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Unauthorized Dealers

Not long ago in 2016, the Cleveland Cavaliers basketball team won their first NBA Championship. They were down 3 to 1 winning games in the finals as the Golden State Warriors appeared to be positioned to take possession of their second NBA Championship, BUT! *Guess what?* The Cleveland Cavaliers came back and took it all!! Our city was filled with excitement everywhere you went! Nothing like this accomplishment had ever happen in professional sports history. Personally, I am not a sports fan whatsoever, however, there are some spiritual lessons that we can certainly glean from this event.

How did the Cleveland Cavaliers pull this off? They knew their purpose was to win. They were prepared. They had the skills to do it, and they did. These men did not win the game on the basketball court as millions looked on. No, they won the NBA Championship within their hearts first. The Cleveland Cavaliers knew who they were long before the crowd witnessed their

record-breaking defeat of the Golden State Warriors, despite the agony of defeat and setbacks in the finals. They stayed their course and their purpose pushed them into victory.

When setbacks and times of crisis come into your life, courage is the mindset necessary to overcome. There is no other option. Natural talents and skills alone will not sustain you when, like the Cleveland Cavaliers, you are down 3 games to 1 against your enemies and foes. You must have reassurance from another source to reaffirm your purpose and drive you down the court of life with fervor and tenacity. Mark Twain said it best, "The two most important days of your life are when you're born and when you find out for what."

Finding the answer to this most important question in life: Who Am I? is vital to overcoming the many pains and defeats you will experience in your life's journey. It is the key to rebounding from setbacks. This question cannot be correctly answered from others' opinions and your own primary assessment. This question must be

'outsourced' to be properly answered and assessed. Let me prove it to you: fish cannot survive very long outside of water. Water is their source to maintain life. Take them from their life source; it's just a matter of time, they will die. It is inevitable. There is nothing in the earth that is animated, breathing, growing or electrical that can sustain itself or maintain from within its-self. Flowers need water and sunlight. Cows need grass. Cars need gasoline. Your cell phone needs electricity to charge it. *Human beings need God!* This is why self-help and psychology does not work in restoring the human soul when violated.

Consider this fact, you and I cannot recharge our cell phones from another cell phone. It has to be hooked up to an electrical outlet to receive power from another source. Self-help and psychology cannot assist you in discovering who you are, and why you are, in times of serious crisis, why? You did not create yourself and your psychotherapist did not create you either. God did! Humans are of the same source. **You cannot overcome spiritual challenges with man-made remedies. It's**

called: humanism. Humanism is the attempt by human beings to solve problems apart from God, our creator.

Since the fall of man in the Garden of Eden where Adam and Eve sinned, Genesis 2, man has been like fish out of water. Becoming skillful with our talents will assist us in 'flopping' around for some time, but eventually, all human beings will ask the question, who am I? What was I *really* born for? What is my purpose for living? Talent will not satisfy the human experience apart from God.

Talents are natural, but 'spiritual' gifts and spiritual identity are **only** given by God, from God, to those who will seek him to find their "God Purpose." Without discovery, many talented people begin to lose 'breath' in the game of life unable to go the distance. This is why many famous, wealthy and very talented people take their own lives. This is why multitudes are unable to defeat destructive behaviors, though they are praised for their talents, nonetheless, they are privately tormented and defeated by depression, loneliness,

fear of death and secret sin. Sin is missing the mark with God. This propensity of mankind was made right through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God and gives life, in the game of life. *Jesus answered, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."* John 14:6.

What good is a taco shell without the other ingredients? The taco shell does not make the taco, the ingredients do! Life with only discovery of natural talents apart from God and forgiveness of sin, is nothing but an empty shell of a life. It will eventually 'crack' under the pressures of life. Multitudes are without purpose, only talent and recognition from other human beings. They feel lonely, because they are attempting to play in the game of life, without God, ignoring his obvious presence revealed through nature alone. *"For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being*

understood from His workmanship, so that men are without excuse," Romans 1:20.

Follow me closely my Friend! Talent is like the 'standard' icons and APPS that come on your smart phone. You can shuffle them around and update them, but if your phone is damaged, they are good for nothing, but show. Natural talents have been given to every human being by God since the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, they are standard. And like cellular phones that all include standard APPS, when the phone is damaged, the APPS cannot restore the phone, because the 'purpose' of the phone has been compromised. It's now time to visit your local cell phone store where they are experts in repairing damaged phones and will always tell you, we have "new updates" you knew nothing about, and they are always free. God is the same way, when we humble ourselves to him, he updates our life with spiritual "gifts" freely for you to now give freely to your

fellowman. This allows you to contribute to the "circle of life." This is a life worth living. When you *give*, you *live*! The essence of God's nature and character is that he is a giver. He is the ultimate giver who gave his only begotten son for the sins of the entire world, and whosoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life. John 3:16. Glory to God forever!!!! *Whoohooo! This is Great News!!!* Let me stay on the topic!!!

Talent can be easily discovered without God and confused for purpose. It can bring wealth, fame and power, but it cannot sustain you in times of *spiritual* crisis. It will not fill the 'empty' space inside that God has purposely left for himself, for those who will seek and ask for his help in humility when the heart is overwhelmed with 'pain' and fear. Pain is the vehicle most commonly experienced to find God. In times of crisis, your true character will come forth. It will either *derail* you or *propel* you. Pride says I don't need God, and thus, for masses of people, they are left alone by God. He keeps them afar off. *"Though the Lord is great, he cares for the humble, but*

he keeps his distance from the proud."
Psalm 138:6 Humanism has separated them from His free gift of grace found in the living Christ, God's only begotten Son. And thus, talent becomes their 'idol' that for many, has provided many earthly treasures and accolades of their counterparts. Nonetheless, it is vitally important to understand that what you do; *is not* the same as who you are. Your character is the real you. Your job is what you do, and for some, they are not able to keep their jobs because of their character, now follow me carefully here... the Cleveland Cavalier players were professional ball handlers. They get paid lots of money to do what they love, handle a basketball skillfully, and make shots through a hoop. They have a coach and captain to motivate them and give them strategies to overcome their opposition. Who do you have on your team to motivate you when you're down and out? What do you do when your back is against a wall? How do you handle opposition and painful situations that come into your life? Do you ignore God? Do you rely

upon Him to lead and guide you? Do you even talk to God???

Power is energy that will move something or someone. If you have no pain, you will never have power. Pain pushes you. When put into proper perspective, pain actually is your friend. It will give you momentum when God is sincerely sought after and acknowledged in all of your ways, *Proverbs 3:6*. When a person is in a relationship with God and desires to sincerely know him and respect his commandments, you will have power to overcome your trials and traumas, why? All power belongs to God! I am a witness!! Without him, a person is like a beautiful, man-made Rolls Royce without a motor. No motor, no power! Your pain will crush you! The Rolls Royce by most accounts is one of the most expensive, hand-made motor vehicles in the entire world. But without a proper working motor on the inside, it is simply for show on the outside. Everyone that looks upon its beauty will never know it doesn't have a motor unless they attempt to start it up to move it. Dealing with pain in your life without God,

will leave you stuck in the 'showroom' of life, where everyone looks upon you, compliments your talents and honors your accomplishments, but you have no power to go any further than that, after a while, all compliments and praise all sound the same, just spoken by another voice that passes you by in the 'showroom' of life. Nonetheless, pain builds character, wisdom and confidence. This book is going to 'coach' you how to overcome with God on your side, **not** religion; which is man's attempt to appease God with religious traditions and rituals. The human soul (psyche, heart or mind) was created by God, for God. He knows what you need to 'rebound' from your current situation.

Setbacks, pain and sufferings soften the heart or harden it. The latter will destroy you. Without grapes being crushed, there can be no wine. Without squeezing the lemon, there can be no lemonade. Without pain in your life, you will never find God. But, with God, you will overcome your pain because he adds grace, like sugar is added to lemons, to remove the 'bitter' taste so you can endure its

bitterness. Therefore, **without resistance you cannot grow nor discover who you really are.** Like muscle, you develop spiritually from *enduring* resistance, opposition and pain. These prepare you for discovering your purpose. Purpose is fueled and maintained by preparation. Preparation builds confidence. It is essential to personal growth.

When you are not confident in who you are, you will collapse under pressure and miss very important opportunities in 'the game of life.' This is why we must first ponder when opposition and pressure comes, the million dollar question, *who am I?* The Cleveland Cavaliers individually and collectively came up with the winning answers: **We are not quitters!** We are strong enough and prepared enough to take this team out!! *And they did!*

In the game of basketball, the ball is constantly being handled on the court. Your purpose is the same; it has to be '*driven*' and '*defended*' constantly once it is discovered. God does not force himself on anyone. He is self-existing and His handy

works speak for themselves; nature alone reveals his existence, majesty and power. He patiently waits for each one of us to humbly come to him for the answer to our question ~ *who am I?* This is a life worth living.

Each of the Cavalier players had been playing basketball since they were boys. They knew the game and their sole purpose was to win, but not without the “I Am” self-motivation that we all need from time to time. Speaking the truth to yourself is your defense when the double team of fear and anxiety is trying to shut down your game. You got to have some DEFENSE!!!

Your God purpose has the innate power to sustain you. It will stand in the midst of your storm and pull you to shore. It cannot be brought. It has to be discovered. It has to be cultivated, respected and protected. Where purpose is, God is too! He created you and he knows what he wants from you. Therefore, as you embrace your God purpose, God is there to back you up. The same as Dan Gilbert was for the Cleveland Cavaliers. He was the majority owner of this

team in 2016. He knew exactly why each and every one of those players was chosen to play on his team ~ to win ball games. You were created by God to bring him glory.

Consider the flowers of the fields. No clothing designer can come close to the beautiful design that is revealed in one pedal! God is real, He is powerful and He wants to connect with you daily. He wants to have a relationship with you that moves your heart beyond any human experience you have ever experienced. He wants to restore your 'breath' again if you are feeling breathless. Like the fish out of water, you will lose life without God. That is why you must seek to find the answer to your question. WHO AM I!! *For real!!!* Why am I here???

When we have an encounter with God, He then gives us **spiritual gifts** he wants us to share with our fellowman. Let's move on and talk about spiritual gifts and talents and how to practically discover your God purpose. *Are you ready My Friend?!!!* Let's move on and get some understanding.

The Difference Between Gifts and Talents

Now as you purposely and diligently seek to find your purpose for living or to transition your life, you must understand the difference between spiritual gifts and talents. Most people have a diversity of talents and gifts. Diversity means to have a variety, assortment, range or mixture.

Everyone is naturally endowed with talents given at birth. Your talents can assist you in taking care of yourself and contributing to the 'circle of life,' but gifts are given by God for the uplifting of your fellowman for eternity. Now I need you to follow me very closely here. Your talent may lead you into a steady, lucrative career; it's what you are *paid* to do, but your 'spiritual gifts' are what you are *called* to do, and you will do it for free. You will give them freely to build hope in others towards God. Your *gifts* assist God

in preparing others to consider *his* goodness, not your goodness. Proper stewardship of your *spiritual gifts* touch the heart of man to cause them to think about eternity, your talent oftentimes provokes others to think about you. For instance, some very talented celebrities make the mistake of calling other human beings '*their fans*' because they are celebrated for their talent, **not** the giver of their talent. Their talent is *their* glory. Here is the seduction of talent that deceives multitudes who tote about their talent amongst their fans, confusing their praise and adoration for God's approval. This is why countless 'stars' commit suicide and cannot overcome destructive behaviors. They mistakenly believe God approves of their lifestyles, when in fact; he abhors their lascivious lifestyles that are celebrated and regarded as 'normal' amongst their entertainment industry peers and fans, where often, morality is non-existing. Greed, pride and lust are celebrated, and God's name is constantly taken in vain.

What is very important for us to note (if you are naturally talented in expressing yourself in the area of fine arts) is there are millions with the same talent. Natural beauty is the

same. There are multitudes of very beautiful people. Beauty, like talent, can also deceive the one who has been given their facial features and body structure by God. If not careful, they too will be swept away by the appraisal of their fellowman. Seduced into thinking they are the most beautiful or handsome person walking the face of the earth. This is a gateway to insanity provoked by vanity. God cannot live in the heart of this type of person. There is no room for him. It's all about their beautiful face and/or body.

Talent may be discovered at a very early age for some, but gifts can only be realized from a bona fide encounter with God. For example, I recall a very wealthy businessman stated that he owned 7 private planes and many residential homes throughout America. He read a devotional to God every morning, but he did not have a personal relationship with God until, one day he read a scripture that brought him under conviction that he was materialistic and self-centered. He said he immediately felt overwhelmed with God's love and began to sell all of his possessions and set up a foundation to take care of the poor and downtrodden. He had an encounter with

God. His life was forever changed. Giving is the ultimate expression of God working in the heart of humanity. You cannot know God and continue to be stingy and self-centered. It is not possible. *"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever, shall believe upon him shall have everlasting life."* John 3:16 A person may have a natural ability to persuade people in sales. They have a natural talent to communicate. We often call it a "gift to gab." They are content making lots of money for themselves, receiving recognition for their sales prowess, but, when they have an encounter with God, they will begin to use their talent of persuasion to tell others about God's gift, his son, Jesus Christ, the savior of the world. They become evangelists, teachers and exhorters. They become 'ministry gifts' to the body of Christ and the world, no longer seeking to heap praise and recognition upon themselves.

Now follow me very closely here: all spiritually gifted people are givers. Let me say that again, all "spiritually" gifted people give!!! Whether its time, money, motivation, food, shelter.... they are givers. But here is the

paradox: you can be a very generous person and not have a relationship with God whatsoever. There are those who refuse to give anything without being rewarded. Giving is not part of their game. Why? They have yet to have an encounter with God, they are talented *takers*. You cannot meet God and not become a giver! It's simply not possible! Why is this observation very important for you to consider? Are you a giver or a taker? Do you daily look for opportunities despite your personal pains and problems to be a blessing to others? Or are you consumed with your life, your family, your problems, your pains, your issues, your money, your talent, your 401k plan???

On the other hand, gifted people give from the heart. They are consumed with how they can care for others less fortunate than them. They are not hoarders ignoring the hurting. They're the ones that will not exit the hair salon or barber shop without giving a reasonable tip to their stylist. They're the ones that *privately* leave large donations for charitable organizations.

“Spiritually gifted people do not wait for opportunities to give, they look for them.”

Talent is oftentimes confused with being spiritually gifted by God because when being expressed, they both have the innate power to move the recipient's emotions. But here is the vast difference. **Talented people arouse temporal emotion, but the gifted provoke attention to God for eternal response.** Now follow me here! You can have a very talented singer who can sing like a bird. Their talent is undeniable. But if that songbird has an encounter with God, he or she will no longer desire to sing about their ex, lust and frivolous matters. He or she will now sing out of a *gift of mercy*. They will want to sing about God's love, mercy and power to cause their listeners to think about God. And they will do it for free! They now want to give their talent away as it has now been set apart for God. Any emotion aroused henceforth, is to provoke their listeners to think about our Creator and His only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world.

