



CHRISTIAN CHARACTERS

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Edited by Zamai banje

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to God Almighty and to everyone who will read its content and apply it to their daily lives.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Special thanks to God Almighty for the inspiration to write this book. Also I want to thank Zamai banje for taking out time to edit this book. I also want to thank my Parents and siblings for their support. Lastly my appreciation goes to all believers who have in one way or the other made me become closer to God.

TABLE OF CONTENT

Love	1
Faith	14
Forgiveness	23
God's word	37
Prayer	49
Patience	66
Long Suffering	77
The Spirit of God	89

PROLOGUE

In the world today, several people profess to be members of the Christian faith, but their attitude betrays their words. It is my desire that as you read this book, you will learn about the characters that sets you apart from unbelievers and false believers. Read with an open mind and pray for God's Spirit to interpret to you; so you can get the best out of this book and exhibit a character that is befitting of a Christian

Osakpolor Onaiwu

LOVE

“Though I speak with the tongue of men and that of angels, and have not charity, I become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.” 1 Corinthians 13:1(KJV)

Of all virtues stated in the bible, love stands out as number one, and also of all the virtues only love is said to be God.

*“We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. **God is love**, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them”.* - 1 John 4:16 (NLT)

In the teaching of our Lord Jesus in mark 12:30-31, he stated that love is the greatest commandment; and as such the importance of love in your life as a Christian cannot be overemphasized; because without it, you are nothing.

³⁰ *“And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.”* ³¹*The second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ No other commandment is greater than these.”* -Mark 12:30-31(NLT)

WHAT IS LOVE?

According to the English dictionary, love is defined as an affectionate, benevolent concern or care for other people and their well-being. Based on the scripture, love is defined as God (*for God is love*-

1John 4:16). From these two definitions, we can say that love means showing concern, care and affection toward others (both God and man).

GOD’S LOVE

The love of God, is best shown by his supreme sacrifice of sending Christ, to give his life for humans. We know how painful it is to be punished for a crime we did not commit, I believe that you would hardly be punished for a loved one, much less, dying for your enemies; but that’s exactly what God sent Jesus to do. This tells us that God’s love is the ultimate love there is.

“For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life” -John 3:16(NLT)

WHOM SHOULD YOU LOVE

“And thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind and with all thy strength. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” - Mark 12:30-31(KJV).

The scripture above makes it clear that the first person you should love is God. Loving God according to the scripture simply means keeping his commands (John 14:15) -*“If you love me, obey my commandments”*. His commands as stated here, does not refer to the usual ten

commandments alone, it also includes other instructions He gives to you today through - His word, His Spirit in you, from those in authority (such as pastors) and other Christians

¹³ For the Lord's sake, submit to all human authority— whether the king as head of state,¹⁴ or the officials he has appointed. For the king has sent them to punish those who do wrong and to honour those who do right. ¹⁵ It is God's will that your honourable lives should silence those ignorant people who make foolish accusations against you. - 1 Peter 2:13-15(NLT).

Loving God also involves rendering service to him, i.e. using your energy, time and resources to please him and carry out his work. The second category of whom you should show love to is your neighbours. Your neighbour refers to everybody you see around you, both those you are familiar with and those who you just met (Luke 10:29-37).

²⁹ The man wanted to justify his actions, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?" ³⁰ Jesus replied with a story: "A Jewish man was travelling from Jerusalem down to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road. ³¹ "By chance a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. ³² A Temple assistant walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on

the other side. ³³ “Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. ³⁴ Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, ‘Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I’ll pay you the next time I’m here.’ ³⁶ “Now which of these three would you say was a neighbour to the man who was attacked by bandits?” Jesus asked. ³⁷ The man replied, “The one who showed him mercy.” Then Jesus said, “Yes, now go and do the same.”- Luke 10:29-37(NLT)

A very common practice among most people today and even among Christians is that people from a particular group (church denomination, club, class.) tend to love each other and despise others who do not belong to the same group as they do. However, God does not want it to be so. His wish is that you should show love to all individuals irrespective of colour, religion, race and so on. The book of 1 John 3:18 states that *“Dear children, let’s not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions”* and this is the type of love God wants you as his child to exhibit.

you can show love to others by:

- Helping them with your finance

- Encouraging them when they are down
- Praying for them
- Helping them draw close to God.
- Spending Time with them

WHY SHOULD YOU LOVE

It is a command and it's the fulfilment of the law of God: Love is a command, and not what should do because you feel like doing it. In John 15:12, Jesus said, “*this is **my command** that you love one another*”.

