

SURRENDER FOR *Sanity*



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"I want to surrender, but I don't know how."

By Angelia Richardson

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Scripture quotations taken from The Holy Bible, *New International Version Bible*®, NIV®

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Introduction

Matthew 6:33, says “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

Years ago, I remember coming home from work, unlocking the door, and just standing there in a trance like state. My thoughts were, “There has to be more to life than this.” I recall this happening a couple times in my adult life. I wasn’t aware of it, but because I was saved and baptized in my youth, the Holy Spirit was present and at work in my life. And, I had no idea He was trying to awaken me.

I was so unfulfilled in my life for so many reasons. And in my mind, I just hadn’t met the right person. So, whenever a relationship didn’t work out, it wasn’t too long before I would get involved in another. These were decent relationships; they just weren’t Godly. Meaning, they were based more on flesh than God’s purpose. In between time, I never did my work. If you’re anything like I was, I didn’t know anything about purpose, or what the work consisted of. I thought the work meant taking time to recognize who was at fault for the demise of the relationship. Even through all this, I knew there was something missing and somehow God was the answer to the issues in my life.

After years of doing things my way, and not getting the results I desired, in 2014 I took about a year to do some self- reflection. During this time, I decided to surrender. So, one day I said, “Lord, I surrender.” Then, I went about my life waiting for things to change. In the meanwhile, I hadn’t changed anything. It took another long-term relationship to run its course for me to realize there was a void I was trying to fill. Yet, I had no idea that void, emptiness, and drawing, was the call of God on my life. It wasn’t until July 2019 that I dedicated my life to Christ and answered God’s call.

This time, when I surrendered, I surrendered my heart. Meaning, I humbled myself while going after God’s heart. And I learned to let go of the control, thoughts, ideas, and timeline I had for my life. Then, I became obedient to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Now, not only did I have an idea of what the work consisted of, I was ready.

This doesn’t mean my life has been perfect and I’ve made the best decisions since I surrendered. It means I’ve been more intentional about my walk. It’s so easy to go about our lives self-seeking and living for ourselves. Therefore, I knew being more intentional would require my commitment, consistency, and focus just like I had given in my previous romantic relationships. And I knew the perfect place to start.

Matthew 7:24-27 (NIV) says, "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And, the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who build his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."

I know it sounds cliché, but when I began to rebuild my foundation by putting my trust into following Christ just like I had in previous romantic relationships, that's when I started experiencing real growth and progression that led to transformation. Knowing God's love cannot be earned allowed me to come to Him as is with all my broken pieces.

He wants us to be transparent and bear all so He can heal the hurt, pain, and past trauma. Now I can see how my life is being transformed by the power of God through the Holy Spirit. I've fallen, but not as far as I used to. It's more like a trip, but what I call progression.

From the Author

I've been asked many questions about my relationship with God, but there's one statement that is highlighted the most.

“I want to surrender to God, but I don't know how.”

I knew God was putting it on my heart to lead others to Him by using my gift of creativity through writing. In fact, He told me to write the eBook. So, this is for those that want to surrender to God, and establish a relationship with Him, but don't know how. Perhaps, you're like me. You're completely broken due to the life choices you've been making that have led you into a constant cycle of disappointment. Or it could be you know there's more to life than what you've been experiencing. Now, you're tired of the surface level distractions and want permanent change in your life.

First, let me start by saying there is no right or wrong way to go about your relationship with God. Nor is this meant to be a side-by-side comparison of your journey to mine. If anything, I'd like to challenge you to use this guide as a tool based on who you are to build your relationship with Christ.

Understanding God doesn't move upon systems, methods, traditions, or rituals, should allow you to be more open to tapping into your creative side. In fact, in this eBook, you will see how I used my past romantic relationships as a guide to redirect my focus towards Christ.

From my experience, I know what you're seeking is not another romantic relationship, or vice, that continues to immerse you deeper into a life cycle of disappointment, hurt, and pain. I can say with all certainty what you are seeking is an intimate relationship with our Heavenly Father.

It's the only relationship that will guide you into all truth. Not only will it guide you into all truth, but it will set you free and set the precedent for every relationship in your life thereafter. First, and foremost, the relationship with yourself. And just like any other relationship, what you put into it will determine what you receive from it. However, this is the most important relationship you'll ever have. And it starts with surrender....