Spiritually gifted people are givers without any expectation of a return. They want recipients of their gift to know God and his love for them. On the other hand, talented people who have not experienced an encounter with God expect pay for their talent and oftentimes, they lust for fame and recognition. Their focus is "Team Me, Myself and I." They oftentimes do not have integrity and honor because they are so hungry for success and fame. They will compromise whatever morals and values they may possess to gain recognition and applause. And for some, they lost their wealth gained through their talent because they have no character. They are shady characters, driven by greed. Murder has filled the heart of some who kill and steal to maintain their lust for materialism and power, only to be shipwrecked. There used to be a very popular documentary show called "American Greed." The stories told were absolutely mind boggling how very talented people stole, killed and ended up dead or in prison because they had no morals, no values, no respect for God. It was all about the Benjamins! Money that is.

Having a great mind to create and figure things out is common for many, but unless the individual connects with God to 'ground' their natural propensity, like electricity, if it is not grounded, it can destroy that person and those around them. They will become self-reliant and 'a legend' in their own minds. Pride fills the heart and there is no need for God, they become their own 'gods.' They worship their natural ability to unravel problems, lacking the humility to grasp the fact that God has graciously given them their natural talent that is being expressed by multitudes who refuse to acknowledge God as their creator, because in their minds, they are. I have met many in my day and their disposition is all the same, they want proof for everything, but the mere fact they are manufacturing skyscrapers bigger and stronger than them, should tell them that someone has miraculously given them insight how to build these massive structures, especially those who make bridges and airplanes. Personally, I'm still trying to figure these two out! Simply amazing!

It's mind boggling that man is able to fashion steel and cement to build structures that

weigh tons and yet they float on water and fly through the air! I cannot give man the credit on any day of the week for these phenomenal structures. *To God Be the Glory!!!!* They're using his natural resources from the earth he created, Genesis Chapter 1, and their God-given great minds, yet for many, they refuse to acknowledge the Creator of the Heavens and the earth....SMH!!!!. Arrogance is a deal breaker with God. Many 'great minds' go insane because of their pride and refusal to consider the facts. The earth was here long before their parents met and their mother pushed them out of her womb. The earth does not maintain itself because of man. Case in point, we cannot control the weather. We have absolutely nothing to do with the moon, sun and the stars staying in their place, nor do we have anything to do with the ocean waters not swallowing up the earth. And we certainly cannot stop death. Having a natural talent to engineer and build is a talent from God.

So, what's the difference between talents and spiritual gifts? ***Talents can be used without God, Gifts are used for God. For His glory that is.***

Now let's move on to some keys to discover your talents and gifts if you do not know what they are. *Are you ready?* Let's Go!

How to Discover Your Gifts and Talents

Making money “doing” something is not necessarily your purpose. Statistics show that 85% of Americans hate their jobs. Multitudes don't know what their “calling in life” is or for many, they do know, but they allow fear of failure to hold them in a place, going nowhere. Nonetheless, your purpose will ‘journey’ with you, quietly beckoning your attention and devotion. Oftentimes, many people make their real purpose their ‘hobby’ expressed through their natural talents. They use them to relax and escape the wiles of lucrative incomes and stressful job positions that have them stuck in a rut, but their hearts yearn to be set free to do what they love. Ignoring the ‘calling in your heart’ can become a gateway to mental illness and substance addictions, why? Because the heart cannot be ignored in discovering your reason for living that God

has placed inside of your heart to find, develop and give to your fellowman. Your true love (purpose) will not leave you once you begin to seek God, that calling will raise its voice. It is undeniable, it is steady.

It is a known fact, that what you really love to do will oftentimes not bring you lots of money, but! You love it! Now listen, this is where faith comes in. This is where heartfelt conversations within the secret chambers of your soul must take place in order for you to become liberated in the game of life to get a 3 point, half-court shot like Stephan Curry, who was the 2015 Basketball MVP of the Golden State Warriors. Curry has been celebrated for his incredible ability to score from far range. My friend, it's time for you to take a 3-point shot and make the plans necessary to transition yourself into doing what you love. *Come on, let's get some offense here!!!* It's time to dribble your purpose down the court of life and score!!! BUT! Remember, *success is not the key to happiness; happiness is the key to success.* "If you love what you are doing, you will be successful." -Albert Schweitzer

We all know money is necessary to pay our bills, but excessive living can put you into bondage. Fear and anxiety will dominate your thoughts as you continue to go to that job you hate in order to maintain your excessive living. And for some, they do allow money, power and materialism to destroy them while trampling over their purpose. I recall a man I met many years ago advertising from his van that he was a general contractor. I was in the midst of renovating my new hair salon at that time. He was just what I was looking for. It took him several weeks to finish all of the renovations. During this time, I could not help but notice there seemed to be sadness about this man. One day I asked him what his story was. He would reveal to me that he was a general manager of a high-end car dealership where he managed the entire sales staff, he managed a \$1.3 million dollar budget, and was served hand and foot by a personal assistant that kept his personal car spotless while he carried over \$5,000 CASH spending money in his pockets *daily*. He admitted he was very prideful and cheated on his wife and neglected his children. Eventually, the dealership grew weary of his arrogance and fired him. He hit rock bottom.

He had taken a common road many of us have traveled, the EGO Trip. He had **E**ded **G**od **O**ut and lost everything. He said that during the time he was relishing in his lofty job and its benefits, he always felt the 'calling' to do carpentry. It was his natural gift and he loved it since he was a little boy. This man had a natural gift to build things that never left him, but he strayed from it. When I met him, he was trying to rebuild his life, starting at ground zero. Regret had taken hold of his heart. He lost his wife and children, but he was now doing what he always loved and knew he was called to do.

Sometimes discovering your natural talent and purpose will come from heartache and pain. Purpose will not abandon you. It journeys with you until you surrender. It is faithful to us like God is. When you surrender, it blooms in your heart like tulips in a spring garden. So, the first key to discovering your purpose is, asking yourself, what do you love to do? What is it??

Second Key to Discovering Your Purpose

What is your habit? What do you find yourself always thinking about, dreaming about? Now let me make a very important distinction here. God does not make anything that does not have a purpose. Everything has been made for a purpose. Humanity is no different, except, we have a 'free will' and an innate propensity to serve self. Therefore, oftentimes, many people "dream" of being famous, rich and powerful with people serving them. But a God given dream and purpose is for you to serve others. What is your dream? How does it position you to serve your fellowman?

Third Key to Discovering Your Purpose

What makes you upset? What angers you? Purpose is discovered in your tendency to get angry over the same thing. It could be children who have no

food or corrupt politicians, that's a good one! Hehehe!

What disturbs you, is an indicator of your God purpose attempting to rise and shine in your heart for development. **Don't ignore your emotions.** They were created by God for a reason. Many people have succumbed to the notion that expressing emotion is negative and inappropriate, especially for men. But, even Jesus wept, John 11:35. He was the savior of the world expressing heartfelt emotion. He or she that does not express emotion, or feels guilty for expressing heartfelt emotion, has been robbed of their ability to reach God with a pure heart *"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise."* Psalm 51:17

Pay close attention to your emotions, they will sound off without your permission when your God purpose has been triggered from within your heart.

Fourth Key to Discovering Your Purpose

Oftentimes, complete strangers will tell you who you are. They will 'bare' witness to your God purpose. Like perfume, we all leave an impression on others. Perfume fragrances, like purpose, do have a 'scent' if you will. Usually people who are very perceptive and or spiritual can discern your gift and purpose. How many times have you met someone and immediately you smelled their perfume or cologne and commented, and without fail, they reply, "*I can't smell it.*" Then, they roll their eyes in the back of their head to recall what they sprayed on that morning.

What have others commonly told you about yourself that you know is true??

Fifth Key to Discovering Your Purpose

What do you find yourself spending your money on? *Not clothes!* Do you have a hobby that you have begun to stockpile all sorts of equipment and gadgets? This can be a very big indicator! Where your heart is, you will spend your money! Now follow me very closely here. Your full-time job may only be for a season, but your God purpose will stay with you for your lifetime. That is why you can chronicle all the times you have excitedly spent money on your "hobby." But let me share this fact to inspire you. Many millionaires in America started their businesses as a hobby. One that comes to mind is Silpada, a sterling silver jewelry company founded by two best friends in 1993. They were stay-at-home moms. In 2010 they sold their company to Avon for \$650 Million.

Okay my friend, I need you to really think to find the answers to the before mentioned five keys. What is your propensity (tendency or habit)? What is it?? What do you spend your money on? What makes you angry? What have others told you about yourself that you know is true?

Okay, now we have to move on to consider some very important facts about your gifts, talents and skills that will also help you to identify your purpose in "The Discovery Zone." It's your own private zone. We most commonly call it "soul searching." Now let's take a close look at why many people don't know what their purpose is, even though some earn decent salaries and live in palatial homes, but they are miserable because of a jaded belief about God's existence. Let's move on and talk about it.

The Secret Weapon of Prayer

Why do multitudes, whether rich or poor, feel empty and unfulfilled? *They have left God out!* They are simply disconnected. This can be for a plethora of reasons, nonetheless, let's take a look at one very important factor. *Prayer!*

Prayer is not complicated. It is simply communicating with God. It is where your 'discovery zone' is opened up for your gifts to begin flowing through you to your fellowman. Prayer keeps you humble and accountable to God with your *true self*. It opposes the human ego when the heart is humbled in faith to talk with God. Humility keeps you reaching for God's guidance in every situation in your life, the same as 'the locker room' is for sports athletes.

In the NBA, no fans are allowed in the locker room. It is the place where very important conversations take place between the

players and their coaches. It is the place where strategies, correction and motivation are constantly exchanged for the perfecting of the team's purpose; and that is to win.

Your mind is the locker room of your soul. Soul searching is the only way to find your purpose and God's guidance. Regular quiet time is a must. Why is it vitally important to discover your God-given purpose versus making money and having a mere existence on earth? Because when you find your God purpose, you are spiritually connected. You are spiritually energized and made alive. Loneliness is dispelled and you are restored back into a relationship with your creator. It is now time to Play Ball!!! For Real!!!!

Prayer is a very powerful weapon! It cannot be done when pride exists in the heart nor can it be done when there are unrealistic expectations about it. For many, it is a mystery. What in fact is the mystery about prayer? The mystery is ~ there is none! Prayer simply means talking with God by faith. Most people find no value in talking to God because he cannot be seen, yet,

nature alone reveals his existence and power. It cannot be denied.

For some, they don't believe God hears them because they want him to answer their every request according to *their* personal desire and in ways that they can "see" with their natural eyes and ears. But remember,

"God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." John 4:24

Now follow me very closely here....when God speaks, and he does all of the time, it is in your conscience, your spirit. You will know what to do. You will know when to hold off. You will begin to know why you must do a certain thing a particular way. You will begin to know what God doesn't like. Your morals and values will begin to change drastically! You will begin to know who you are, but!!! Remember, it's no longer about 'your will' being done anymore; it's about "*His Will*" being done through you, for *his glory*.

What is God's glory? His glory is Jesus Christ, because Jesus died a horrific death to save us from our sins to bypass God's eternal

judgment. He paid the ultimate price with his life to restore the lines of communication between God and man that were lost in the Garden of Eden after Adam and Eve sinned, (Genesis 2). Sin separates us from God. But Jesus' death *'bridged'* us back to God. We must cross over that bridge to get back to God. Jesus was very clear: *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes unto the Father but by me."* John 14:6 Prayer is the "toll" you pay to cross the bridge. Humility will take you straight over. This is the precise reason many contemplate self-destruction, jeopardizing their physical safety and health using drugs, alcohol, illicit sex and the like, to escape the emptiness on the inside of their souls, because they refuse to cross the bridge! Why? When you cross over, it can no longer be about you. You can no longer do whatever you want to do.

Prayer is a spiritual matter. **No prayer, no power!** Without prayer you cannot 'dribble' your purpose down the court of life and strategically outplay your opposition, *you need God!* Basketball games are won in part, because of the priceless moments the players are gathered in their locker rooms to receive motivation, strategy and correction.

There is no such thing as “I don’t have time” to hear what the owners, coaches and captain has to say. The locker room is vital to winning and treatment of the ball players when they are injured. God cannot comfort the troubled soul who will not meet him in the ‘locker room.’ Prayer is your locker room.

In the game of basketball, laziness and lack of dedication to the game causes ‘turnovers.’ Other’s opinions and assessments of you can cause emotional turnovers that will dominate your heart and mind instead of what God says about you. This is why you must learn to *play* and *pray* in the game of life, to advance your God purpose. Multitudes spend thousands of dollars on training sessions, “How to Become Your Best You” and “Secrets to Success, Wealth and Prosperity” and still that empty, gnawing feeling on the inside cannot be silenced. Why? You have no coaching, motivation and correction in the locker room of your soul where God wants to meet you *personally*.

LeBron James is by far one of the best players of all time in the game of basketball. He has mastered his game. But let us make no

mistake about it, he is far from being lazy and lacking dedication to ball handling. He has mastered the game inside and out. He is fearlessly competitive and confident. Why? He has put the time in to discover his weakness and strengths to drive himself to accomplish his purpose, to win! This is also done in part with his submission to his coaches and teammates that meet him in the locker room on a regular basis. During the 2016 NBA Finals, they were down not one, but three games. The Locker Room sessions were vitally important to their win. **When you are down and out, you must spend time in prayer ~ you must!** This is why many youth are killing one another. Street violence and gangs are rampant because the youngsters do not have a clue who they are. They don't understand what purpose is and its power, and that power is only discovered in prayer with their creator. Multitudes of parents pride themselves on providing their children with formal education, but they have neglected to teach their children how to reach and seek God through prayer and repentance of their sins through Jesus Christ. It is by far the most important exchange of knowledge parents can teach their children at a very young

age while their hearts are pure and tender toward God.

Prayer is *not* complicated. You do not have to stand, kneel or lay in any particular position to talk to God. But it is vital that you talk to God. *"Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you..."*

1Thessalonians 5:17-18 Prayer with thanksgiving, keeps you in an attitude of gratitude. Gratitude is also a weapon in your arsenal to defeat your opposition in the game of life. You cannot win without it. It's like wearing athletic shoes on the court, you cannot play without them. They help protect you from sliding around. They provide agility and comfort. Like gratitude, thanksgiving to God in prayer will calm you down and help you refocus on what is most important in your life. It will realign you. Never take it for granted. God is listening, trust him. He knows what is best for you. If you don't get what you prayed for, focus on what you already have been given. Be grateful and TRUST God!! Trust him!

Finally, do not ignore your conscience. It is the place God speaks. Your conscience is

your awareness of God, self or others. When you strive to keep your awareness on God, you will win over your emotions and fears. You will be able to endure every negative play in your life. Unforgiveness, anger and jealousy block you from God. Be sure to examine your heart and rid yourself of these. Your conscience must be alive to God in order for him to lead you and guide you in times of turmoil.