⁹ For the commandments say, “You must not commit adultery. You must not murder. You must not steal. You must not covet.” These—and other such commandments—are summed up in this one commandment: “Love your neighbour as yourself.”
¹⁰ Love does no wrong to others, so love fulfils the requirements of God’s law. - Romans 13:9-10(NLT)

Thus if you love, you have fulfilled all the commandments.

It shows that you are a child of God:

The Bible made us understand that God is love, and “*as He is, so are we in this world*” (1 John 4:17 KJV). Therefore, as his child, when you express love, you portray to others your Godlike nature.

To be loved in return:

love is mutual, according to Luke 6:38, Jesus Christ said: “*give and it shall be given unto you*”. He also gave the golden rule that whatever you want others to do unto you, you should do the same to them. Putting these two statements together, you can see clearly that Love is first given before it is received. Even God told us in Proverbs 8:17 that “*I love those that love me*” signifying that you need to love others, to receive it in return.

QUALITIES OF LOVE

These qualities of love are stated are gotten from 1Corinthians 13

It is Patient and endures hardship.

True love i.e. Godly love does not easily react to offence from others. It forgives easily. According to the Lord Jesus in one of his teachings, he spoke that if you are smitten on one cheek, you should turn the other. This means that rather than retaliating when offended, you should extend love and refrain from attacking in return.

For some people (even some Christians), they consider doing this as being foolish. They are quick to smite back just to show that they don't take nonsense, but true believers ought to follow the example of Christ. For when He (Jesus) was smitten, he reviled not but rather committed his life to God and even prayed for those who killed him (I Peter 2:3).

When you go through difficult situations in life, you should wait for God rather than looking for help in the world. Because by waiting for him you show that you love him.

Love is kind and does not envy others.

When you have the love of God, you don't feel bad when others succeed. Rather, your desire should be that everyone is successful and even helps them to succeed. Also, you learn to be kind to all, whether good or bad.

It is not rude or proud

As a person that has God's love, you should not be proud or arrogant, and do not see yourself better than others, but rather be humble and meek.

Does not behave itself unseemly and thinks no evil.

Possessing God's love, makes you behave acceptably. It prevents you from doing something offensive to others and also it makes you think positively about them.

It is not self-centred, it does not rejoice in iniquity but rather in the truth.

You have others at heart and always work for their good, when God's love dwells in you. People usually say "*work for a living*", but it is not enough to work for a living, also work for a "*giving*". You need to work so you can help others, and when God's love dwells in you, it becomes your nature to have others at heart and not be selfish.

God's love spurs you to rejoice when things are done right and not when they are done unjustly. For some people, they think that protecting someone that does wrong is love, however, if you have the love of God, you will chastise person rather than covering up for them, so that next time the person will act rightly.

It does not keep count of being wronged by others, never loses faith, and is always hopeful.

Love makes you expect all things from other people (whether good or bad), without feeling hurt. No one is perfect, so you should expect certain behaviour that you don't like from others, hence there is no need to be angry, discouraged or hate those who may disappoint you. Love helps you appreciate people no matter the character they exhibit. True love also gives one the ability to give thanks to God even when situations are not okay.

God's love helps you put your trust in him in all situation, even when your wants and desires seems to be humanly impossible. It makes you believe God's Word no matter how unreal it seems to the human senses. True love for your fellowmen also helps you not to doubt their God-given ability, but to believe that these people can do something great and good.

It never gives up on others

True love for others and God almighty makes you keep loving them even when situations are not pleasant. Some people who claim that they love God but really don't will start losing faith in him and eventually stop serving him when their prayers are not answered, But when you have love, you will still fear him and honour him and not give up on him.

Examples of individuals who had such love are seen in the book of Daniel 3:15-18, Job 1, 2:9-10. If you have a love for your fellow men, you would love them even when they do those things that are unseemly (things that offend us). True love will also help you to love them the way they are and not for the things they possess.