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Part I

Commitment

Chapter 1

Accepting Christ as your Lord and Savior

John 8:12 (NIV) says, "When Jesus spoke again to the people, He said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life."

Salvation is an invitation for God to come into your life and be your Lord and Savior. So, if you haven't already accepted Jesus as your Lord and savior, please take this opportunity to do so.

It could be that you're already saved but haven't been fully committed. You've strayed away and now you're ready to surrender and be obedient to God's guidance. If you're unsure of what to say, but you know you want Jesus in your life, here's a prayer of salvation I found on the internet.

Heavenly Father,

Romans 10: 9-10 (NIV) says, "If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved."

I humbly ask that you come into my life and be my personal Lord and Savior. I repent of my sins and ask that you please forgive me. I'm ready to turn away from old things and live a new life. I confess with my mouth that I am born again and cleansed by the blood of Jesus. I surrender my life to you as I sacrifice my plans for your purpose. John 3:5-16 (NIV) says, "We receive the Holy Spirit by simply receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as our savior." Therefore, I'm asking you to take complete control of my life and help me walk in obedience by the power of the Holy Spirit daily. In Jesus' name.

Amen.

If you said this prayer and believe in your heart, you are now saved. Welcome to the Kingdom!!!

Chapter 2

Getting Baptized

Mark 16:16 (NIV) says, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."

I accepted Christ as my Lord and savior at 12 years old. However, I didn't fully understand the decision I was making. This time, I was making a choice to fully commit my life to the Lord. As I stated before, I knew it was more about my heart posture and actions as I began to go after God's heart. I humbled myself knowing God doesn't need us for anything, but we need Him for everything. And one of the first things I did to show my commitment and dedication to Him was to get baptized.

First, I have a confession to make. Many folks don't know I'm afraid of large bodies of water. And for a kid that cannot swim, that baptism pool is huge! So, when I signed up to get baptized again as an adult, all I could think about was the size of that pool. Of course, anxiety started to kick in. Yet, I moved forward anyways knowing getting baptized again represented me putting my fears, *and* old ways, to the side as Romans 6:3-11 says, "we too may live a new life."

Now I know baptism is symbolic of the death, the burial, and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. And when we are dipped under water, our old ways are washed away, and we rise to walk in the newness of life. So, if you've never been baptized or did so as a kid not knowing what it represented, take this opportunity to make a choice. Allow this to be the next action you take, as representation of your outward commitment, to following Christ as you too begin to live your new life.

The takeaway from this is:

- Baptism is symbolic of the death, the burial, and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- Baptism is symbolic of washing away our old ways to live a new life.
- Baptism is a representation of our outward commitment to God.

Chapter 3

Prioritize God

Mark 1:35 (NIV) says, "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place where he prayed."

So often we wonder why we don't hear from God. The truth is we don't make time for Him. We're too preoccupied with our own fleshly desires, and distracted with life, to hear Him. I know this firsthand because the excitement I would feel from the promise of a new relationship was unmatched.

The newness can be intoxicating. So much so, I had allowed my relationships to become my priority carving out time and putting forth all my energy. Yet, when things occur in our lives that require us to take a time out to reprioritize, rest our mind, heal our body, or all the above, we start rallying the troops for prayer.

So, I began to think. Instead of forcing God's hand to get my attention, I'll be intentional about making Him a priority. And I went after Him using the same tenacity, time, and creativeness from my past relationships.

Here's a rundown of how I prioritized:

- When I started my journey in 2019, The earliest I had to be at work was 7:45am. Yet, I **set my alarm clock** for 4am to make sure I was up by 4:30am at the latest.
- Prior to starting my journey, I would wake up reaching for my phone looking for that, "good morning beautiful" text that would make me smile all day. Now, instead of reaching for my phone to check text messages, social media, or emails, I **speak to God first**. "Good morning, Heavenly Father. Good morning, Jesus. Good morning, Holy Spirit."
- Then, I **fellowship with Him** starting with an intimate prayer. I thank Him for waking me and giving me another day to do His will. I ask God How He would like to use me as I surrender my plans for His purpose daily. I ask the Holy Spirit for discernment as He leads, guides and directs me. And I humbly ask Him to step forward allowing others to get the fruit of His spirit, not my flesh.
- Next, I sit in silence to listen for anything I may have asked during prayer. And that's followed by a few minutes of reading His word. It doesn't have to be a lot, just a couple of verses. During this time, you're familiarizing yourself with the Bible and getting to know God's character. (I'll discuss meditating on His word in another chapter. Now, this is what worked for me to center myself before starting

my day. However, you should decide what works best for you. And whatever you decide, stay committed.)

