

Being Spiritually
Minded and Earthly Wise

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INTRODUCTION

We know that all things work together for good to those who love God and who are called according to His purposes. But what about the wrong choices, foolish mistakes, ill-informed decisions, terrible consequences of laziness and other disasters that arise out of a lack of proper preparation? What about the things that take place because of a Christian's own doing? What about the Christian who is so spiritually minded that he has neglected to educate himself in the affairs of this life? What about the things that take place because of a Christian's own irresponsibility? Is God causing those things to happen?

We see a number of Christians suffering and trapped amidst almost inescapable pressures. Our theology explains that God allows His people to go through and encounter difficult times, so that they could profit from them and be strengthened. But, are all such experiences of suffering and difficulties God-ordained?

If we were to pause and examine things a little closely, we would be able to identify definite decisions and choices that eventually led to the predicament we sometimes find ourselves in. It was our wrong decisions—in whatever fashion they may have been—that caused the mishaps we may be facing. Should we spiritualize our experiences and hold God responsible for such sufferings? It is true that all of us, being yet imperfect, make mistakes. Wrong judgments, in situations we encounter for the first time, may have severe consequences. How do our wrong choices affect the plans

that God has for us? Do our mistakes defeat, alter, or in any way hinder God's highest and best from being fulfilled in our lives? This book is intended to awaken us to a practical side of our Christian faith. It is intended to make us understand our solemn responsibility in fulfilling God's plan for our lives. It is a call to stop spiritualizing our actions and assume responsibility for them. It is an exhortation to 'wise up' in the affairs of this life.

The decisions and choices we make in life, eventually lead to the predicament we sometimes find ourselves in.

2

TENSION IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:1,2).

There seems to be a constant tension in a Christian’s life, as he attempts to “seek first the Kingdom of God” while living among a people of another kingdom that is totally contrary to the Kingdom of God. We are here on the Earth, but we are to seek those things that are above, of heaven. Living on the Earth brings with it the tremendous responsibilities of building a career, becoming ‘someone,’ achieving success, amassing riches and yet amidst the almost incessant business, we are urged to set our mind—our affections, our interests, our desires, our pursuits—on things above!! If there was any true challenge that would stretch the spiritual, mental and emotional capabilities of a person, this seems to be it!! But then, God would not challenge us with something that we would be unable to fulfill. He gave us this command only because He knew that it would be within our reach—not by ourselves in isolation, but by the strength He supplies—to keep it. Nonetheless, ordering our lives by this command brings with it the ‘tensions’ that every spiritually mature Christian functioning in the ‘real’ world is sure to recognize.

There are numerous ‘issues’ in everyday living where the Christian feels a ‘pull’ in two directions. For instance, what are the true measures of success? Success by temporal standards is

measured in terms of accomplishments and riches gained, while success in the Kingdom of God is determined by whether or not one is fulfilling the Father's will. There is nothing wrong in earthly accomplishments and acquiring riches but the higher calling of God calls us to "lose our life in order to find it" (Matthew 16:25). So, the Christian faces a constant struggle as he approaches those points in life where he has to decide which of the paths to choose—the path that causes one to increase in worldly measures of success or the path that furthers one's progress towards fulfilling the high calling of God in Christ.

In addition to the many 'areas of conflict,' the Christian has to contend with the world and the devil during the course of his earthly pilgrimage. The Lord Jesus Himself said, "The sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light" (Luke 16:8). This ought not to be, but sometimes that is the way things are, especially when the children of light fail to lay a hold of the divine provisions of wisdom that the Father makes available to them. The Christian has to learn to relate to, work with and, in many cases, compete with "the sons of this world" in the activities of everyday living. Also, the Christian is also a target of the adversary's schemes. There is a devil who delights in tempting and troubling the Christian in an attempt to lead him astray from God's highest and best.

There are numerous 'issues' in everyday living where the Christian feels a 'pull' in two directions.

3

WRONG CHOICES, MISTAKES AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES

“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life” (Galatians 6:7,8).

In the midst of these and other ‘tensions,’ add the pressures of the world and the temptations of the devil; the Christian is likely to make mistakes. It seems almost pessimistic and negative to state this, yet it is true that we sometimes do make wrong choices and bad decisions in life. Think about the many believers who compromised when it came to choosing a life partner. Consider the many decisions related to academic and career choices, place of residence, friends, handling of finances, hobbies and the like. As one progresses further in pursuing one’s heavenly calling, things become even more serious because one begins to realize that every decision—where, when, what and how one orders every detail of one’s life—has its impact on the Kingdom of God, here on Earth.