BENEFITS OF LOVE

1. It helps you to live in harmony with others and also to have peace with God.

2. It covers a multitude of sin.

The book of James 5:20 (KJV) tells us that “*anybody which converted the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death and shall hide a multitude of sins*”.

For you to convert a sinner, you must first show love towards the sinner and tell him/her about God. When you do this, you prevent the sinner from destruction and hides their sins according to Proverbs 10:12 (KJV)- “*Hatred stirs up strifes: but love covereth all sins*”.

1. It cast out fear:

Love helps you overcome your fear, and enable you to approach God and men with a heart free from worry and condemnation.

There is no fear in love; perfect love drives out all fear. So then, love has not been made perfect in anyone who is afraid, because fear has to do with punishment.-1 John 4:18 (GNT)

2. It makes you receive love in return: As stated earlier, what you give will be given back to you. This, therefore, means that when you love God and men, you get it back in return.

"Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. My Father will love those who love me; I too will love them and reveal myself to them." John 14:21(GNT)

3. Love makes God answer your prayer and also grants you his spirit. John 14:14-16 states that - *If you ask me for anything in my name, I will do it.* ¹⁵ *"If you love me, you will obey my commandments.* ¹⁶ *I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, who will stay with you forever.*

From all that has been said, it shows that as a Christian, God's will for you is to love him and keep his command and also love your fellowmen as yourself. However, God encourages us in the book of 1 John 2:15-17 that you should not love the world nor the things that are in it, for if you love the world (giving your self to fleshy lust such as those listed in Ephesian 5:3-5 and Galatians 5:19-21), it shows that you are not of him.

Since you are God's people, it is not right that any matters of sexual immorality or indecency or greed should even be mentioned among you. ⁴ *Nor is it fitting for you to use language which is obscene, profane, or vulgar. Rather you should give thanks to God.* ⁵ *You may be sure that no one who is immoral, indecent, or greedy (for greed is a form of idolatry) will ever receive a share in the Kingdom of Christ and God.*

Ephesians 5:3-5 (GNT)

¹⁹ When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarrelling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God. - Galatians 5:19-21(NLT)

So in conclusion, God encouragement to you is to “...*put on charity (love) which is the love of perfectness*” (Colossians 3:14 KJV).

PRAYER

Dear God, I thank you for the love you have shown towards me by giving me Christ to die for my sin, I ask that you help me to love you in return and also to love my fellowmen as myself, in Jesus name. Amen.

FAITH

“But without faith, it is impossible to please him (God). For he that comes to God must believe that he is and that he rewards those that diligently seek him” Hebrew 11:6 (KJV).

As a believer, one of the most important virtues that God expects from you is faith. In the bible, faith is listed as one of the three greatest virtues alongside charity (love) and hope.

“Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love” - 1Corinthians 13:13(NLT)

This show its importance in the life of a believer.

WHAT IS FAITH?

According to the book of Hebrews 11:1, faith is defined as the *“substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen”*. From this definition, you can say that faith is accepting what is you can't see currently as though it is right before you. Faith can also mean trusting in God to bring to life your desires.

The Bible teaches that God himself is the author of faith. Hebrews 11:3 states that - *“It is by faith that we understand that the universe was created by God's word so that what can be seen was made out of what cannot be seen”*. In other words, God exhibited faith during creation, because everything He created was not existing or seen before.

Great men in the Bible exhibited faith and did outstanding things that were humanly impossible. Some of these include:

- **Joshua** who prayed unto God and the sun stood still. (Joshua 10).
- **Daniel** who through faith in God escaped the plan of the enemies even when he was cast into the den of lions.
- **Abraham** who gave birth to Isaac even when his wife Sarah has passed the age of childbirth etc.

For more examples of people who had faith and what they obtained through it, read Hebrew 11:4-35. The examples listed above demonstrate that through faith you too can do amazing things just like Christ Jesus said in Mark 9:23 and Mark 11:22-23.

“Jesus said to him, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes”. - Mark 9:23 (NKJV)

22 “ Then Jesus said to the disciples, “Have faith in God. 23 I tell you the truth, you can say to this mountain, ‘May you be lifted and thrown into the sea,’ and it will happen. But you must really believe it will happen and have no doubt in your heart”.