Now before we move on, we must deal with three very dangerous '*players*' in the game of life that can steal your faith and shut down your weapon of prayer, they are: Trash talkers, death and religion!

These ***three players*** can pull you from faith in God and steal your purpose. Let's first deal with the

'trash talkers.' Okay! Let's Go!

Overcoming the Trash Talkers

Alright, here we go! Like any sports locker room, there is always 'trash talkin' going on. The same as you will find in men's barber shops. It is amazing to listen to the barbers and their customers talking as if they know the team players 'personally.' Some will even become upset if you mention their least favorite player in comparison to their star players of the game.

When I take my sons to the barber shop, it is so amusing to listen to the self-appointed pro sports analysts. *They are so funny!* What never ceases to amaze me, is that some of these very fanatical people begin to call professional, National Basketball Association players, out of their names, berating them as if they stole something from them! Have you ever heard these types of self-appointed sports analysts? They are so adamant about *their* opinions and analysis of every highlight of the games they watch. But what they soon forget, is they are in fact, talking about *professional* ball handlers.

They're not talking about street players who 'wanna be.' These pro basketball players have been drafted amongst their peers. They have million-dollar contracts! Come on now, follow me here.....they are talking smack about the best of the best. These players have done absolutely nothing to provoke the wrath of the self-appointed ones.

The Cleveland Cavaliers are the 2016 NBA Champions; they were down 3 games to 1 against the Golden State Warriors. They made history rallying from this deficit to winning the entire Championship Finals, but yet, there are still those who just can't acknowledge the facts, the Cleveland Cavaliers won the thing!!!!

Stay with me here, I'm going somewhere with this.....

The same can be said for the Golden State Warriors point guard, Stephan Curry, who was recognized by the NBA as MVP of 2015, after winning the entire NBA Championship, but! You still hear the trash talking, self-appointed basketball gurus bashing his character, despite the facts!!! *Alright my fellow Cleveland*

Fans; CALM DOWN!!!! But let me give you some facts. LeBron James is in a class all by himself, but Stephen Curry is too! The basketball league has never seen such a 3-point shooter as Curry. He is holding one of the most important positions in the game. He was the “leader of offense” for his team. He has great ball handling skills and his 3-point shot is unmatched. Come on, Google the facts!!! Stephen Curry has got it going on—so what's up with the trash talkin'???? The facts are the facts. Stephen Curry has led the Golden State Warriors to victory and his stats prove it!!

Okay, where am I going with this?

How can anyone claim there is no God, when the facts are overwhelming? Now I'm asking this question for those who *claim* God does not exist, and/or, you are angry with God for whatever is your reason. Before we move forward in this book, we have to deal with this. Why? If you are an atheist, you cannot win in the game of life without a team!! The team I'm talking about is not your therapist, family members, co-workers, friends or spouse. They have their own fears, pains, problems and tragedies. That is not the team I'm talking

about here. I'm talking about God the Father, God the Son and the Holy Spirit!!!!

My friend, you need a 'power forward' and 'center' to help you score in the game of life. You need a captain! You need God! Yes! God!! How can anyone claim he does not exist? **The facts are overwhelming!** And the first, is that atheists do believe in God, if they didn't, they couldn't say he doesn't exist. *Think about it.* How can one seriously entertain the false statement that the sky is not blue, when it is obvious? Nonetheless, the blue sky continues to witness against them day in, and day out. They reject the facts. So do those who claim God does not exist.

Oftentimes, those who 'trash talk' claiming God does not exist are very controlling people. This is manifested in their constant need to see proof for everything. If it doesn't add up to the standard of their finite minds, they reject it. Nonetheless, let us consider some hard-core **facts** My Friend.....

1. We are constantly eating God's food provided for all humanity. He faithfully gives us seed, time and harvesting of crops every year for our sustenance.

2. We are constantly drinking his water provided from the rivers, lakes and streams.
3. The sun, moon and stars remain in their place, not burning us up.
4. Many have become extremely wealthy from the natural resources afforded us, such as trees that we build our homes and furniture from, so that we can live in sheltered dwellings protecting us from outside elements.
5. God has provided natural resources to allow humanity to enjoy electricity to maintain our modern-day technologies, transportation, our homes and clothing.
6. Our favorite cotton t-shirts come from the cotton fields he has provided.
7. Your car has been fashioned from steel produced from the earth. The list could go on and on.

Now let me take my time here.....many people talk trash about Jesus Christ, they claim he was just a prophet or a teacher amongst many other defaming things, but the facts are in.....since his death over 2,000 years

ago, there has NEVER been any other human being that has walked this planet, died and rose from the dead. None my friend, not one! He is the Savior of the entire world. His resurrection from the dead was noted by his disciples who wrote about their experience with Jesus Christ in the Four Gospels of the New Testament books of the Bible; Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and thirteen books of the Bible were written by Paul, the apostle of Christ who did not physically walk with Jesus, but had a spiritual encounter with the living Savior, Jesus Christ.

LeBron James has been affectionately regarded by his fans as “King James” because of his dominance on the basketball court, but, Jesus Christ, who is King of all kings, is the most popular and controversial person on the planet! There has never been anyone like him, and there never will be. Why? He fulfilled his purpose, to die for the sins of the entire world to save us from the wrath of God since the fall of man in the Garden of Eden.

Before Kevin Durant, Stephen Curry and LeBron

James came on the scene. Players like Michael Jordan, Charles Barkley, Magic

Johnson, Isaiah Thomas, Kareem Abdul Jabbar, Larry Byrd, and of course, the one and only, Dr. J (Julius Erving), dominated in the sport of professional basketball. These men fascinated sports fans with their skills. I tell you, no one could dunk a basketball like Dr. J! If you're too young to know who he was, Google him! *He was amazing according to sports analyst of his time!* Many have come and gone, just like LeBron James and Stephan Curry will, but when have you ever once heard of anyone who has since risen from the dead since Jesus did? Who have you ever heard walked around in a resurrected body? Who do you know that has ever done this? ? ? ? ?

Stay with me on this my friend....

I cannot tell you how important these facts are too finding your "God purpose." I cannot! There will always be another star athlete. It will not be long before another comes on the scene to compare to our current star athletes. Countless grade school children are currently studying the moves of Kevin Durant, Dwayne Wade, LeBron and Stephan Curry. Just like these men emulated Michael Jordan and Dr. J who were before their time. But who can duplicate the eternal SLAM DUNK of Jesus

Christ when he got up out that grave????? I'm just asking!!!! WHO????

THE FACTS ARE IN!!!! Jesus Christ stats are undeniable. I AM A WITNESS!!! I have been a follower of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ for nearly 30 years. He made the difference in my life. I have not been the same since I cried out to God in a one-bedroom apartment. *He is alive!* And he is still assisting those who sincerely seek God to overcome the bondage of sin in their lives. Who do you know that has even come close to this miracle play that God invested and allocated to Jesus Christ? The bar was set in eternity for the sins of the entire world, making it possible for all humanity to once again have a relationship with God after Adam and Eve messed up.

What Jesus Christ did cannot be compared to anyone. He stands alone!!! There is none to compare, NO, NOT ONE! It does not matter what your talent is, nor how much you have in your bank account because of your talents, unless you have turned from your sins and believed on the LIVING Christ, you will perish my Friend. Come On! Let's play ball!!!! Get right with God, turn from anything in your life that is ungodly. This would include THINKING

you are a 'good person' because you do nice things for people. This mindset of the prideful heart that feels justified because you give money and time to charities and you help all of your family members out with their financial woes. NO!!! This will not save you from God's wrath, it is pride. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, Romans 3:23.

In my 52-year journey in life, I have met countless atheists; some poor, some rich, and some very educated. They all have had one thing in common, depression. Why? They refuse to consider the facts. You cannot experience purpose without God. Without God's purpose, you are in fact, merely existing. You live, yet you have no life. God waits patiently to restore their souls and forgive them of their pride and self-righteousness, but the choice is theirs if they will ONLY consider the facts.

Now let's take a look at the second most dangerous player in the game of life ~ death. Without understanding the purpose of death and its real position and purpose, it will bully you around and steal your faith in God. It can cause very serious damage! Let's Go! LET'S PLAY BALL!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Defeating Death

If you gave me a brand new designer handbag as a gift, telling me in advance that you will one day return to retrieve it from me, you then decide after a few years, you want it back, do I have the right to be angry with you? I knew you gave this designer handbag to me to enjoy for an indefinite amount of time. Who am I to begin hating on you, ignoring your attempts to communicate with me, talking bad about you because you wanted the handbag back, for whatever is your reason??

Is it not true, all of us are born to die? Then why are so many people angry with God because someone they loved has died? All 'handbags' belong to God!" The facts are undeniable. Everyone is going to die. Now we must understand and ponder this fact.....**Grief is a thief!** It can and will derail your purpose. It can instigate bitterness and resentment towards God. Nonetheless, we must stay in the Locker Room of Prayer meditating on the facts ~ our eternal MVP has the keys!!!! God raised Jesus from death and the grave. Jesus has the keys!! HE IS ALIVE!

In a court of law, the judge and jury make their decisions based on facts. When the facts are properly laid out before the court, a guilty or not guilty verdict is rendered beyond a shadow of doubt. There is no room for 'reasonable doubt' when the facts are clear. There is no argument.

Now, Let us consider these facts: Every facet of life expresses bi polar opposites. There is black, there is white; there is good, there is evil; there is hot, there is cold; there is up, there is down; nice people, mean people. Quietness, loudness; old people, young people; selfish people, generous people; right, wrong; skinny, fat; bad credit, good credit; curly hair, straight hair; clean house, dirty house; male, femalethis list could gone on and on. **These are all FACTS!**

Now follow me very closely here.... It stands to reason, if everything in the earth has an opposite, and it does, then it behooves each and every one of us to

consider.... ***there is heaven and there is hell***, of which most people do not want to believe, nor do they like to talk about it. But the facts are in. All things have an opposite. And all of us are going to die whether we want to deal with it or not.

We cannot continue to discuss the power of purpose and not deal with these very important facts, because without respect for God's existence and eternity, all that you are doing in your life is completely in vain and can cause you to lose your soul.

The ultimate purpose for living is preparing to die. Death is not final, nor is it to be feared. It must be understood!

We have an eternal rivalry, which once lived in the presence of God until he was lifted up in his heart and desired worship. He was then kicked out of heaven; his name is Satan. Jesus confirms these facts, *"I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven"* Luke 10:18 Satan is real and he is working in the hearts of many who have yielded to him, just turn on CNN if you need proof of these facts.

Satan has one purpose in mind, to take your soul and cause you to spend eternity in hell with him. And contrary to popular belief, God does not send people to hell. They go there because they do not want God. They refuse to believe and consider the facts ~ we are all sinners! If you ever told a lie, you have sinned. If you have ever lusted after anyone, you are guilty of sin. God is holy and he hates sin, but he does love his creation. The only reason the earth stills remains, is because God is merciful and wants to have a relationship with us. This helps us to understand why God does allow suffering in our bodies. **God is not after saving our bodies; he wants to save our souls.**

As human beings by default, we love our mortal bodies. But the value of the body is the soul, just like the value of your cell phone is not the screen and visible icons; it is the technical data and battery on the inside. The same as a car; the value of the car is not the 'body,' it's the engine.

The soul cannot be seen with our eyes, but it is manifest in our behaviors and conversations. It is your most valuable asset, *not your body!!!!* Injury, murder and violence against the physical body harms humanity psychologically. There are some hideous and unexplainable things humans have done to one another's bodies, but the soul will never die. The body is returned back to the earth from where God created us, Genesis 1. After death, the body is buried in dirt.

Please follow me very closely here....in the game of basketball, players are injured all of the time, but they do not get angry at their owners and begin to hate them. They recover and continue playing the game. They allow time to heal and they continue to love the sport. They continue to help others play the sport. They are all in, just as the Cleveland Cavaliers were after their team had significant injuries in the 2015 season; that allowed the Golden State Warriors to win the NBA Championships against them. But who became the reigning Champions after the 2015 defeat? The Cleveland Cavaliers!! Who

was the reigning 'king' over death, hell and the grave, after the fall of man in the Garden of Eden? Satan. But who is now currently the reigning King over it all? Jesus Christ! The MVP of Eternity! He rose from the dead and snatched back the keys (symbolic of authority) over death and hell after the religious people of his day had him crucified.

Jesus told us clearly, FEAR NOT!!!! Because he was the first and the last to rise from the dead, ***"Fear not; I am the first and the last: am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."*** ***Revelation 1:18.*** In other words my friend, without Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord over your life, when death visits your life by way of someone that you love, you will not be able to triumph over it, because Jesus has the keys!! Satan was defeated at the cross. ***Death should not be feared, it must be understood!*** When death comes, it will steal your faith in God if you are not **ALL IN!**

When death comes, we cannot focus on how our loved one died, we must focus on their life, not their body that has died. Death is

transportation to eternity. We must thank God for the time we were given to carry that handbag!! We must learn to defy death! It is inevitable! Ignoring it and pretending it does not exist causes anxiety and for some, mental illness as they attempt to deny reality. Death is inevitable.

You do not honor your loved one's death by being miserable and angry with God. You honor their passing away by *living on purpose*. Celebrate their life, celebrate it, but whatever you do, keep dribbling your *purpose* down the court of life! Keep seeking God for direction and clarity. He will answer you. Seek out another person who has the same handbag you had, help them carry theirs! If you've lost a child, seek out single moms in your community and help them with their children. If you have lost your mom or dad, ask your friends if they need help caring for their elderly parents.

Death must be understood. It cannot be avoided if you want to war and win in the game of life. It has to be embraced for what it is. ***Death is transportation to eternity. Eternity is where you will live forever.*** We will either spend it with God or without him. This is why we

must choose who will be the 'lord' of our souls while God allows us the daily 'present' of the breath of life. Once our loved ones have passed on, we must leave them in the hands of God. WE MUST!!! To do otherwise will destroy you! Where their soul rests, is between them and God. Only he knows. Our responsibility now, is to allow God to heal us and keep us moving down the court of life serving our fellowman and challenging them to get ready for their appointment with death. No one will escape it. *"It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment..." Hebrews 9:27* We are all going to die 'physically.' As hard as it is to face this fact, if it is ignored, when it visits us, it has the potential to 'knock you out' of the game of life and you will begin obsess over the dead. This is forbidden by God. It will destroy you My Friend and push you to do things that are forbidden by one. Seeking witches or a medium is one of them. This is dangerous!!!!

**NEVER seek the dead through a medium!!!
NEVER!!!!**

This is how God feels about it, Leviticus 19:31
"Do not defile yourselves by turning to mediums or to those who consult the spirits of

the dead. I am the Lord your God." God told Moses to tell the Israelites these things to protect them from his judgement. It has become extremely popular to seek mediums who claim to talk to a person's loved ones. These men and women are VERY convincing. Nonetheless, they are witches and wizards according to the Holy Scriptures that should BE AVOIDED at all cost! Their 'spirit guides' are demons. These demons are what the Bible refers to as 'familiar spirits.' These familiar spirits have observed the life and behaviors of the deceased and does give the witch/medium this information when they conjure up that person's spirit. This is absolutely FORBIDDEN by God.