All of our decisions have consequences. Some of us have not realized the seriousness of the matter. Knowing that our God is a God of grace, we consciously or unconsciously take ‘advantage’ of this. Yes, everything in God’s Kingdom is by grace and yet the Lord has placed certain responsibilities on us. It is our responsibility to live by the truths we have been taught. It is our responsibility to work industriously and to avoid slothfulness in whatever we do. It

is our responsibility to crucify our flesh and resist the temptations of the world and the devil. These are some things the Lord will not do for us. He will provide us the wisdom (if we seek Him for it) but yet the decisions are ours to make and we must be ready to face the consequences of the decisions we make.

Everything in God's Kingdom is by grace and yet the Lord has placed certain responsibilities on us. It is our responsibility to live by the truths we have been taught.

4

THEREFORE BE WISE

“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves” (Matthew 10:16).

The sheep—the people of God—are not in a particularly friendly environment! Warning us about this, the Lord Jesus instructed us to be “wise as serpents and harmless as doves.” Even though the world may be hostile and wicked, we are not to match its evil by being evil. Instead, we are to “overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:21). We are to walk in the grace and virtues of Christ. This is what Jesus meant when He urged us to be harmless as doves in the midst of an unfriendly world. The other aspect of Jesus’ admonition was to be wise as serpents. We are to be wise and prudent while we live in this world. We are to couple our spirituality with wisdom and understanding, especially concerning the affairs of this life. The people of this world are most often not impressed by our spirituality. In fact, many people hold spiritually minded Christians in contempt and deep disregard. Therefore, it is going to take some wisdom, if we are to survive and live triumphantly in the world.

Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves

5

SPIRITUAL YET PRACTICAL

As much as it is good and very important to be spiritual, it is also necessary that we be practical. Just being spiritual does not guarantee one's success in fulfilling God's purpose and accomplishing much for the Lord on the Earth. One has to combine spirituality with practical wisdom and understanding. For example, just because you are a Christian, it does not mean that your marriage is guaranteed to succeed. You will need to understand the practical issues in building your marriage and family and the application of that understanding, to build a happy home. Likewise, it is not enough if you tithe and make offerings and then expect to prosper financially. In addition to this, you have to learn how to order and use the rest of your money wisely.

Just because you believe that God heals and blesses His children with divine health, it does not mean that you can be indisciplined in your eating habits or abuse your body with overwork. God expects His people to maintain a sense of discipline in taking care of their bodies. After all, it is God's temple. Also, just because you know that God has placed a call on your life, it does not mean that you can 'wander' through life aimlessly and still expect to accomplish all that God has planned for you. On the other hand, you will need to prepare, train and equip yourself and move with God, step by step, to fulfill His call upon your life.

For those in Christian ministry, it is not sufficient to merely have a strong anointing to be fully effective on the Earth. We need

to learn how to organize, coordinate and properly order our ministerial efforts to be an explosive force for God on the Earth. It is true that it is the anointing that destroys Satan's yokes and removes burdens from people's lives, but it is also true that mismanagement and lack of proper organization hinders many from maximizing the impact of the anointing that has been entrusted to them.

Sometimes, we pretend to be more spiritual than God Himself! We become so spiritual sometimes that we are of no earthly use. I suppose that even God would find it difficult to get us to do anything useful for His Kingdom in such situations. There was a time when I spent many days pondering on the issue of whether our actions affected, altered and influenced God's plan for our life. It was a very sobering time. On the one hand, I knew that God is sovereign and His plans cannot be defeated. "I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You" (Job 42:2). Yet on the other hand, we see throughout the Bible that God requires human obedience and cooperation to accomplish His purposes. On a general 'universal' level, God in His sovereignty wills to accomplish all that He has purposed for the human race. But at the individual level, our actions do influence the unfolding and fulfillment of God's purposes for our lives. It is a sad fact that many Christians fall short of fulfilling God's highest and best for their lives because of their own doing.

You will need to prepare, train and equip yourself and move with God, step by step, to fulfill His call upon your life.

6

WISDOM—OUR SAFEGUARD

“Wisdom is better than strength...Wisdom is better than weapons of war...Wisdom brings success” (Ecclesiastes 9:16,18; 10:10).

“Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding. Exalt her and she will promote you; she will honor you, when you embrace her” (Proverbs 4:7, 8).