Mark 11:22-23 (NLT)

WHY IS FAITH NECESSARY?

It helps you to please God.

Faith is a necessary tool you must possess, as a child of God. The book of Hebrews 11:6 tells us that “*without faith, it is impossible to please God*”. From this passage, God puts it straight that no matter what you do and the service you render unto him; the only way you can please him is to have faith in him.

As a human, you feel unhappy when others don't have faith in you. In like manner, God feels displeased when you don't trust him; on the other hand, he feels very happy when you believe him and his Word. Hence, for you to please God and receive your desires, you need to exercise faith in him.

Through faith, you can quench the attacks of the devil.

The Bible describes faith as a necessary part of the armour that God's children need to put on. Ephesians 6:16 describes it as a shield.

At all times carry faith as a shield; for with it you will be able to put out all the burning arrows shot by the Evil One.

Ephesians 6:16(GNT)

Shields are used for defence, thus it is only through faith in God, that you as a Christian, can defend yourself against the attacks of the devil. These attacks may be in form of illness, financial difficulties etc., but if you keep believing in God then you can overcome and triumph over these circumstances (1 John 5:4-5).

⁴ because every child of God can defeat the world. And we win the victory over the world by means of our faith. ⁵ Who can defeat the world? Only the person who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

1John 5:4-5 (GNT)

It helps us obtain great miracles and good report.

In Mark 11:23, Christ states that if you can have faith, then you can move mountains. From this statement, it shows that the only way to get those miracles that look impossible is to believe in God.

I tell you the truth, you can say to this mountain, 'May you be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' and it will happen. But you must really believe it will happen and have no doubt in your heart.

Mark 11:23 (NLT)

Hebrews 11:2 says that through faith the elders obtain the good report. This is telling you that those who have exhibited faith in the past all

had a testimony of good. So as a person who desires good; you need to exercise faith in God.

For by it (faith) the elders obtained a good testimony.

-Hebrews 11:2 (NKJV)

It enables you to overcome fear.

The Bible says fear causes torment and in many passages, God always tells those who believe in him to “fear not”. This means that God wants you to have faith in him instead of doubting and be in fear.

“Remember that I have commanded you to be determined and confident! Do not be afraid or discouraged, for I, the Lord your God, am with you wherever you go” - Joshua 1:9 (GNT)

A saying goes like this – *whenever fear knocks at your door, tell faith to open the door.* What this means is that whenever fear tries to set in into your heart, always present faith. Because faith will help drive out your fears.

It helps you wait for God’s time.

Having faith in God enables you to wait for his appointed time without losing confidence in Him. In the Bible, Abraham is an example of a man who had faith in God, for even when he was old he still waited for

God's time to receive his desire (a child). The bible describes him as a friend of God.

Abraham believed and hoped, even when there was no reason for hoping, and so became "the father of many nations." Just as the scripture says, "Your descendants will be as many as the stars." - Romans 4:18 (GNT)

Job is another example of a person who waited for God. He trusted that God will certainly save him from his terrible circumstance, and the bible told us that the latter part of Job's days after his trials, was twice as good as his beginning.

"So the LORD blessed Job in the second half of his life even more than in the beginning. For now, he had 14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 1,000 teams of oxen, and 1,000 female donkeys."

- Job 42:12 (NLT)

HOW TO BUILD YOUR FAITH

Through study and hearing of God's Word.

The best way to build your faith is to study the word of God and hear its teachings. By studying, I mean reading God's word and by hearing, I mean to listen when it is been preached either in church, television or anywhere.

So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God.

Romans 10:17 (KJV)

God's word can amplify your faith by making you know how God worked in the past. For example, Genesis 15 to chapter 21, tells of how Abraham through faith received a son from God even when it was naturally impossible. By studying this story and other mighty acts of God which are embedded in the scripture (his Word), it helps you to grow your faith and make you more confident in him.

By constantly declaring your belief.

Another way to grow your faith is to keep saying what you believe until you start seeing it as a reality even when it has not yet manifested. A case scenario is when you are sick but you believe in God for healing. To grow your faith in God, all you need to do is to constantly declare that you are healed even if the sickness is still present.