⁶And the soul that turns after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards, to go a whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people. Leviticus 20:6

God told Moses that any person that went after these witches/mediums was an abomination to Him and would destroy them.

10 There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch.

11 Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.

12 For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord: and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee.

13 Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God.

Many are angry with God because they do not understand the appointment of death. Nor do they want to accept it. But we must consider the facts: God has graciously given us the breath of life, *"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."* Genesis 2:7 In the game of professional basketball, players are traded every season. The owners make that call. It is up to them. It can be like a death to those who are very close to their teammates. Nonetheless, they keep on playing to win. They keep on pressing on. They may question the owner's decision, but it does not affect their game. So why do many begin to hate

God for his decisions to take our loved ones? Idolatry. These are matters that are not being discussed in 'churches' by the leaders that are calling themselves 'pastors.' Masses of people are being deceived and swallowed up by death and obsession of the dead without any 'coaching' from their leaders.

Listen to what Jesus told us, *"If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."* Luke 14:26 In other words, we should not love anyone more than Jesus. Why? Because when they die or if they betray you, they can take you away from him and your love for God. Many people cannot handle death of their loved ones. They walk away from the game of life. They walk away from God. Jesus will no longer be the "center" of their life, the person who has passed on becomes their focus and meditation. This my friend is idolatry. You become swallowed up in grief and death. You are defeated the same as Satan was on Calvary.

Jesus Christ requires complete allegiance. The word 'hate' in the above scripture means to 'love less.' God must be first. Jesus also told us

this, *"Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul. And with all thy mind."* Matthew 22:37 When death visits our loved ones, we must run to our locker room!!!! We must take it head on *with* God in prayer. If you're angry with God, he can handle that. Nonetheless, he wants you to still play for him. He wants to forgive you of your sins and fill your heart with peace, joy and purpose for living. That purpose cannot be for your children, spouse or parents. It has got to be for God if you want to win the war within.

No one can force you to ask God for help in your time of trauma and pain. You are a *free will* agent in an 'open draft.' Just the same as pro athletes who decide where they want to play ball. The only difference is that we are talking about eternity. We are talking about your purpose for living. We are talking about your soul!!!

Many became very angry with Kevin Durant, one of the NBA's star players who shook up the free agency in 2016, after he decided to leave the Oklahoma City Thunder to play with the Golden State Warriors. Kevin Durant is a grown man! He had every right to do what he wanted to do, whether the ex-players of his

team or the sports commentators and fans liked it or not. He exercised his FREE WILL!!

My Precious Friend, God is allowing you to play in the game of life. He has given you a 'free will' to do whatever you want to do in the court of your life, whether you play for self, by yourself, or for the savior of the world, you get to choose! You overcome grief and death simply by choosing to stay in the game of life ~ and win! IT'S A CHOICE because humans cannot handle death. Only Jesus Christ did and he won!!!! He got up out of that grave!! When traumatized by sudden death or any devastation, DO NOT throw the ball to humans!!!! Go to God!!!!!! People can hear you, but they CANNOT heal you! Why? Because God created you. He knows how to fix you!!!

Never forget.... Human beings are NO match for death. We MUST pass the ball of trauma and tragedy to the eternal 'center,' Jesus Christ. The MVP of Eternity! After He conquered death and rose from the dead, over 500 people saw Jesus Christ in his 'resurrected body,' 1 Corinthians 15:3-8. Because of these facts, it behooves every human to consider who and what are you

living for??? What is your God purpose? Who is the REAL 'center' of your life? It will be proven in times of trauma and tragedy. Death will grip 'man-handle' you in the game of life if you refuse to acknowledge and defend your love for God. Why? Because God created those we love and it is HIS decision to call them out of their earth suit.

Grief IS a thief!!!! You and I can break its power off our lives when we CEASE asking the bottomless pit question of death.....why??? Why did this happen? What could I have done to preserve their lives? Why did God allow this? We MUST CEASE entertaining these questions that will harm the soul (mind, will and emotions).

Pride has many hues. One of these hues is thinking we had the power to stop death of those we love. This is exactly why we keep asking why? Think about it My Friend. Its time to "D Up!" Defense! Defense!!!! "God, I need you! Help me to back off the bottomless pit!!!!!!!" **Help Me!!!** He will do it! I Am a Witness!

God helped me through a very dark time in my life. The Holy Spirit taught me to CEASE

asking why and start asking what!!! What can I do to serve you God? What is my purpose for living? During this season of my life, I experienced constant trauma for nearly 10 years straight!!!!!! I had no relief from the deep pain in my life. There were times I thought I would die from the deep hurt....BUT GOD!!!! As I learned to PASS THE BALL of my pain to God through private devotion and prayer, I found I had power to overcome, I had peace and joy springing forth out of the depths of my soul. I kept fresh flowers around me at all times, to remind me of God's glory and awesomeness. I kept a song of praise to God in my heart at all times. I sang songs of praise to God daily! I began to have joy in the midst of my sufferings. I experienced what the Scriptures refer to as "the peace of God that passes all understanding, Philippians 4:7. "

In times of sufferings we must choose to offer to God a 'sacrifice of praise' with the fruit of our lips, Hebrews 13:15 says, "Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise ..." We all have been through trauma, but we must keep moving down the 'court' of life. What we refuse to confront, we will never conquer. Fear of death must be confronted. Releasing your anger

with God over losing your loved ones must be confronted. There is no life in meditating on death. Choose life My Friend and **LET'S PLAY BALL!!**

If you would like our prayer team to pray for you, please visit our website and click on our "About" page and you will find our Prayer Request form at:

www.HandmadeSoaps4Hope.org



*When trouble makes a fast break
in your life, PASS that situation to
God IMMEDIATELY!!!*

The Eternal Dangers of Religion

When seeking to know and grow in your purpose for living, it is vitally important to understand the dangers of religion, because it is a deceiver. It facilitates pride and self-righteousness

When Jesus came on the scene, religion was just as plentiful as it is now. In fact, it was the religious people that crucified Jesus. (Read the Four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.) Religion strokes the ego of those who are partakers of its innate power that blinds those who still want to play in the game of life *without* God. Countless people believe they are on God's team with the exercise of their traditions and religious conversations, no different than those who like to debate, and relentlessly trash talk professional athletes. They constantly spew out conversation about the game of basketball like they are professionals themselves, yet, they don't have 'no game' whatsoever. They watch the games, they analyze the games, but they have *no game!!!!* They're 'religious' sports fanatics and critics with no "relationship" with the players whatsoever. Neither are they partakers of their financial rewards,

nonetheless, they are 'hooked' on their sports games. Religious people without God, are the exact same.

If a person becomes intoxicated with religion, he or she can lose their soul after their allotted time here on the earth.

Religion is a counterfeit of a sincere relationship with God. It is worse than crack cocaine, alcohol or any other drug human beings can become addicted to. Religion is man's attempt to please a deity by repetitiously maintaining traditions that easily deceive countless church goers who pride themselves on their religious rituals, church attendance and monies they give to their churches, but, they do not have a *personal relationship* with God. They do not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, who is The MVP of Eternity. They are simply going through the motions without peace, joy and real purpose for living. Religion simply put, is dangerous!!!

You can practice religion and not have a relationship with God whatsoever, but you cannot meet God and not become religious.

In the game of basketball, players are drafted and contracted to win ball games. They practice and workout religiously! They exercise when no one is looking. They stay longer in practices when others are long gone. They look for opportunities to inspire their teammates. They're in constant communication with their team captain, coaches and the owner of their team. They do these things religiously, just like the self-appointed sports announcers in our local barber shops, who trash talk religiously, what's the difference? Relationship!! ***You gotta catch this!!!***

Relationship with God produces life, purpose, peace and joy. **Practicing religion causes spiritual death without God.** It is empty adherence to rituals, traditions and teachings of men and their commandments. This being the very reason many people loathe organized religious groups where some mortal men and women attempt to control them under the guise of 'religion.'

So how do you know if you are 'religious' without God? You hate life, people and yourself. You love sin and pleasure, despite your regular church attendance, bible study (if any, many people never read the Bible),

charity to the poor and good works. You resist turning away from your sins while making excuses for your human nature. Check if you have a 'potty mouth.' Most religious people do.

There used to be a time in our culture where it was absolutely disgraceful for a man to use foul language in front of a female, now, the women curse worse than the men!!!! It does not convict them whatsoever to cuss up a storm!!! Remember, what's in your heart, will come out of your mouth. Using foul language is perversion. Listen to what God thinks about it.....*"The righteous will never be shaken, but the wicked will not inhabit the land. 31The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom, but a perverse tongue will be cut out. 32The lips of the righteous know what is fitting, but the mouth of the wicked is perverse...."* Proverbs 10:31 In other words My Friend, God hates a perverted tongue, that is exactly what modern day 'foul language is.' Perversion. If you are a 'potty' mouth, I encourage you to question very seriously, your relationship with God.

Another epidemic manifest by the religious, is women who love to wear sexual, provocative attire unashamedly. These are they that will

tell you, their tight fitted jeans are 'comfortable.' They trade Christ for comfortable. They will contend with you for trying to help them understand it is inappropriate to showcase your curves as a follower of Christ. It is common to hear them say you are being 'legalistic' and, "Don't judge me - God knows my heart!" They're right!! He does! It is cunning. *Proverbs 7:10* "Then a woman came out to meet him, with attire of a prostitute and cunning of heart" Make no mistake about it, any woman that is flaunting her physical body with her attire, is cunning and DOES NOT have a 'bona fide' relationship with God. Don't let anyone fool you!!! Jesus said it best, "You will know a tree by the fruit that it bears" *Mathew 7:17*. Fruit in this text means behavior. When a woman is behaving sexually in her attire, she IS a seductress, AND! She knows it! Regardless of how sweet and charitable, we know what we are doing. I USED TO BE ONE!!!! I know all about the games we play ladies. By the grace of God, when I was 21 years old, God touched me! I have never been the same! The Holy Spirit convicted me of my 'cunning' ways and I immediately changed my attire! I cleaned out my closets IMMEDIATELY! I felt ashamed for using my body to seduce others.

Let no one be deceived in our 'modern world,' God has standards. Any attire that reveals your curves is ungodly and we cannot 'pretend' we don't know what we are doing. Sexual attire has taken over America! The pastors aren't saying nothing!!!!!! On any given Sunday morning, you can enter most 'churches' and find women clad in ungodly, tight-fitted attire, young and old! God have mercy!!! His standards have not changed since Paul, the apostle of Christ wrote a letter to Timothy, the young pastor of the church in Ephesus and told him that women should adorn themselves in modest attire, 1 Timothy 2:9. Modest, Godly attire does not reveal a woman's bumps!!!! In other words, your attire falls off your body, it does not sculpture or hug your body revealing your buttocks, vaginal area, breast cleavage or thighs.

The reason most pastors do not teach from their pulpits the importance of 'Godly' attire in our modern world... the reason they will not rebuke their female congregants that showcase their sexuality in their low-rider, tight jeans, yoga pants and hip huggin' mini-skirts is simple....if they offend you, you will not pay your tithes and bring your offerings to their buildings! They care NOTHING about your soul, only your M O N E Y! Your 'membership'

monies pay for their trips to Disney and pays for their children's college tuition and for many, their salary.

Let us face the facts, we have an epidemic of church goers who are mentally tormented, and for some, if they would simply take the time to consider how they go about presenting themselves to others, they would find they have come up short. Sexual public attire is a moral issue, make no mistake about it.

When you have a 'bona fide' relationship with God, our Creator, you will hate sin. You loathe it in your life. You want to please God in everything that you do. You have very high moral standards. You will not make light of evil and sin. You will NOT use your body, influence or talents to harm others. On the contrary, you are constantly seeking ways to glorify Jesus Christ, the Savior of the World, the MVP of Eternity. *You will brag on Jesus!* He protects us from God's wrath. How can we NOT brag on Jesus Christ? The religious does not, they talk about God, but they leave out God's only Begotten Son who clearly states, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes unto the Father but by me."* John 14:6

LeBron James' teammates boasted in interviews how much they loved 'their leader' during the time of their record-breaking win. But LeBron James did not own the team of the Cleveland Cavaliers, Dan Gilbert did. LeBron was their captain. He was the star of the team. Because of Jesus' sacrifice for our sins, God has brought him center stage. No one can come to God except through Jesus Christ who is able to forgive us of our sins and restore our relationship with God. *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes unto the Father but by me."* John 14:6 Therefore, sincere followers Jesus Christ will lift him up. We love our leader. We relish in his eternal SLAM DUNK in the face of death, hell and the grave for the sins of the world. We exalt him. We are witnesses and God does not mind his only begotten Son receiving praise and honor. Why? He played, he scored, **We Won!**

If you are trapped in the snare of religion without God, you will not talk about Jesus. You talk about 'church,' leaders, traditions and doctrine. You will have no witness for the Savior of the world ~ Jesus Christ.

The Cleveland Cavaliers home parade boasted over 1 million people in 2016. The people crowded the streets of downtown

Cleveland, Ohio to celebrate their victory of the NBA Championship over the Golden State Warriors. However, billions continue to celebrate the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ since his resurrection over 2,000 years ago. We sing, we dance, and we testify to others because we have experienced forgiveness of our sins. No human being has to die in their sins and be separated from God, tormented in hell because of our sins. No one! Your sin debt has been wiped out. God is recruiting for players to come to his team. All that is required is a humble heart willing to confess that you are a sinner in need of forgiveness. To confess means to agree with God. Unless you agree, you cannot see where you're going in this life, though you're moving ~ you're going nowhere. You sleep, but you do not find rest. You meditate, but you never find peace. Why? Peace is only found in the person of Jesus Christ. He is the Prince of Peace, Isaiah 9:6. There is no other human being that has walked the face of the earth that has been attributed to being 'peace,' no one ~ Jesus ONLY! HE OWNS IT!

In our sinful condition since Adam and Eve sinned against God in the Garden of Eden, all humans have been enemies of God, (Romans 5:10) But because of Jesus Christ, we are restored, (Romans 5:1.) Only the humble in

heart will accept this offered *position* of restoration. All else will remain enemies of God. Depression, hatred, jealousy and greed will continue to drive them to perdition. Who can fight with God and win??? Some are fighting with God unknowingly seduced by their religious piety. Studying theology does not produce intimacy with God. More often than not, it claims many victims of spiritual pride. They are puffed up because of *what they know*, rather than *who they know* ~ Jesus Christ; the Prince of Peace and Savior of the world's sins. They study to be smart and recognized by man, but they have no peace. They have no rest for their weary souls that have been taken captive by religion and the pride of life.

I recall a pastor who committed suicide. I was a new follower of Christ at the time. I was befuddled to say the least. He was educated in theology with several college degrees. He was revered by his church members as "Dr. Reverend." I just could not understand how an educated, religious person in such a position could take his own life. I later figured it out ~ that was the problem. He was *religious* in a *position* without God. Religion is performance; without God's presence, it is empty.