- It didn't stop there. Before long, I decided to take things a step further. I disconnected my cable and packed up my tv's and put them away in the closet. I'm not saying you must go to the extreme of packing your tv's away. Nor does it mean I didn't have "down time" for myself to focus on some other things I love. For me, it was all about being intentional about **removing any obvious distractions.**
- Instead of listening to the morning news while getting ready for work, having a lengthy phone conversation after work, or watching *several* episodes of your favorite tv show before bed, I took time to fellowship with Holy Spirit.

The takeaway from this is:

- I prioritized God giving Him the first part of my day.
 - I sacrificed my time by rising much earlier than necessary.
 - I made space for God to fill by removing any obvious distractions as I anticipated hearing from Him.
1. Would you be open to setting aside 15 minutes each morning to get your day started with God? (Suggestion: Try starting with 5 minutes of reading God's word, 5 minutes of prayer, and 5 minutes of quiet time. You can adjust as you get further into your journey.)
 2. Are there any obvious distractions you need to remove from your life, or limit your time, to prioritize God? (When it comes to our cell phones, everything we need is right at our fingertips. Consider setting an alarm for social media, watch only 1 episode of your favorite show, and limit that phone conversation to 30 minutes versus hours.)

Chapter 4

Be Prepared

Ephesians 6:10-18 (NIV) says, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

The same way we prepare for a date, you should prepare for the journey you're about to embark upon. The difference is you don't have to impress God. So, don't worry about getting ready, just be ready.

Even though it's normal to have that one close friend we discuss our relationships with, we never stop to think we'll need a spiritual mentor when embarking upon a spiritual journey. Well, let me tell you, I had no idea God would open my eyes to the miraculous things I experienced. He revealed Himself to me in ways that made others think I was insane. And none of this was familiar; therefore, I didn't know who to turn to. Just to name a few, baptism of the holy spirit, vivid dreams, and other supernatural occurrences, which includes being tested with spiritual warfare. And you want to be ready.

Having a spiritual mentor, like your Pastor or another trusted source, to go to with any questions or concerns is necessary. Otherwise, you might forfeit what God is doing in your life and turn back to the ways of this world. During my wilderness journey, I remember briefly speaking with my Pastor and explaining the 2am electrifying bath I'd recently had. And he helped me understand that was the anointing, which is God's power. He explained to me that God was preparing me for something. That statement alone made me nervous and constantly wondering what God could possibly be preparing me for.

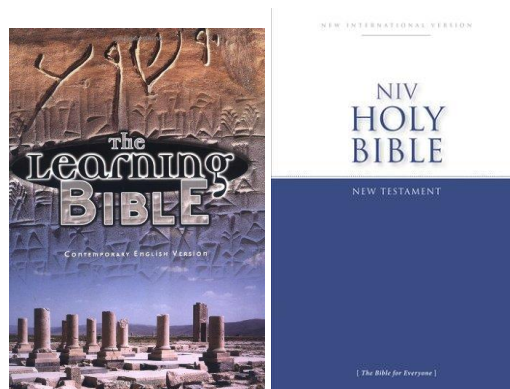
Regardless of how God reveals Himself to you, please keep a journal of everything. One thing I've learned is Holy Spirit is not about convenience. And the last thing you want is to be up searching for a pen and paper at 3am. Therefore, have your essentials within arm's reach.

Another important essential I'd like to suggest is a bible. I know that should go without saying. However, you may be thinking the Bible app will work. Yes, the app is great when you need quick access to a verse(s), or even while in church. But, when it comes to study time, you'll want to reference back and forth, highlight and take notes. I'm sure you're thinking you can highlight and take notes on your phone. What if you lose your phone? I know from experience that not all information from electronic devices can be retrieved. Plus, there's something about opening the pages knowing God's word is alive and real.

The version of the bible you start with is also important. I've noticed most Pastor's and Bishops use the King James Version, which is what I use in church (the app). However, at the start of my journey, I studied from The Learning Bible, Contemporary English Version. It was a lot easier to comprehend as it was like the bible for dummies.

(Remember the computer programs for dummies 😊).

I also have a NIV New Testament that I read during study time. Plus, I like to compare the translation of each version. Please do the research to see what works best for you. I've listed the Amazon links of the two I have below.