As I continued to ponder on this, I remembered many instances in my own life where I had made mistakes. What if I had worked harder? What if I had chosen this instead of the other? What if I had invested my time and energy in a certain area instead of another? Would things have been different if I had the necessary information and knowledge back then—if I had known better? I could have avoided some of the hardships and difficulties I endured because of my own doing. As I considered these things, all I could do was to cry out to the Father in heaven, praying that I would not miss His highest and best for my life. I was also drawn to consider more seriously, the importance of making wise decisions. Wisdom is our safeguard. When we walk in wisdom we will walk securely. The Scriptures tell us, “A wise man’s heart discerns both time and judgment, because for every matter there is a time and judgment” (Ecclesiastes 8:5, 6). There is a right time and a right decision for every matter. ‘Wisdom’ knows what to do, how to do and when to do the right thing for a given situation.

The Word of God says, “Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established” (Proverbs 4:26). In other words, pause,

consider, and think twice or thrice about the decisions you make. More often than not, in making wise decisions we will need to acquire information to increase our knowledge and understanding about the matter at hand. It would greatly benefit us to talk to and learn from those who are more learned and experienced in a particular area. That is why the Scriptures state, “A wise man is strong, yes a man of knowledge increases strength; for by wise counsel you will wage your own war, and in a multitude of counselors there is safety” (Proverbs 24:5,6). We should not consider ourselves so spiritual that we do not need counsel and advice.

In ministry, gifting and anointing are very important. However, for them to be put to maximum use and have a lasting impact, it is absolutely essential to add to our gifting and anointing, good leadership skills, good organization, hard work, discipline, continuous improvement and a lot of Godly wisdom.

Wisdom is our safeguard. When we walk in wisdom we will walk securely.

7

THE GOODNESS OF GOD

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths” (Proverbs 3:5, 6).

Nevertheless, our sovereign God is a good and merciful God. He does not forget even one little sparrow. Even the very hairs of our head are numbered (Luke 12:6,7). In sovereignty, the Lord supernaturally involves Himself in the details of our everyday life. All He requires from us is that we trust and acknowledge Him and He has promised to direct our ways. Yes, the responsibility is on us to seek for wisdom and understanding in the many issues of life. As we do so, our steps will be ordered by the Lord. “The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, and He delights in his way” (Psalm 37:23). God will order events in our lives so as to steer us in the course that He has ordained for us. In the process, if we still make mistakes, stumble and fall, we will not be utterly ruined, for the Lord upholds us. That will not be the end of God’s dream for our lives. “Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the LORD upholds him with His hand” (Psalm 37:24). He will raise us up to our feet and set us on our journey again. Praise God for that!

“I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined to me, and heard my cry. He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps. He has put a new song in my mouth—Praise to our God; many will see it and fear, and will trust in the LORD” (Psalm 40:1-3).

The Psalmist, David, found himself in a “horrible pit,” his feet stuck in “the miry clay.” There may have been many reasons for him being in that situation. But he said that as he waited patiently for God, the Lord heard his cry and brought him out of the pit and established his goings (Psalm 40:1-3). Hallelujah! This is the goodness of God. Even if we make mistakes and fall into a horrible pit, the Lord is able to lift us up and set us back on solid ground. Our mistakes may cause us pain. Our ill-informed decisions may cause delays. Our failures may cause detours, but as long as we hold on to the Lord, He will enable us to still carry out His plans in our lives. God is greater than our failures. He is greater than our mistakes. If we learn from our mistakes, wise up, and continue to run the race, God will take us to our final destination. It is God who is able to turn our mourning into dancing. “You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; You have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness” (Psalm 30:11). God is able to turn things around from bad to beautiful. He turns our desperations into divine destinies. God is greater than time. “So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the crawling locust, the consuming locust, and the chewing locust, My great army which I sent among you” (Joel 2:25). He knows how to make up for the time that may have been lost because of our wrong choices.

Our ill-informed decisions may cause delays.
Our failures may cause detours, but as long as we hold on to the Lord, He will enable us to still carry out His plans in our lives.

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All Peoples Church & World Outreach, Bangalore, India, has extended its ministry by launching its Bible College & Ministry Training Center (APC-BC&MTC) in August 2005. APC-BC&MTC equips, trains and releases faithful men and women to impact villages, towns and cities in India and other nations, for Jesus Christ.

APC-BC&MTC is a member institution of the Apostolic Council for Educational Accountability, Colorado Springs, USA, (www.acea-schools.org).

APC-BC&MTC offers 3 programs:

- The two-year **Bible College** program is for full-time students and provides spiritual and practical ministry training along with academic excellence. The program is designed to equip and empower students to successfully fulfill the call of God upon their lives. Students receive a **Diploma in Theology & Christian Ministry** upon successful completion.
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Classes are conducted in English. The faculty comprises of both trained and anointed teachers of the Word. All faculty and students have access to APC's Study Centre and Library (SC&L). The SC&L contains books, teaching tapes, videos, VCD's/DVD's and music CDs.

For more information please see the page overleaf.

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