Where God's presence is, there is joy, not torment. His *presence* is a *present*! When we receive presents, they bring us what? Joy! Joy is one of the fruits of God's Spirit working in your life when you are in a relationship with God, Galatians 5:22-23. Despite pain and trauma, joy will anchor your soul in the midst of your storms. *I am a witness! "Thou will show me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."* Psalm 16:11

When a person has been deceived by religion (performance) without God, they live in torment without any life ~ joy brings life. They have not come to a place of surrender towards God. This is why we cannot believe everyone that claims they are ministers of Christ or followers of Christ. *"Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world, 1 John 4:1* Talk is cheap! We must examine their fruit just as Jesus told us to, *"By their fruit, you will know them...."* Matthew 7:20

Now, please, allow me to take my time right here....Jesus Christ is the center of the Christian faith, not a pastor or any other minister. Why? They did not die for the sins of

the world. Therefore, when an individual raises herself or himself above Christ, they will be defeated. They will have no peace and joy. This is what separates real followers of Jesus Christ from religious church goers. Now don't get me wrong here. I am not suggesting that going to church is wrong at all, but it does not prove a person is a sincere follower of Jesus Christ, whether they are the pastor or parishioner. Your lifestyle and disposition proves you are a real follower of Jesus Christ.

The religious have no peace, purpose for living or joy; nonetheless, these are the byproducts of having a real encounter with God. Where he is, there is life. Where he lives in the heart of humanity, there will be life, not depression and death. *Let no one fool you.* **Worshippers of God do not need Prozac.** Why? We have a bona fide relationship with the creator of our souls. We have strong minds and we love him with our *whole* heart, mind, soul and strength. Even in our sufferings, worship is not a Sunday event for us; we exalt God daily ~ we are devoted to seeking him, learning of him and serving others. We are not moved by death, poverty or scandal. We love God, we respect his sovereign decisions that oftentimes we don't understand. We trust him for eternity! He is our Heavenly Father.

The Power of Praise

We celebrate God and adore him through song, dance and instruments. Just as Miriam, the sister of Moses did with the other women of Israel after God freed them from slavery in Egypt, Exodus 15:20, they danced and sang. David, king of Israel, "*Danced before the Lord with all his might...*" 2Samuel 6:14 and Paul, the apostle of Christ along with Silas who were both in prison for preaching Christ, yet, they began to worship God by singing and praising him. Their adoration towards God pleased him so much so, that he sent an angel to free them, Acts 16:25 Wow! This is very powerful information to understand right here! Why? Because religious people who are not in a bona fide relationship with God, are not true worshippers of God. Some have allowed education to lift them up in their hearts. They are too important to worship God. Let us make no mistake, God has given us his only begotten son to restore our relationship with him, and all some want to do is argue doctrine, sermonize and look important? Hmmmmmm? What else can you give God? He is the creator of the heavens and the earth. *Everything belongs to him.* Yet, some religious folks attempt to use the Holy Scriptures to

explain away why one should not celebrate in Christian churches with instruments, singing and dancing, despite the fact, the Scriptures clearly give us examples of very powerful men and women who celebrated God – in the Old and New Testament. How much more should we want to lift up holy hands and our voices in praise and adoration to God for giving us his only begotten Son for our sins? These are the same folks that will go to sporting events; shout and praise professional ball handlers without any trepidation whatsoever. Now this, my friend, is hypocrisy, Jesus said it best....*"On the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness."* Matthew 23:28.

If you are in a religious organization that does not like to praise God ~ RUN!!!! You are on a losing team!! **Praising God is a weapon of mass destruction!** If we can shout and praise ball handlers, my Friend, we have absolutely no excuse not to give our Creator praise and thanksgiving every day, except we have been deceived by false leaders who block you from wielding joyful praise and thanksgiving to our Creator. PRAISE IS A WEAPON! It protects you from depression and stabilizes the heart when you are harmed psychologically. **PRAISE IS POWER!!**

Instead of taking anti-depressant drugs three times a day, we need to give God some praise and thanksgiving three times a day! I dare anyone that is struggling with self-destruction and mental illness to try God!!! I challenge you to begin exercising this spiritual discipline for 21 days and see what happens to your life!! *I dare you!!!* God is not afar off! He simply wants us to repent from our sins and surrender all. Remember, psychology is all about you, praise is all about God. That is why psychology does not work when the heart, soul and mind have been violated in the game of life. It's like a virus on a computer; praise kills spiritual viruses harmful to your relationship with God, yourself and your fellowman. Without praise as your anti-virus, you will be defeated in your psychological health. You are unprotected without a "firewall" of praise and thanksgiving. Norton Anti Virus is all good, but Praise and thanksgiving to our Creator KILLS SOME STUFF FOR REAL!!!!!!!!!!!!!! I AM A WITNESS. If the summation of your praise and thanksgiving is on a Sunday morning for 45 minutes, you will be defeated in the game of life.

What you lift up, you will worship, whether you are aware of it or not. Sin is lifted up in therapy sessions. The patients discuss all of the people

that have sinned against them. The therapists never ask the patient if they have sinned against God, or, who they have sinned against with their actions and attitudes. The therapy sessions are all about their pain and who did what to them. Nonetheless, Jesus Christ, clearly told us this, *"Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."* Matthew 11:28. Therapy is free in the locker room called prayer!!!! The Holy Spirit will meet you there and your soul will find comfort. **I am a witness!**

Praise kills fear of man and lifts your heart and mind out of the dregs of your daily turmoil and setbacks. It calibrates your heart towards God. Praise, *raises* you up! It gives you the tenacity to get up and get the rebound!!! My Friend, do not underestimate *daily* praise and thanksgiving to God. Praise and worship music that exalts God's power, majesty, grace and mercy saturates your soul. All other forms of music can destroy your awareness of God from the inside out if not listened to in moderation, if at all. The wise will not feast on their "old school" or heavy metal music. Why? It does not exalt God.

Exercising *public* religious positions without *private*, heartfelt, adoration and thanksgiving

towards God, is nothing more than vanity. Private devotion is vital to enduring in the game of life and scoring past your personal tragedies and traumas. Make no mistake about it; LeBron James is privately devoted to the game of basketball. He is an exceptional player because behind closed doors, he is devoted. We didn't witness this ball handler threatening to kill himself, because his team was down 3 to 1 games against the Golden State Warriors, nor did you hear him talking defeat as they rallied back from their setbacks. This man stayed the course. You will do the same when you are not practicing religion without God. Religion apart from the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will leave the partaker empty, lifeless, tormented and confused.

A relationship with God is sustained by heartfelt worship to God. When religion is being practiced without God, the person will praise themselves, other humans and materialism. And thus, they have strategy to overcome the 'turn overs' and 'fast breaks' in their lives. They usually feel uncomfortable when you do mention God and religious people do not find value in praising God except on Sunday mornings at their church. Now, I need you to follow me very closely.....

Religious Studies

When education is acquired, a person is more susceptible to the pride of life when they are recognized and praised for it by other humans. Studying the bible does not teach you about God, He does! This is why the Bible can be used to seduce, trick and destroy countless lives when false teachers use it for their own selfish gain. So, what makes the difference for sincere followers of Christ? Intimacy with God!

Before God inspired holy men to write the Holy Scriptures, Noah walked with God, Genesis 6:9. Before God ever spoke to Paul, the apostle of Christ who wrote most of the New Testament, Enoch walked with God, Genesis 5:24. What am I saying here? My friend, you need a relationship with God. *"God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."* John 4:24 If your religious rituals and studies exalt you over others, demanding they bow to your 'lofty title' in a church organization. You have been deceived. You are dribbling down the wrong way on the court of life. TURN AROUND! You're Going the Wrong Way!!!!!!

If you are contemplating suicide or any other harmful mindset in your heart while practicing religion, you are going the wrong way! Jesus is alive and he waits patiently to restore the weary soul, *"Come to me, all you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."* Matthew 11:28 This is by far one of the most powerful scriptures in the entire Bible. Why? It tells us clearly who Jesus is. He is a sin bearer and heavy load sharer!!! He needs us to **pass him the ball!** Religion will block you, but prayer and faith in the real Christ assists us in bypassing the futility of religious practices that do not produce life, but rather death. Pride comes in many hues. Practicing religion can cause blindness and pride, instigating spiritual death. Without heartfelt love and adoration for God, it will not be returned from God. You will perish spiritually.

Claiming that one is a Christian or that they honor God is a fad like never before. It is fashionable to showcase religious relics and sing "Christian" songs, but the proof is in your private life. How are you living behind closed doors? Do you constantly abandon God for relationships with other humans? Are you constantly 'falling' into sin while making excuses for it without conviction?

Jesus is by far the most popular person on the planet. He has many fans. This is the problem; multitudes are *fans* of Jesus, not *followers*. Fans defend people they do not know. They have no personal relationship with the people they talk about, nor are they partakers of the rewards their celebrity stars possess. But real followers of Jesus have been born of God's spirit. We want to live right and honor God. We want to tell others of the forgiveness we have received because of Jesus. We have peace with God and joy resides in our hearts. We are partakers of God's spirit and like LeBron James, who was beloved by his teammates during the 2016 Finals, because he is a great basketball player and leader, true followers of Jesus Christ love him and speak well of our Savior just the same. Just like the Cleveland Cavaliers fans we're ALL IN, we are too!! This position of the heart opens one to receive their *GOD Purpose* and protects them from the wiles of the devil and his workers. Cladding oneself with formal education about God can desensitize the heart from a posture of humility towards Him, this is the bait of Satan, the pride of life. It is provoked in the heart when others lift you up and appraise your 'religious' accomplishments. God is to receive all the Glory from us, every chance we get to esteem

him, and exalt him for all that he has done for us. We must resist being honored and lifted up before one another. **All glory belongs to God!!!**

God has real pastors and teachers, so does Satan! He will convince them to kill themselves to mock the true and living God, attempting to cause the weak and wounded to lose their faith in God and Jesus Christ, who was rejected and suffered for mankind. When Jesus sends a messenger in his own name, they will not self-destruct under pressure. They will endure all things, just as their leader has already done. In him, they move and have their being. They are free from the love of this present world. They're free agents in the game of life. They have no contracts with this present world. Nothing or no one moves them, but God.

In conclusion, the desire for forgiveness of one's sins protects them from the seduction of religion. It takes humility to meet God. It takes the same disposition to remain accountable to Him in the chamber of your soul when the storms of life are raging, he will assist you. His grace and peace that passes all understanding will harness you. He will not

abandon you in times of turmoil. Your purpose will not be aborted. Your enemies will not take your peace and joy! God will heal your every

injury. You belong to him. He is yours, and you are his. Practicing religion is not your boast, obeying God and loving him is. Remember, practicing religious traditions can relax your sensitivity towards God, seducing you to focus on your performance. Without private, heartfelt worship, like the sunlight and water is to a growing plant, if you do not water it, the sun will burn it up.



Dominating Distractions

Distractions are dangerous because they kill dreams, vision and momentum. They cause you to lose 'traction.' In the game of basketball, there is an allotted time to play. Our lives are the same except we don't know how much time we have to play in the game of life. Time is the commodity given to every human being equally. It should never be taken for granted, *never!* Unfortunately, it is taken for granted by multitudes plagued by their past failures, setbacks and fears. Nonetheless, time steadily moves. It is the vehicle for multiplication and revelation. Frivolous entertainment will block the necessary time needed in your locker room. Sometimes, remember, ***prayer is not always talking. It is listening.*** That is why quiet time is vitally important to humanity to get in touch and remain close to God through prayer.

When you are seeking understanding of your gifts, talents and purpose, there is not much time for casual socializing and entertainment. These two are twin assassins to purpose,

destiny and discovery. People, distractions are everywhere! This is why the one who desires to find their God purpose, and stamina to transition in times of change in one's life, must learn to respect and love silence. It is a very important factor in learning to trust your instincts and learning how to follow the directions of God for your life, your ministry, your marriage and how to handle your children.

It's okay to say "no" to invitations that do not have any relevance to your passion and vision for your life. In fact, learning to wield the simple answer "no" does protect your commodity of time. It offers you the opportunity to balance your day accordingly when you are on the path of discovery of your talents and spiritual gifts. It offers you the opportunity to develop your relationship with God and how to discern his voice of comfort and direction.

When you are entertained by frivolous people and pastimes, you are in fact being detained. Your precious commodity of time is running out in front of the television or social media sites where you are indulging with people who are stuck in a rut going nowhere fast. Make no

mistake about this fact, those who have found success in their lives, do not spend excessive amounts of time being detained with anything that does not relate to their purpose. They understand the priceless value of time and they have learned to identify potential distractions and dominate them to maintain their focus and 'drive' to the hoop.

Social media is the number one distraction for multitudes.

In 1980, John Paul DeJoria, the owner of Paul Mitchell hair care products, borrowed \$700 and started this business with friend, Paul Mitchell. In 2015, his company's net worth was an estimated \$2.8 Billion. During a recent documentary of his life, this billionaire revealed that he did not have a computer at his home office and he used a 'flip phone.' The kind we all used in the early 2000's! He did not possess a computer, laptop or tablet! The billionaire stated in the interview, "I'd be inundated if I did email," he also stated, "I do phone calls, a little bit of texting. I like the personal touch." He does not engage on any social media sites whatsoever. Wow! This is powerful!!! Why is this billionaire without a smartphone or computer? He understands

the value and power of time. He is protecting the precious gift from God we have all been given to discover, develop and maintain our purpose, passion and power. That gift is time.

My friend, what and who are you spending your time on? Technology is an awesome source for many reasons, but, it can derail you from the discovery zone. Thus, blocking your ability to discover and develop your spiritual gifts, talents and God purpose for living. What you see, that *you can be*, when you choose to allot regular, daily time for soul searching in the locker room of prayer. Remember, this is where championships are won. This is where your life will be challenged, inspired and developed. It's your Quiet Zone! The Cleveland Cavaliers did not rally from a 3 to 1 deficit in the 2016 NBA Finals against the Golden State Warriors without some serious soul searching my Friend. They did not win their championship on the basketball court. They won it first, in their hearts. Their purpose was clear, to win!

Turn off that computer! Get off those social media sites and pick yourself up a good book! Get yourself a fresh smoothie or cup of tea and relax!! Get quiet daily to decompress and

allow your heart to exit the *rat race*. Allow time for God to speak to your heart, to give you inspiration and instructions. Allow him time to comfort you in the midst of your pain. To reveal what he has placed on the inside of you, and what you need to do next. He will do it. *I'm a witness.*

Time is a weapon. Use it! Don't lose it! Be very careful DAILY how you allocate it. Pace yourself in conversations that are frivolous and will steal your time. Learn to work in your 'peak' hours of the day. Take note of the time you are most charged up and vivacious and get your tasks done!!! Kill it!!!! Earn your time of rest and relaxation at the end of the day. Make sure if you are married or have children that you have time to allocate hugs and listen to them if they need to talk to you about a matter.