[The Learning Bible: Contemporary English Version: American Bible Society, Kee, Howard Clark: 9781585160174: Amazon.com: Books](#)

[NIV, Economy Bible, Paperback: Accurate. Readable. Clear.: Zondervan: 9780310445890: Amazon.com: Books](#)

The takeaway from this is:

- It's important to have a trusted spiritual leader, coach/mentor, or both (ask God's guidance).
- Don't put God in a box. Be prepared to hear from God at any time through any source.
- Have the necessary essentials within reach: pen, paper, journal, bible, bible app.

Chapter 5

Be Open to God's Process

John 15:2 NIV says, "He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful."

Prior to God's deliverance, I didn't enjoy being alone. I used to seek validation through romantic relationships because they gave me purpose and made me feel worthy. And once it had run its course, letting go was the hardest thing to do. However, as I began to make my way through the wilderness, I realized being alone during that time was necessary. This is when God began to heal those broken places so the person I was created to be could surface.

As you stay focused on God, and committed to His process, real transformation will begin to take place. While transformation is taking place, being alone with God will become your safe place. Then you'll be surprised you're no longer interested in the things you used to do. You may begin to distance yourself because the common bond of trauma you held with others will be broken. Therefore, rehearsing and recycling that same old pain will be a thing of the past.

It may even cause them to walk away thinking you've changed. That's okay, they are not to blame. Growth is painful, especially for a person that's not ready to deal with their own pain. And for some, it's not about dealing with their own pain. It's about recognizing your paths are different, while embracing the special bond you have, knowing God called you, not family, friends or loved ones.

The takeaway from this is:

- Regardless of your feelings, stay focused on God and committed to His process.
- He's using this time to burn some things off you while preparing you for what's next.
- Your commitment is to God, not people. Anyone that goes, let them. They are not meant to be a part of what God has next.

Part II

Consistency

Chapter 6

Praise & Worship

Hebrews 13:15-16 NIV says, "Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased."

I don't know about you but when I'm in a new relationship I can't wait to share it with the world. One way I love to share it with the world is by being obvious with public display of affection. I'm sure you already know where I'm going with this. We turn on the PDA for a romantic partner, but shy away when it comes to praise and worship with our Heavenly Father.

Why do you think that is? I can honestly say one of the main reasons I would shy away is because I used to get things confused. I idolized my romantic relationships thinking that was the reason for my joy and happiness. And the status would dictate my mood.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying God doesn't love us through people. I'm saying no other relationship will make you feel the love, peace, and joy that comes from our Heavenly Father. Therefore, it's best to give God constant praise, not the relationship. After all, He's worthy to be praised!

Praise and worship also allow us to set the atmosphere ushering in God's presence. And the good thing is you can praise God anywhere and anytime. As I go throughout my day, I praise Him. "Thank you, Jesus. Lord, I love you. Father, I praise your holy name. Holy Spirit, I'm so thankful for you."

Having said that, we should also be careful of the enemy's tactics. He wants us to keep our mouths closed and turn away from God blaming Him for life's disappointments and setbacks. And feeling entitled to God's favor will cause ego, hurt, pride, and arrogance to get in the way hindering our praise.

Think about it, when you've experienced a disappointment the last thing you want to do is praise God. If we're honest, don't we ask God why He allowed the disappointment in the first place. Changing my perspective helps me move forward and not dwell on the things that cannot be changed. Instead of thinking 'bad' things are happening to us, look for the 'opportunity' of God in everything. It's not about what happened *to* you, but instead what happened *for* you.

My pastor helped me understand we should see our circumstances, or situations, as God's redirection, or an opportunity, to make the necessary changes we've been praying for. Allow it to be an opportunity to become good stewards over all things whether it be finances, relationships, our health, etc. When you see things from this standpoint, we should open our mouths and praise God even more.

Not only should we open our mouths giving God praise but turn on some worship music. Do you think the enemy is going to let you serve God without a fight? No. So, don't wait for Sunday morning worship to have your spirit lifted. Prepare yourself by creating a playlist of inspirational music on YouTube for quick and easy access. You can listen in the gym, at work, during lunchbreak, while doing household chores, etc. Just use earbuds to make sure you're being respectful of your surroundings. This is not to say we should be afraid of worshipping God in front of others. I'm saying if you're at work, you're getting paid to work, not to be a distraction 😊

As I've grown in my journey, I like to switch things up just like I would in a romantic relationship. Sometimes I'll go to the park to read my word or have a conversation with God while taking a stroll. When I lived on the east coast, I might take a drive to the beach to enjoy God's creation. And I can't tell you how many times I've driven home on lunch break, to give God praise, because I needed to let the tears flow without judgment or interruption. Just remember, as we magnify God, our problems shrink in size compared to how big our God is.