Understanding Spiritual Maturity

Purpose is not a destination, it is a journey perfected by faithfulness in expressing your gifts and talents despite pain, rejection, and setbacks. It takes grit and tenacity to play in the game of life, despite pain and weaknesses, to perfect your skills.

LeBron James lives in the gym! He is constantly perfecting his game. When asked does he attribute his skills to repetition or technique, he replied "repetition." Why is this very important to note, because repetition is the vehicle to mastery! The more you do something, the better you will become. You will master it. It is the process called maturation. Maturation is the process of ripening or aging. When a ball player has been chosen to play on a professional sports team, he is rambunctious and ready to play ball. Nonetheless, there is much for him to learn on this new level of competing that has nothing to do with his ball handling necessarily, but rather his ability to adjust in the game mentally and maintain his momentum. It takes time to learn how to mellow out and flow confidently with the

game accordingly, despite fouls and blocked shots.

Expressing your talents or gifts is very tricky in that they can be praised by others, but you are not mature spiritually and emotionally as you tote them about. This is most evident when someone rejects your talent or gift, you become despondent or like some, they begin to perform to retaliate against others who have rejected them. No longer are their talents or gifts their love, it becomes their choice weapon to prove themselves to those who have hurt them. This is a fast track to destruction. Why? What you do will never be enough for your critics. Never!!! Critics are *critical* to character building. They are your friends when you understand they allow your need for affirmation to manifest. This My Friend, is where God must allow pain to raise your awareness to Him, *not* mortals. His appraisal must become paramount in your life. Why? Because people are like the weather, always changing.

People pleasing causes one to become vulnerable to substance abuse and other hazardous behaviors to silence the hurt instead of lacing up their thoughts and running to The Locker Room of Prayer to seek

motivation, consolation and direction from God, and the MVP of Eternity, Jesus Christ. His example of triumph is clearly laid out in the Bible: **B**asic **I**nstructions **B**efore **L**eaving **E**arth.

When we are offended, the trap of our eternal adversary is to seduce us to hate our enemies and to hold grudges. This will cause you to lose possession of your purpose and drive. When you are offended, and you do not handle it the way Jesus taught us, to get the rebound in our lives by confronting the person privately, you will be defeated. You will lose possession of your joy and peace. *"If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you..."* Matthew 18:15 You will be defeated!

It takes maturity to confront those who have offended you. It takes understanding that if what has happened continues to fester in your heart 'unchecked,' a root of bitterness will begin to take resident in your heart. Its fruit is hatred and increase of violence.

Unforgiveness instigates hatred and murder. *Get rid of it!* Do not allow it to live in your heart! Run to the Locker Room! Run! Pride is the reason a person refuses to forgive. Yes,

pride. Remember, it has many hues. Driving your purpose down the court of life is thwarted when you attempt to retaliate against those who have wounded you. This is why God takes his time maturing those who follow Jesus. You must learn the vital importance of forgiveness. It assists you in rebounding. This is one of the hardest workouts for the human soul ~ choosing to forgive your enemies. You will never grow spiritually if you don't. Yes, you can be talented, maybe wealthy and praised by men, but God will not allow you to enter heaven. *The bedrock of Christianity is forgiveness.*

Unforgiveness injures the heart. It is a self-inflicted wound. When you refuse to forgive those who have hurt you, it's like drinking deadly poison, expecting them to die. ***Forgiveness is not for them, it is for you!***

Unforgiveness is a manifestation of pride and ungratefulness. That is why God will not tolerate it. We have all sinned and fallen short of God's glory. We must 'will' to overcome pain and trauma; it is not possible without forgiveness.

Make no mistake about this fact, unforgiveness of our enemies is a deal breaker between us and God. He does not tolerate us hating anyone. Think about it, the people that you know, if not yourself, who withhold forgiving those who have hurt them, are all miserable. They're moody, full of negativity and slander. They're spiritual assassins of others character. They are mean spirited pessimists. They are miserable people and their manner of speech tells it all.

When an NBA player is injured in the game, they are immediately rushed to the locker room. Mature players in the game of life learn to release their pain. They are quick to run to the locker room of prayer to deal with their pain. Prayer is the secret to ex-crete your pain. God is not like man, he does not gossip. Prayer is a very humbling posture of the heart when you are 'fouled' in the game of life. This is why many ignore it and choose to believe that God does not exist. They don't want to let go of their hatred, it's all about them instead of him.

When taking a test in high school or college, the teacher is silent. They will walk by your desk, sit at their desk, but they will not answer any question you have, because they want

you to complete the test *in hand* to grade your level of understanding.

When God is purging us from pride, self-righteousness, self-reliance, arrogance and unbelief, He is silent. It will appear that he has left you, or that you cannot feel his presence. Press in and press on! *Pass the test in hand ~ FORGIVE!* Unforgiveness is the fruit of the before mentioned.

There are some lessons in life that will come through much pain and toil, but if you will not give up and stick to the basic fundamentals of the game, *you will win*. Forgiving those who have harmed you is a basic fundamental of Christianity. You will overcome when you confront your offender God's way. I am a witness. In my journey, there has been pain unspeakable. But practicing forgiveness and confronting those who harmed me saved my spiritual life. God kept me!!!

Taking an escalator is the easy way up, but climbing 20 flights of stairs will provoke pain. However, when one reaches the top after walking, they will have an appreciation for the elevated position. They will not take for granted the journey as each stair step caused them to dig deep inside to muster up the

stamina to keep moving past the discomfort that was fully manifested by the time the 12th flight of stairs was reached. The majority of us will resist walking up the 20 flights of stairs, but each stair in life provides lessons that cannot be found on an electrical express flight of stairs. God prefers the staircase flight to prepare us. He is not in a rush to elevate you to greatness, instead, he wants us to decrease so that his star player, The MVP of Eternity, Jesus Christ, does get the spotlight in your life. This is not possible with hatred in your heart. It will never happen! No more than a basketball team can play and win with a 3-foot man on their team as a power forward. That is what you become when you refuse to forgive, instead hating your fellowman, who is a sinner just as you. You become stunted in your soul. Too short to slam dunk or rebound from any opposition.

Examine your heart. Allow time to prove your love for God, people and yourself. Real success does not make you happy, your happiness makes you a success. Happiness will never be the portion of those who refuse to forgive. Never.

**Leaders are not born, they are made
through adversity.**

Understanding Anger

Anger is a very serious emotion to say the least. It is often displayed in the sport of basketball primarily because it is a contact sport. Life is the exact same. You are in *constant* contact with other human beings who can and will 'stir up' outrage, disappointment and hurt in the best of us. Nonetheless, without understanding its purpose, it can and will destroy you.

The word anger is referenced in the bible nearly 300 times. Many of these references are concerning God's anger towards mankind when they refused to obey, murmured and complained, and of course, turned their hearts from him.

There are many who claim that anger is sinful and that "God fearing" people should not become angry, that all anger is evil. But let us consider '*the facts*' about anger. God himself, who is the creator of the heavens and the earth, gets angry! You and I were created in his image, "*So God created man in his own image.*" *Genesis 1:27* **God Gets Angry ~ You**

Will Too! *"God is a righteous judge, a God who displays his wrath every day." Psalm 7:11*

A very powerful example of God becoming angry with someone was King Solomon: the wisest and richest man that has ever lived. God became angry with Solomon because he turned his heart away from him. This is the main reason God becomes angry with us. We turn our backs on him. *"And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice."*

1Kings 11:9

When God is angry with a person or a nation, they cannot endure the tests, trials and tribulations of their lives. Why? God is not for them ~ he is angry. *"And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of their enemies and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies."* Judges 2:14

My Friend, you will have many people and situations that are going to make you angry.

We are all constantly being 'fouled' in the game of life. You cannot watch CNN Headline News and not be stirred over the increase of murder, street violence and racial issues that plague our nation, but, let no one deceive you into pondering that you are evil for feeling angry! No one!!!! The question on the floor is: What is causing you to be angry and how should you release that emotion of anger? *"Be ye angry, but sin not: let not the sun go down on your wrath."* Ephesians 4:26 This scripture not only gives us understanding that we will sometimes become angry, but how we should handle it ~ immediately! The question should be asked, *"Why am I angry."* Don't allow the sun to go down on finding that answer!!! This is how you begin to control your anger. You must run to the locker room of prayer to get clarity as to what or who has stirred you up.

When someone can boast and brag that they never get angry, something is wrong with that person. They are very likely out of touch with reality. Nothing moves them? This is a person with a cold heart without any empathy for their fellowman. The things that should provoke outrage, they have no input or resistance. The things that are silly and menial

they make light of. Some of these types of men and women hide in religious garments. They do not care for the souls of men who are lost. These are they that will not warn their congregations about hell or the reality that God will turn folks over to a reprobate mind if they continue to sin against him, *"And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient..."* Romans 1:28 These are they that only want to talk about heaven and God's love. They are out of touch. We just read that God does get angry with us. Every preacher should be willing to tell their followers why he does ~ sin.

When a person has become reprobate; unprincipled, degenerate, shameless; they are sinners predestined for damnation. They call evil good and good evil. Many of them will continue to talk about God as if they're best friends, while unashamedly indulging in drunkenness, orgies and all manner of lovers and friends they sleep around with. They have no conscience whatsoever. *"They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate."* Titus 1:16

Anger is like fire to a match, it can make its presence known and assist you in lighting your stove or candles. But if you set it to flammable materials *uncontained*, it can burn your whole house down! It can and will destroy your life. This is why learning to forgive is vitally important. Without it, you will continue to seethe over every play in life that has hurt you. This is immaturity, a manifestation of pride. How can you expect to maintain peace with God and joy, *when you constantly choose to 'set' your heart on those who have hurt you instead of God?*

If you are a person to hold grudges you must grow in this area of your life ~ *fast!* Why? Because God does not hold our sins against him over our heads. Who are we to do this?? This is pride and will bring you under the judgment of God rather than his mercy.

Basketball players become angry constantly in the game, but if they physically assault another player, they are in big trouble and if they keep it up; they run the risk of being fired. We are the same with God My Friend. You cannot go around killing, physically assaulting others, and destroying property because you are angry. If you have a tendency of hitting

walls and destroying property when you are angry, you are out of control and you need to repent, stop it! Ask God to help you in this area of immaturity. This is not the way to release anger. You are asking for trouble, big trouble!! If you notice someone you are in relationship with destroys property when angry, be very careful My Friend, your face could be their next target! Do not take this behavior lightly. DO NOT!!! In fact, I would have no dealings with this type of person. They're ticking time bombs! Every day all day, they constantly rage, it is just a matter of time before they're going to do something very foolish, if not deadly. *"He that is soon angry deals foolishly."* Proverbs 14:17

Forgiveness douses the flames of anger.

Forgiving others who harm us is not natural, it is supernatural. *With God it is possible.* If one does not practice forgiveness, anger will take hold of you and drive you to retaliate and kill others, violating the instructions of God, *"Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. Romans 12:19*

I do not write this chapter as one who has not been violated and provoked to anger. I have experienced injustices beyond my own comprehension. But God has made the difference! I have had his peace and joy fill my heart amidst the tragedies and traumas in my journey. I have witnessed God avenge me. I have seen the demise of some who have harmed me. I refuse to do anything to harm my enemies. I cannot afford to jeopardize my relationship with God. Neither can you My Friend! Pain is inevitable in this 'contact game' called life. We are going to take some hits and 'fouls' in the game of life. Don't allow anger to trap you!!! Contain it! Restrain It!!! Keep playing ball ~ D up! Defense! Defense!! DEFENSE!!!

On the other hand, anger is very important in the game of life. When used properly, it gives you momentum and passion to drive down the court of life. It can save lives. For instance, when a person becomes angry with outrage from witnessing children being neglected or abused, they take action! It can save their lives.

When a person witnesses a man beating on his wife at the local mall and is stirred to outrage,

he takes action! It could very well save her life. When you witness a dog attacking a pedestrian, you are stirred to anger, and you take action! It could very well save their life.

Make no mistake about it, anger is a God given emotion. Do not be afraid to examine your heart when you are feeling its *motion*. Get alone ASAP!! Don't allow the sun to go down on your anger. Remember, if you are contemplating harming others in any way, because of your anger, *you need to repent*. Stay in the locker room of prayer to contain it and diffuse it.

Now the scriptures clearly warn us in Colossians 3:8, *"But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips."* Notice that all of these things are expressed with the mouth and your actions. When you're angry in a way that is destructive, you will slander others and you will likely use filthy language in your outburst of rage. Malice is maliciousness. These are all opposite of kindness and self-control. We must get rid of them!!!!!!

A CALL TO ACTION:

If you have been carrying unforgiveness in your heart and you know it, I invite you to go to your private locker room of prayer and ask God for forgiveness and then make some phone calls if necessary.

It's time to let it go and PLAY BALL!!

J E A L O U S Y

The Green-Eyed Monster

Now, My Friend, we must deal with the Green-Eyed Monster called jealousy. Why, if you have it in your heart, it must be identified and exercised from your life to successfully dribble your purpose in life. You cannot play fairly if your heart is full of resentment. That is what jealousy is. It is a form of hatred.

Jealous people are 'lousy' people. They can be very cruel people. The most common characteristic of a resentful person is their

manner of speech. Their targets will always be 'no good for nothings.' They're murderers with their mouths, spiritual assassins with their tongues.

Jealous people will do anything and everything to make their targets' lives as miserable as theirs. This is why it is very important for you to know who your friends really are. If they talk about others, they are going to talk about you. I am not talking about casual conversation. They will reveal your secrets and stab you in the back. Make no mistake about it, jealous people have bad hearts. They cannot be trusted whatsoever. Simply put, they're treacherous! They have no mercy. The Bible clearly warns us that *"Jealousy is cruel as the grave..."* Song of Solomon 8:6 The grave is cruel because it does not allow anyone mercy. If you are dealing with a jealous person they will not forgive. They will exalt your faults and shortcomings and in some very extreme cases; mothers will betray their own daughters and fathers their own sons.

How do you identify jealous people and subdue them in your life? Prayer! Do not tell others they are jealous of you. This only makes

you look arrogant yourself. But rather, make every effort to show them kindness. They are tormented souls who do not realize they are in opposition with God, *not* you. Why? God is the one that has given you all that you have. Be it your personality, talent or physical features, they're not hating on you, they're hating on God. You have what you possess from God, by God. Make no mistake about it. Without the breath of life, you can do nothing that you have done. There is no room for a swelled ego. Pray for your haters. They are in the way of God's wrath unless they repent.

If you're a jealous hearted person, you know that you are. You must repent or you cannot 'carry' your God purpose. You cannot!! Simply go to the "locker room of prayer" and confess your true self. Jealousy is a deal breaker. You block and subdue jealousy with an attitude of gratitude towards God for all the things that you possess in life. God has been good to you. Thank Him. Work with what he has given you. Keep an attitude of gratitude!