The takeaway from this is:

- Praise and worship don't have to be a structured part of your daily routine, but please make it a part of your life. It sets the atmosphere ushering in God's presence.
- There are times you'll feel disappointed by life's setbacks. This is when you should worship God even more.
- Praise and worship renew our spirit realigning the focus on God and not our circumstances.

(I was recently introduced to soaking music. This will be great to incorporate in your time with God. And it can also be found on YouTube.)

Chapter 7

Read God's Word

John 1:1 NIV says, "In the beginning was the word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

As we're getting to know someone special, we want to know everything about them. When I say everything, this typically only includes the surface level questions revolving around marriage, children and any deal breakers. Rarely do we venture deep enough to see the important things before we start claiming one another calling it a relationship.

This reminds me of how we get involved in religion when it comes to God. We get saved and call ourselves Christians. Yet, we stay on the surface never going deep getting to know God's heart. We fail to read, understand, and become a doer of his word by the power of God through His Holy Spirit. I used to think if I hadn't broken any of the commandments, I was in 'proper standing' with God. Yet, I was judgmental and opinionated abiding by the laws never knowing God, or His word, for myself.

It wasn't until I started reading God's word for myself that I learned about His character. I started to see Him in all His magnificence and glory. Yet, He's a person with feelings just like me except His feelings are to the highest maximum capacity. Meaning, His love for us is stronger than any type of love we could ever feel. So much so, He gave us the greatest gift of all, Salvation, through His only begotten son. Now, I no longer see him as this invisible being off in the distance waiting to judge me. I see Him as Love....

Seeing God as love allowed me to go deeper make choices and decisions based on my own knowledge, not the teachings of a parent, friend, or loved one. This has also been a great help when it comes to taking God's word out of context or misusing his verses like a self-help book. For me, it's about having faith knowing God's word is alive and real. Therefore, I can fall back on His word regardless of what season I'm in.

The takeaway from this is:

- Reading God's word reveals His character.
- Reading His word allows you to fully understand the choices and decisions you are making throughout life.
- God's word hold's life's instructions.

Chapter 8

Prayer & Quiet Time

Matthew 6:9-13 NIV, pray then like this: Our Father in heaven, hallowed (Holy) be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, Amen.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 says rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Psalms 4:4 (NIV) Tremble and do not sin; when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent.

Genesis 24:63 (NIV) He went out to the field one evening to meditate, and as he looked up, he saw camels coming.

We all know how important communication is in any relationship, especially when it comes to romance. Yet, when it came to God, I used to think conversation meant thanking Him for the good things. And asking Him to remove me from the fire when things were uncomfortable. I never knew prayer was two sided. Nor did I know prayer was the time to apply God's word using His promises.

If anything, I treated God like He was a genie in a bottle. And I placed more importance over my romantic relationships than I did God. I only called on Him when I needed Him and never took the time to listen. It wasn't until I started my spiritual journey that I realized God wants to have detailed, intimate conversations with us just like we do in our romantic relationships.

How do I know? **Prior** to starting my journey in 2019, I recall asking God two specific questions, in two different relationships, years apart. And each time, I never waited for the answer. It wasn't until I'd allowed my mind to drift off into a daydream or deep thought that I heard the audible voice of God. Both times, I was alone in a moment of complete stillness and silence. It was in those quiet still moments I heard a small, yet clear voice, that appeared to be in the room with me. But, for some reason, it still didn't register that I should be having quiet time with God.

Now, I'm not saying hearing the audible voice of God is common for most people. I'm saying after we pray, we should take the time to listen to what God is sharing through the Holy Spirit. We shouldn't be waiting for a crisis to happen. Nor should we wait until

after we've started the relationship, relocated to a new city, accepted a job offer, or the best time to have children, for us to have prayer & quiet time.

And this is not worldly meditation that incorporates chanting and seances. This is sitting still and listening to God as you seek guidance for His will as well as anything you may have asked during prayer time.

Find a quiet space (maybe a prayer closet) where you can meet with God daily knowing you won't be interrupted. This will help you avoid distractions from the tv, cellphone, kids, pets, not even the noise from the ceiling fan. And if you still struggle with hearing from God, try clearing the physical clutter in your space. Then, close your eyes and focus on your breathing.

As you grow in your journey, you'll start seeking out quiet time to hear what the Holy Spirit wants to share. Your intimate conversations with God will be priceless.

The takeaway from this is:

- God wants us to have open, honest communication with Him.
- God still speaks, please take time to listen.
- When praying, speak the promise to the problem.
- If God doesn't take you out of the storm, He's always with you in the storm.
- If God doesn't take you out of the storm, there's something He's developing in you that only the storm will provide.

Chapter 9

Fasting

Luke 4:2-4 (NIV) where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.

You ever notice there are certain things we'll do to gain a sense of closeness to our significant other? However, we do the minimum when it comes to getting closer to God. And when I mention fasting to deepen that relationship, some folks are defeated before they get started. The first thing I hear is, "There's no way I can go three days without eating,"

And you're right. You can't while in your own strength. However, God can which is why fasting requires the power of God through the Holy Spirit. It requires His strength to get you through. And whether it be lust of the flesh, lust of the eye, or the pride of life, denying your flesh takes a different mindset. To prepare your mind, don't make it about what you can't do. Make it about getting even closer to God.

If you've never fasted, fasting is abstaining from food or drink to gain clarity, get spiritual insight, and discipline the flesh. However, I've noticed, some make up their own rules like fasting from electronics, and other distractions, not necessarily food. However, when I fast, it *includes* putting away my electronic devices, and other distractions like social media, for a certain amount of time to focus on God.

There are a couple of fasts that I know of. And the bible has many stories about God's supernatural acts because of fasting. You may recall Esther, and her people, fasting for God to move miraculously to spare their lives. (Esther 4:16). Or I'm sure you've heard of the more popular fast initiated by Daniel's story called the 21-day Daniel fast.

He and his friends ate only vegetables, it says no choice foods. (Daniel 10:3) And God showed them favor. Perhaps you've participated in a corporate fast. That's where some churches fast together when an important decision needs to be made. This is to help everyone stand on one accord.

From my experience, I didn't 'feel' any different when fasting. Yet, some say their senses are heightened. However, I'm already super sensitive to the Holy Spirit. So, fasting for me was about gaining clarity as I was seeking God's will for direction. This was a 3-day water fast. And I did see God's hand move in a way that it could only be Him.

Depending on the type of fast, prepare yourself ahead of time. If it's a 3-day water fast, don't gorge yourself until the day of. When you know that day is approaching, start eating less and less. If it's a 21-day Daniel fast, do your research and grocery shop prior to starting the fast so you can plan your meals ahead. It also helps to keep snacks, such

as raw nuts and fruit, on hand. This will help you be successful as too much thinking will cause you to get distracted. Your focus becomes more about meal prepping and what you can and cannot eat rather than focusing on God. This is what we call dieting.

Another reminder, this is not the time to run errands when you would normally spend eating. Use this time to read your bible, pray, have quiet time, or whatever the Holy Spirit is leading you to do. Remember, this is about spending more time with God deepening your relationship with Him.

The takeaway from this is:

- Fasting is for clarity.
- Fasting will strengthen our intimacy with God.
- Fasting disciplines the flesh.
- Change your mindset and prepare to be successful.

Part III

Focus

Chapter 10

Meditate on God's Word

Psalms 119:148 (NIV) My eyes stay open through the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promises.

Joshua 1:8 (NIV) Keep this book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

You ever notice when things are going crazy in our lives, especially romantic relationships, anxiety takes over? We focus on the worst possible outcome as we feed our minds negative thoughts. And whatever thoughts we meditate on are what we get. That's because we have a habit of speaking our thoughts into existence.

However, continually meditating on God's word helps to keep the focus on Him. If you look this up online, it says to turn over and around in the mind to gain greater understanding. As I mentioned earlier on, some may call it 'chewing' on the word.

In a previous chapter, I briefly mentioned prioritizing God by reading His word. However, reading God's word and meditating on it is different for me. When I initially started my journey, I challenged myself to read the bible in one year to hold myself accountable to daily reading. However, I didn't always understand everything I was reading.