LeBron James could not have led the Cleveland Cavaliers to victory in the 2016 NBA Finals if he had jealous teammates of his skills. They would've caused him harm and

jeopardized the win for the entire team. Thank God for all that you have. Express gratitude for the beautiful gifts and talents that others possess ~ DON'T BE A HATER!!! You are talented, gifted and valuable! Be grateful. If you see that 'green-eyed monster' of jealousy raising up in your life in any facet, run to the 'locker room of prayer!' Do not ignore it! Confess it immediately and you will conquer it.

You ARE valuable! Take inventory of your talents and all that God has given you to manage in YOUR life journey. EXCEPT it and thank Him daily!!! Let's face it, you are stuck with it all until you leave your earth suite/body.

Give God glory, *"for every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."* James 1:17

**Be FREE From Jealousy!! Be FREE
and LET'S PLAY BALL!!!!!!!!!!!!**



When Success Is Not Enough

I recall a meeting I had with a very wealthy businessman. He told me one of his friends was suicidal. He was also a very wealthy and 'successful' motivational speaker. Nonetheless, he was depressed and wanted to commit suicide. I was invited by this man to meet him after I gave a presentation to one of his managers at his company.

Not very long into our 2-hour long meeting, I could not help but notice this 'wealthy' businessman was a pessimist and very arrogant to say the least. He boasted of his wealth and how smart he was. It was obvious he did not have a love for people. According to him, all poor people were lazy and deserving of their station in life.

He invited me to meet with him to pick my brain why I felt motivation was important and "how does it really work." He also struggled with depression. He owned a very successful employment staffing company. But, he failed to realize that like his friend, they had both

allowed the fleeting seduction of money and power to inflate their ego, therefore, edging God out of their hearts. They were self-reliant and felt no need for God. Jesus said it like this, *"Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven..."* Matthew 19:23

Those who place their riches and materialism as their god, have no need for God. Their materials are their motivators. Their focus is very limited to Team ~ Me, Myself and I. It is here that motivation is derived from the outside recognition of others and what they see with their eyes, rather than from God who speaks from the inside where this wealthy businessman and his friend were disconnected. *They had no Captain?* They have no voice of reason except for their own. His friend was paid to motivate others, yet he was toying with self-murder, why? Remember, without a captain for your own soul, you are left alone in times of crisis and discovery of the fleeting thrill of materialism and fame. It is empty. It is like chasing the wind as King Solomon warned us in Ecclesiastes. You cannot catch the wind, but you can feel it from time to time, sometimes more than others. And so, it is with acquiring materialism and recognition from others that strokes the

ego. This is precisely the reason God allows suffering. To teach us to resist the highs and the lows that will come to us in the game of life from temporal things.

Learning to be content with what you have is power. You can accept the *no* or the *yes*, and still keep moving on. You can live in a 1-bedroom apartment or a 10-bedroom house and still remain the same. You can lose a deal or obtain 3 in a day; either way, you will still remain grateful and steadfast. You are cool about it all. This is real prosperity. This is the fruit of a very wealthy soul. You become immune to the hype concerning fame, success and materialism. Your desire is to score in the area of joy and peace in your life.

Peace is priceless. It cannot be found in materialism and wealth. If it could, the wealthy businessman I was meeting with, he and his friend would have purchased it a long time ago. Listen to the words of the richest and wisest man who has ever lived, King Solomon. God gave him his wealth and wisdom:

“Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding; for her

proceeds are better than the profits of silver, and her gain than find gold." Proverbs 3:13-14. At the end of his life, these were his last powerful words for all to consider:

"Fear God and keep his commandments for this is the whole duty of man." (KJV) Ecclesiastes 12:13 King Solomon by all accounts was extremely successful, but it is his notorious thoughts here that reveals the facts, *"Vanity, Vanity, all is Vanity"* Eccl. 1:2 After experiencing any and everything he wanted to do under the sun, including having 700 wives and 300 concubines. Solomon said it was all meaningless to him. *"A chasing of the wind,"* verse 2:11.

Success is relative. It's a matter of opinion. As long as one chases the wind, he or she will never experience God's peace. Peace is the absence of war. Peace is harmony from within. How can anyone have peace on the inside when they are in opposition with God himself? Pride separates us from God. It comes in many hues. It's a deal breaker with God. Why? Because all that we have is because God has given us our breath of life and allows

us to play in the game of life, in the earth that he created,

Genesis Chapter 1.

Never in the existence of the United States of America have we seen so many half-naked women walking around without any shame, clad in sexually provocative attire, showcasing their breasts, hips and thighs. This, my friend, is a shade of pride and self-expression. It is a very dangerous position to play out just the same as the pride of life with one's materialism and financial successes.

What is valuable, you hide it and protect it. The body has a purpose, to house your soul. When used to flaunt, showcase and seduce others, it is reduced to a weapon of seduction. Seduction traps others. It causes them to stumble in the game of life. It's like a ball player elbowing others in the game. It's a 'foul' against the innocent, a harsh play to dominate others unfairly. This behavior has become commonplace in America and like many who 'trash talk' about God and Jesus, they also 'trash talk' about the Bible that gives us very clear instructions about morality and loving the things of this present world. Many claim the Bible was not inspired by God. I

have a question, what man is going to tell us not to fornicate, steal and lie? What man is going to tell women to dress in modest apparel, 1Tim 2:8-10? If man wrote it, as some argue, please tell me what man would indict himself with moral laws that are in direct opposition of his nature?

The Holy Scriptures save lives and help us to avoid pain and troubles. The Scriptures encourage wisdom and respect for God. They assist God in challenging humanity to discover our need for an MVP, a captain in our lives to help navigate us in the game of life, so that we too, can end up champions over death like Jesus did. Everyone will spend eternity somewhere; the question is where?

When success is no longer enough, when it is discovered that it is fleeting and empty, one has three choices: turn to God, remain miserable or self-destruct. Unfortunately, many take the latter. Remember, success is like the wind, you cannot hold onto it. It comes and it goes. You can never catch it. This is why very wealthy and famous people self-destruct. They will not ask God for help. Why? Money has innate power. It has the power to convince the one who possesses it, that they

are invincible, and for some, they become legends in their own minds. It's called pride.

Pride like jealousy has many hues. It is least identified when it comes to God. But the fact of the matter is that many people are jealous of God. Follow me here very closely... they resent God. They want glory and honor for themselves. They want recognition for everything they do. This is why it's easy for them to say God does not exist. Resentful people don't want to be around their targets. Why? They cannot stand the fact they have what they want. They want others to hate their targets as they do. They want worship, honor and praise. This is why the prideful will not humble themselves towards God. They ARE haters.

You can easily find these types of people on most jobs. A man's true character is revealed when he or she is given power or money. They want you to call them by lofty titles and they will mistreat anyone that does not fear them or acknowledge their "greatness." Do you know anyone like this? They are very difficult to get along with, to say the least. Yet, they bask in their God given talents disregarding the fact that their talents were not given to them by their parents. They were given to

them by God, who also continues to graciously allow them to breathe his air.

God leaves them to their vices. For some, they self-destruct, committing self-murder instead of seeking God for help. Why? Success is not tangible; it is a spiritual matter. Success is finding your God Purpose! It's finding your reason for existing beyond your talents, skills, education and your financial status. It is found through repentance. The word repent simply means; to turn around and go the other way. You cannot change your life until you change your mind. If you are a legend in your own mind, you must denounce your false self to apprehend God's love and forgiveness. Repentance provokes confession. Until one can admit they're a sinner, full of pride and selfishness, they will never find rest for their depressed souls, never. Without humility and faith, you cannot find God. God has set it up that way. Why? He wants you to come to the same conclusion that King Solomon did. It's all vanity, meaningless, a chasing of the wind!

The material world is tangible. It's like the Titanic, its going down. It will soon all pass away. If you have discovered your personal success is not enough....JUMP! God will catch

you! *God is spirit*. Seek him with your whole heart, you will find him! I'M A WITNESS!

Okay, My Friend, I have a few more Important things to discuss as we near the end of this writing.....are you still with me? Alright, let's go!

The Seduction of Education

Education is the exchange of knowledge. It is vitally important in the pursuit of most career paths. However, it can and has the potential to derail one spiritually, alienating them from their life source, God. In the game of basketball, it takes more than head knowledge to win a game. You must possess heart, grit, tenacity and respect for your other teammates. Education has an inherent power to encourage arrogance and self-importance. Especially if one is recognized for their educational accomplishments. Now follow me very closely here.... Honing your skill via the exchange of knowledge IS NOT who you are, but rather, it is preparation for what you will do in life. Most commonly referred to as a 'career choice.' However, if you have no character, sincere love and respect for other's talents and gifts, you will succumb to the inherent power of education ~ pride.

“Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies”

1 Corinthians 8:1 My friend, I have seen many shipwrecked because of pride after acquiring higher education. Their God purpose was never discovered, but their natural talent was. Instead of using the exchange of knowledge to make them better at what they did, they used it to harm others with their arrogance and snooty disposition.

Now, please allow me to be VERY clear before we move on in this chapter, education is a tool. If not used properly, it can destroy your life. It is a catalyst to open minds and inspire the heart. Nonetheless, it does not take a college degree to learn how to respect and love people. It does not take a college degree to learn the game of basketball. My Friend, it does not take a college degree to learn to love God and your neighbor as yourself. *It takes humility.* **Make no mistake about it; education is not the key to success. God Is!** He teaches us the value of others and to serve our fellowman. If you do not treat people with respect and honor, your education is in vain. You are headed for a slice of ‘humble pie.’ And worse than that, you could be headed for eternal damnation.

While education prepares us to utilize our craft with competence, it does not render all tools necessary for success. For instance, self-respect manifests in good hygiene and appearance. If you will not fix yourself up and go on an interview after you achieve your educational degree, you will find it very difficult to secure employment. And, if you're lazy, you will not be able to keep a job, despite your college degree.

When your boss asks you to do a task outside of your 'job description' to test your character before promoting you, you refuse and cop an attitude of superiority, you find yourself demoted and depressed, why? You have not allowed a *servant* disposition to become part of your character. You are arrogant. You are self-serving. This is not the disposition of a person who has discovered their God purpose. This is the disposition of pride, the seduction of education.

During the month of July 2012, a very educated neuroscience student killed 12 people and wounded 58. Why? Education apart from God is vanity, and can lead to insanity. Self-worth and value does not come from what you know, it comes from who you

know in the Locker Room of your soul. Now follow me very closely here.... If you are your only cheerleader, and you have no coach or captain, you are left to your own vices. This is why a relationship with God is vital to advancing in the game of life. The young man that killed those people in 2012, as educated as he was, had no accountability for his evil thoughts. He had no one to 'check' him. And my friend, God will check you! It's called conviction. It assists you in evicting wrong motives and thoughts from your heart. This is done through confessional prayer to God. It keeps you accountable with your negative thoughts that can run away like wild horses. Prayer makes the difference. This is why many will not quiet themselves down and seek God. They don't want to be 'checked' for their wayward thoughts and behaviors. And thus, they continue to be slammed on the inside with confusion and depression. They appear successful on the outside, but they are losers on the inside. They have no joy, no peace, and no real purpose. All that is needed is humility. All that is needed is confession. "God, I need help!!! PLEASE forgive me of my sins. I need you, *please help me!!*"

Basic education is necessary, and it is a good thing, however, the problem comes when the

pursuit of 'higher' education beyond basics, becomes a means to an end. When it is used to find satisfaction, acknowledgment, recognition, self-identity, self-worth and in some sad instances, is used to retaliate against others, as the person is driven to "prove" themselves. This is idolatry. Anything that is put in front of God for our sustenance and self-worth, is idolatry. You will lose in the game of life and for eternity.

Have you ever thought about where some of our celebrated 'great minds' received their knowledge from, like Albert Einstein and Isaac Newton? I will tell you My Friend....GOD! Some of the greatest "works" that have been done through man on earth came by revelation from God, NOT education from another human. Please allow me to prove this fact.

Adam named every animal on the earth as we know them today. How did Adam know what to name these animals? There were no universities in his time. There were no 'special' educational courses for him to take on zoology.

How did Noah build a huge boat that was to float on water that had never fallen from the

sky? He never went to an Ivy League college to get his degree in engineering, architecture or construction.

What about John the Baptist? Here is a man that came out of the wilderness preaching a message that had never been heard before. God had not spoken to Israel in 400 years. Scholars say that people came from all over to hear this man preach the Word of God. John did not go to an 'accredited' school of theology to learn how to exegesis the Law of Moses. He did not take up courses on how to 'make' and deliver a sermon.

My dear Friend, all of the before mentioned, received their understanding and knowledge from GOD! When education, the exchange of knowledge is pursued, acquired and then used to exalt oneself over another person or group, it then becomes a tool of pride and vainglory that now has the potential to destroy everything in a person's life, usually unaware.

It is interesting to note that when most people encounter problems in their lives, they always decide to go back to school to "learn" something else. How many "*Jack of all trades, masters of none,*" do you know? They are

restless, unfulfilled souls, searching for the question to life ~ who am I?

Bill Gates, one of the richest men in the world, dropped out of college his junior year. Why? He found his purpose and by his junior year in college, his software company was already demanding too much of his time. He has been a pioneer and dominator of computer software since. Bill Gates was a thinker! Are you? Or do you keep filling your head up with other people's theories and thoughts that have blocked you from hearing the voice of God and his direction for your life?

No person on this earth will ever become like Bill Gates, ever! This was his destiny, the same for the world famous luggage maker, Louis Vuitton. He was a poor, uneducated young boy who became an apprentice to a box maker and packer in Paris, France. Vuitton took what he learned by experience and the rest is history. What about the world's leading billion-dollar shipping company UPS, whose founder was an uneducated man named Jim Casey, who started his delivery messenger business at 11 years of age in Seattle, Washington. Milton Hershey, the famous chocolate maker, did not have more than a

fourth grade level of education; nevertheless, he discovered his destiny as a confectionary (candy) maker. There will never be another like him. All of the before mentioned are world-renown empires of wealth. Their companies are woven into the fabric of ALL societies across the ENTIRE world!

What am I saying here, My Friend, education is

NOT the end all, fix all, and be all.....**PURPOSE IS!** Not all are called to become doctors, lawyers and scientists. There is a creative mind in each one of us. WHO ARE YOU? Besides book-smart and man-made knowledge, who are you? When things do not go as you want them too, who are you? How do you behave? Who do you run to for comfort, God, or your family members?

Please do not misconstrue what I am presenting here. Education is only part of preparation for your purpose to be dribbled down the court of life. If you do not have a captain and coach to deal with you, you will experience many turnovers because of your disposition. If you do not have tenacity and a willingness to adjust in times of opposition to

become better, you will forfeit your discovery and God purpose for living. Never forget:

**Talent *drives* you,
but God purpose *guides* you.**

Education prepares you to express your talent, but good character will keep you moving in your purpose. Education is just like make-up. Some people do not need it at all. They are naturally beautiful. Some need assistance and others, we just like wearing it. Nonetheless, we must make sure when we apply it, it is the 'right' shade and that it is not too much, lest you begin to walk around in pride. Everyone can see it on you, but you.