This is where listening to my Pastor's Sunday morning sermons and Bible study helped take my understanding to another level. You'll be surprised that some of these verses aren't as clear cut as they seem. (This is when you'll need a physical bible to highlight and take notes).

As you meditate on God's word during your study time, break down certain verses. And ask the Holy Spirit how it applies to your life as you may get multiple revelations from the same verse during different seasons of your life. Another way to get great understanding is to read ahead. Prior to bible study, my Pastor would have us read the verses to be discussed ahead of time. This way, he could answer any questions we might have. I am very sensitive to the Holy Spirit, and I would always feel His presence manifest while my pastor was teaching/speaking.

I will say that meditating on God's word requires a lot of focus and intentionality, but after a while it becomes first nature, not second. When I take notice of my thoughts roaming to ungodly places, I'll recite a verse out loud. Psalm 19:14 (NIV), Let the words of my mouth and meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight Oh Lord, my rock and my redeemer. This helps to quickly change the narrative in my mind.

Changing the narrative in your mind is necessary when following Christ. There are times I've allowed the uncertainty of my journey to take over, especially when I'm taking a huge step out on faith. I constantly meditate on this verse, Jeremiah 29:11 NIV says, "For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

And Philippians 4:6-7 NIV says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Another way to stop self-sabotaging, defeat the enemy, and to keep your mind focused on the things of God, is to speak positive affirmations over your life. As you go throughout your day speak life. For example, I am the head and not the tail, I am above and not beneath, no weapon formed against me shall prosper, etc. You get the idea.

The takeaway from this is:

- Meditating on God's word helps to stay focused on Him.
- Meditating on God's word helps you become a doer of His word.
- Meditating on God's word will help combat the condemning thoughts from the enemy as well as our own self-sabotaging thoughts due to past conditioning or unhealed trauma.

Chapter 11

Who's feeding you?

Ephesians 4:11-13 NIV says, "So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."

If you allow it, there's always that one person in your business telling you what they would do if they were you. Yet, their relationship is not one to be mirrored. These are the very people that should not be 'feeding you.'

It's no different when it comes to the teaching of God's word. We're in a time where everyone is an online expert and has a title of Pastor, Bishop, Apostle, Prophet, Prophetess, Teacher, or Evangelist. However, if they don't have a testimony of their own, as well as their own lives reflecting the fruit of the spirit, they shouldn't be feeding you.

That's one of the reasons why it's important to have a relationship with God for yourself. And although God has spoken to me through many people along my YouTube Timeline, every word does not fit my season. Words from a prophet should be words of confirmation that God has already spoken to you. And the Holy Spirit will testify to the teachings of your Pastor or Bishop.

This leads me to ask this question. Outside of inspirational messages, praise and worship, what else are you watching and listening to? I can admit some of the music I enjoy the most will take my mind to places that are not what one would consider Godly. However, whatever you feed, spirit or flesh, is what you'll receive. That's because our mind and ears are gateways to our spirit. For example, if you struggle with lust, porn, and masturbation, maybe you shouldn't listen to secular music that arouses you sexually.

I'm not saying all secular music is bad. I'm saying pay attention to what you're listening to because it does make a difference. It all seems so simple, snapping our fingers and singing along to a catchy tune not realizing we're opening our soul to demonic, or unclean, spirits. Think about it, we're repeating those same words over and over again. Once again, we're 'chewing' on those words. All I'm saying is determine what fits your walk the best and act on it.

The takeaway from this is:

- Be careful of what and who feeds your spirit.
- Whatever you feed, flesh or spirit, is what you get more of.
- A prophet should confirm what God has already said to you. And the Holy Spirit will testify in your spirit the teachings of your pastor or bishop.

Conclusion

Even though there is no one size fits all when it comes to knowing Christ, all the things I discussed in this eBook are the ways I went about surrendering my life to Christ starting my spiritual journey. Therefore, I'm hoping this guide will help you become more intentional in prioritizing God while incorporating Him into your everyday routine. Just be careful of falling into routine...this is about relationship. The most important relationship we should cultivate is the one we have between God and ourselves.

Now, the life God wants for you and the life you want for yourself awaits. And I pray this application/reference guide blesses you along your journey. Get ready! Jesus was ushered into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan and so was I. And you will be also. The wilderness is the place we go to 'learn our lessons,' as God burns some things off us and awakens our spirit. So, stay the course knowing God already has a plan predestined just for you and He's in full control!

-Angelia