How many people have you seen with piles of make-up on that does not match their complexion? It is very common to see. You wonder if they have any friends. Why won't anyone tell them they have on too much make-up? When a person demands acknowledgement of their acquired educational pursuits, make no mistake, they have a deficit on the inside. They need time in their Locker Room with God. They have on too much education! It has ruined them. Give a

man any measure of recognition or power and you will see their true character. This is where God quietly and patiently waits for the humble heart to come and cry out for his mercy and renewal of their troubled souls.

My Friend, ask God to try your heart. He will show you where you are prideful, arrogant and snooty. If you are educated and miserable, check to see if you have made knowledge your 'king.' It is a hard taskmaster indeed that will separate you from God. There is only one King, his name is Jesus Christ. The Savior of the Entire World!

The Friend Called Failure

We cannot discuss finding your God purpose and rebounding from pain to power and leave out the friend that many despise, yet, is the priceless vehicle of developing our character. In times of failure and opposition, our true character is revealed. Oftentimes we don't handle failure very well because we equate it to being worthless, when in fact; failure is an opportunity to rise above the rim and SLAM DUNK our next shot. It has the

potential to turbo-charge your efforts when put into the right perspective.

Quitting cannot be an option.

Quitters never win because they don't understand failure. When one is easily moved from their drive and position, it reveals weakness. It reveals the area one needs to 'work out' even more to conquer their deficits. This is how LeBron James has dominated the sport of basketball. He doesn't hesitate to tell his secret. He is a gym rat! Every chance he gets, he is working on his game. He is consumed with overcoming his weaknesses and perfecting all that he has mastered. He is naturally athletic and talented, but make no mistake about it, LeBron James is not afraid of failure. It drives him.

Now follow me very closely here. This is why younger players in the game must be mentored to teach them how to compose themselves under pressure and times of loss. When a player is notorious for his jump shot, but cannot hit one shot in 10 possessions, he has the challenge of quitting or staying the course of the game to find his shot. In his failure to hit his shot, quitting can never be an option if he is going to win.

When you have trained, focused and done your best and you come up short; that is not the time to give up. That is the time to enter the Locker Room for some coaching, motivation and correction from your coach.

It's time to hit the gym!! It's time for some self-denial. This is the time for prayer!

Prayer is the most powerful transaction in the universe! Many people do not realize the simplicity of prayer. God is attentively listening to the heart that sincerely cries out for help. Failure is like being fouled in the game of basketball. You have the opportunity to still advance in scoring at the 'free throw' line! My Friend, this is great news. Your faith must take feet!!! You have to leap up in faith to overcome failures, disappointment, fear and tragedies. There is no other way. You need divine inspiration. You need motivation! You need God!!!

In times of failure, that's not the time to go out socializing with your buddies!! Failure is not the time to go shopping! And it's certainly not the time to go buy a gallon of ice cream and cookies to sit at home lamenting over your loss.

Your true character is always revealed under pressure and failure. When a ball player's shot is blocked, they don't quit! They keep moving to get their next shot. It's all part of the game. To discover your purpose is one thing, but moving forward in the game of life, you must understand the beauty of your failures. They will derail you or propel you to press in and press on, looking forward to doing things better the next time you are given the opportunity.

In times of failure, it takes courage, humility and grit to be honest within your heart ~ accepting your weaknesses and character flaws. It takes tenacity. The fruit of honesty with your 'true-self' is growth, this is how you grow spiritually and emotionally. Failure is the vehicle. When a person refuses to confront themselves and acknowledge their weaknesses and limitations, they grow old physically, but their disposition remains the same.

When you mess up, don't run from God, run to him! It's time for some one-on-one face time! In 2010, LeBron James departed from the Cleveland Cavaliers. It was devastating for so many fans of the game. The majority owner of the Cavaliers, Dan Gilbert, wrote a very

heartfelt letter with many unpleasant statements to say the least. He was obviously very hurt by LeBron James' departure.

Nonetheless, in 2014 James did return to the Cleveland Cavaliers, and they won the NBA National Championship in 2016, BUT! Not before James and Mr. Gilbert had a conversation. Have you departed from your relationship with God? Do you need to reconnect and have some one-on-one face time? He patiently waits to restore all who will come.

The best example of failure is in love relationships. There are many people who have messed up big time in their marriages. Regret gnaws at the heart. Now this is very important for us to understand. Relationship failure is a tool that God does use to teach us complete allegiance to him, why? Because people are like the weather, they constantly change.

If your source of joy and peace is derived from that person and they decide to reject you, you are positioned for emotional breakdown, or worse, emotional breakout; that result is violence. There are successful reality shows

chronicling the lives of those who 'snapped' and killed the person who cheated on them or left them. Their love for God was not primary. Therefore, when opposition came, they chose to take matters into their own hands; disregarding the instructional book for life, the Holy Scriptures, that tell us this: *"But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, and despitefully use you"* Matthew 5:44"

My Friend, hear me and understand; the game of basketball is a daunting sport. You are constantly moving up and down the court, subject to being injured on every play. Every time you allow someone new in your life, you must keep in mind; you are likely to be injured. Every Time!! *Don't kill them!* Run to your locker room! Come on, you can get past this relational setback! You're wasting time on the court! You must get the rebound! Come on!! You need to "D Up! Defense! DEFENSE!!!

This is why Jesus, the MVP of Eternity told us we must not love anyone more than him. *"If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."* Luke 14 :26 Failure in love relationships have taken many out the

game of life, they are barely existing because their ex left them for someone else or died. It's time to pass this emotional grief to God!!! It's time to REBOUND my Friend if that's you!

No one can have first place in our hearts, not even our children. If they decide to become rebellious, arrogant and disrespectful, you must have the courage to let them go. They have chosen their path. You are not a failure. Let them walk it out. If they are big and bad enough to disrespect you, they are ready for the *'school of hard knocks'* to deal with them. The NBA has rules; players do not get to do whatever they want to. They must respect the game or get off the court.

If your children are breaking your rules and they are constantly striving with you, it's time for them to get out yo' house!!!! Good-bye! Learn to fly!! This nest is now off limits!!!! Make no mistake about it; multitudes are going insane because they will not release their BAD kids to the "school of hard knocks." They have allowed their BAD kids to destroy their heart, mind, soul and strength, but the eternal manual for life tells it this way, you are supposed to *love God with your whole heart, mind, soul and strength*" Matthew 22:37 NOT your BAD kids!

There is no rule book for parenting, but there are some things that simply cannot be tolerated from young adults living in your space, eating your food, using your utilities, stealing your money, staying out all hours of the night, partying in your home, AND talking back to you!!! **FOUL!** It's time to go!! It's time for some suspensions! Maintaining your pace in the game of life is vital!! You must love the game and understand how this thing works. It's all about scoring; maintaining peace, joy and staying on top of your game. Why think it strange when tests and trials come your way? It's not personal My Friend, *its life!!*

Life is a summation of problem solving, he or she that does not grow weary in solving their personal problems, wins!!!

Come on My friend, life is sometimes very hard. If you are still very young, keep living. You will soon come to know the truth of the matter. LET'S PLAY BALL!!! Pass your pain to the MVP of Eternity! Ask him to forgive you of your sins. You cannot drive to the hoop with luggage on your back! Your failure, disappointment or crisis has you on the run without any defense. Come on, we need some DEFENSE here!!!!!!!!!!

Failure is the opportunity to do things better the next time. It has an innate

'lure' to crush dreams, purpose and momentum to those who succumb to its beckoning calls. It is like gravity; it automatically will pull you down in your thoughts to give up, instead of looking up to the eternal MVP for guidance and instructions. It will make you bitter or better. You must choose the latter as you journey towards your reason for living ~ daily. You must have courage. Courage is not absent fear. It is denying its power to control you. Press in and press on!! The Cleveland Cavaliers did! Come on My Friend! Stay in the Game!!! Release those who have hurt you in the game. Seek forgiveness for your sins and let's go!!!! LET'S PLAY BALL!!

It is very easy to blame others for our lack of tenacity and grit, but without "I will" in your arsenal, "you won't." You will remain average, miserable and lifeless because you refuse to put the necessary effort into gaining momentum over your opposition. You refuse to play defense, without it, you will never make it to the hoop of God's peace and joy. Come on, failure is part of the game ~ PLAY BALL!

Boundaries

As we bring this manuscript to an end. We must indulge the power play in life's journey: boundaries! A boundary is a guideline, rule or limit that is set to protect you from how others may attempt to treat you. When that boundary is crossed, appropriate action must be taken to warn or dismiss that person from your association if appropriate. Boundaries protect you. They're necessary in order for you to dribble your purpose down the court of life and maintain your momentum. Without boundaries, you're susceptible to constant turnovers. You will yield your heart to people who should not be in your life. They cause you nothing but pain and frustration.

The heart is very fragile. It is the epicenter of your emotions and decision making. If you do not protect it with all diligence, you will be blocked constantly from peace, joy and rest for your soul. The heart (mind or soul) is where you find strength or you are defeated. When you allow your emotions to keep you connected to toxic people, disregarding facts that point to the reason they should be put out

of your life, you have positioned yourself for constant emotion and spiritual defeat, it's inevitable.

When you tolerate abuse, knowing you are better off away from your abuser, you set yourself up for mental illness. When you refuse to speak up and stand up for yourself when you know you are overwhelmed by unacceptable behavior, you set yourself up for mental illness.

Simply put, boundaries protect your psychological health. They help you to call a spade a spade! When a ball player is fouled in a game, sometimes a 'replay' is necessary to assess the facts. When necessary, in considering the facts in your situations that cause you pain; you must do a 'replay' and consider the facts. Feelings cannot be trusted when you are on a fast break to get to the hoop of peace in your life. They cannot be trusted when departing a toxic relationship or situation. You must stick to the FACTS!!!

What you value, you protect. You only have one life to live. You must become careful who you allow to enter your heart. This is the reason multitudes of people are losing their minds from engaging themselves with people who

do not share in the same values as they have. Compromise is not an option in the game of basketball. If you do not have a winning spirit, you will be defeated every time. If you want to get married to someone who does not share in the same values of marriage, and you compromise, you will likely be crushed. Why? How can two walk in harmony unless you agree, Amos 3:3 Marriage is a major decision. This should not be an option.

If you're trying to know God and honor him in your lifestyle and your fiancé isn't, they're the wrong team player!! They will crush your game from the inside. Boundaries are limitations. The locker room is limited to players, coaches and owners. It is rare occasion others are invited in. This must become your mentality as you journey in the game of life. People must earn their space in the place of your heart. You can't be afraid of being alone. You cannot be afraid of losing your pain. That is what toxic people bring into to your life, nothing but pain. Now follow me very closely here...there is a vast difference between being alone and lonely.

When "God purpose" is uncovered, God is discovered. Your life is never the same. You will no longer experience loneliness because God

begins to download in you his purpose and plan for your life: assignments and ideas to engage, educate and enlighten your fellowman. You will want to play hard to assist others; therefore, there is no time for self-loathing and posturing yourself as a victim in life that somehow just happened. Oh' no My Friend, it's time to PLAY BALL!!!!!!

Without boundaries you are vulnerable. Stephan Curry of the Golden State Warriors has a three-point shot that is unmatched. He has perfected this shot from all over the court. My friend, boundaries are the same. You must perfect the simple answer called "NO" and apply it in every area of your life. It's your three-point shot!!!! And if that doesn't get the job done, you have to become like Stephan Curry and shoot again, but the next time be like Curry who fake moves, dribbles between his legs, behind his back, right in the face of his opposition.... and Bam!!! That three-pointer is ALL NET once again!!!!!!! What am I saying to you here? You must propose to learn to forcefully say NO, STOP, and GET OUT all at once! Slam the door, get your cell phone number changed, move if you have to!! Tell that toxic person Goodbye!!! It's time for some DEFENSE!!!

Tell them and tell yourself from henceforth, I am valuable. I am living on purpose and you are no longer part of my game plan for living in peace and joy. Set them boundaries and hold to your purpose. You will never regret it. It's halftime in your life. Don't spend the rest of it chasing waterfalls. You can't catch a waterfall, why? Because it's always falling! That's its purpose, to keep falling. Toxic people are the same. Get out of their way or be carried off into their perpetual flow of madness. No boundaries, no protection.

Here is a good example how to set your new boundaries:

When your new date tells you he or she will meet you at a certain place at 8:00 p.m. Hold them to it. Give them 5-10 minutes grace, if they have not contacted you to let you know they're running late, at 8:15 leave! But wait to see just how long this inconsiderate person will take to notify you. When they arrive, tell them you do not like being taken for granted with your time. Let them know you gave them willingly, a portion of your precious commodity of time. Remember, time is equally given to all of humanity. Refuse to allow anyone to take yours for granted. Refuse to allow them to waste your commodity. Start there!

Don't allow desperation to grip your thoughts.

Resist it! People are trained to treat you the way they do, by you. Come on; let's get some DEFENSE!!!!

Rebound from Pain to Power

Alright my friend, as we bring this manuscript to an end. Thank you for spending your valuable time with me. I want to leave you with one final thought for understanding and inspiration.

Without gasoline in your vehicle, it will not perform for you. It does not matter if it is a \$300,000 vehicle or a used \$1,200 vehicle. Both need gasoline to perform their purpose; to transport you from destination to destination.

Crude oil or petroleum oil comes from dead fossilized animals and plants found in the ocean floors. It is then manufactured and converted into gasoline that we purchase from gas stations. Gasoline is from dead things!!!

All of your pain, frustration and regrets are dead!!! They're in your past. It's time to stop whining and use them to thrust you forward. If you've had a crisis yesterday, it's dead! If you had one this morning, guess what? It's dead!!! If you had one a year ago, it's DEAD! Today is your "present" from God. Today you have the opportunity to gas up and look up to the creator and thank him for his gift of life to you, and his son, Jesus Christ, the MVP of Eternity who patiently waits to give you guidance and comfort to outplay, outscore, and dominate the perils of your life.

Your Pain Is Your Power!

It is fuel for constant momentum once you discover your God purpose cannot be thwarted when you stay in the locker room of prayer with thanksgiving, confession, seeking motivation, instructions and correction. Only the humble can obtain this relationship. It's personal. It transcends religious rituals and traditions. It brings life and eternal security from the MVP of Eternity, Jesus Christ.

Dead things do have value. It is a matter of perspective and your decision to prepare for your next fast break to the hoop of joy, despite your situation. Despite the pain and the fact you just might be down 3 to 1 as the Cleveland Cavaliers were against the Golden State Warriors. Jesus was down in the Garden of Gethsemane, Matthew 26:36-56, right before his death, sweating drops of blood, but guess what? He went to that cross to die for your sins, he fueled up! He got up! And the rest is history!!

Who Am I? I am a human being, created by God, for God. To him be all glory, forever and ever!

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