By doing so, it helps you to take your mind away from the illness and focus on God's healing power.

By moving with people of faith.

Just as evil communication can corrupt good manners, good and godly communication can improve your manners. It, therefore, means that

by moving with people who have faith in God, you can learn to trust in him more.

In the Bible, the disciples walked with Christ who was full of faith and by moving with him they too became men of faith.

By asking.

You can build your faith by asking God to help you. Matthew 7:7 says “ask” and you shall receive; it, therefore, means that through prayer (asking), you can receive strength and confidence from God to help build your faith.

By listening to other people’s testimony

Your faith can also be built by listening to the testimony of other people. By listening to how God helped others, you can be convinced of Gods sovereign power and thus have more faith in him.

PRAYER

Dear God, I thank you for giving me the privilege of believing in you; I ask that you give me the grace to overcome all my fears and turn them into faith so those things you have ordained for me will be mine in Jesus name. Amen.

FORGIVENESS

“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses”

Matthew 6:14-15(KJV).

Most times, a lot of people including Christians pray to God for several things and yet get no answer just because of this issue of forgiveness. A story was once told about a man who died, and when he opened his eyes he saw himself in a strange place. Walking into a room in the city he found himself, he saw an angel who told him that he is dead; and whether he will go to heaven or not depends on if his name was in the book of life.

As they searched through the pages of the great book, the man saw the name of faithful believers that had died; but he could not find his name. He then asked the angel that his name is supposed to be there because he was a faithful man who gave alms and helped the poor, but the angel told him that the reason his name was missing is that there were certain people he did not forgive.

This may be the simple reason why most people may not enter into God’s kingdom. Hence it is good that as believers you should build up the heart of forgiveness.

WHAT IS FORGIVENESS?

Forgiveness means to overlook a wrong done to one by someone else or group of people; it involves not taken action that will hurt those who have offended you. A good example of forgiveness is seen in the life of Joseph who although he has been offended by his brothers who sold him into slavery, still decided not to harm them when they came to Egypt.

Another story illustrating forgiveness is the tale of the prodigal son, whom though he had acted foolishly was still welcomed home by his father whom he had offended.

WHY YOU SHOULD FORGIVE

To earn forgiveness from God.

One of the main reasons you need to forgive others is so that you too might be forgiven. From the opening text, we understand if we forgive not men their trespasses, we too would not receive forgiveness. In order to find mercy in the sight of God (because you also offend him), you need to forgive others.

To ensure peace and unity.

Forgiveness is a very vital tool in ensuring peace and unity among people. Firstly, peace and unity is only achieved when there is no grudge between people and to prevent these grudges, forgiveness and the ability to accommodate the wrong act of others is needed. The book of Ephesians

also stresses the fact that the only way to overcome bitterness is to embrace forgiveness (Ephesians 4:31-32).

31” Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior.32Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you”. - Ephesians 4:31 (NLT)

To be like God.

Jesus in Matthew 5:48 says that be perfect just like God and in verse 43-47, he explained that it can be achieved only when we forgive our enemies and pray for them.

43 "You have heard that it was said, "Love your friends, hate your enemies.' 44 But now I tell you: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may become the children of your Father in heaven. For he makes his sun to shine on bad and good people alike and gives rain to those who do good and to those who do evil. 46 Why should God reward you if you love only the people who love you? Even the tax collectors do that! 47 And if you speak only to your friends, have you done anything out of the ordinary? Even the pagans do that! 48 You must be perfect - just as your Father in heaven is perfect. - Matthew 5:43-48(GNT)

To get answers when we pray and for your offerings to be accepted.

Forgiveness grants your prayer a free course to God. It helps break away hindrance to prayers because when you forgive others, God also forgives you and thus makes him hear your prayers. In addition to getting your prayers answered, forgiveness also makes God accept your praise and offering.

²³ So if you are about to offer your gift to God at the altar and there you remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there in front of the altar, go at once and make peace with your brother, and then come back and offer your gift to God. - Matthew 5:22-24.(GNT)

It grants us entrance into Gods presence and his kingdom.

When you forgive others, you get access to God's presence and his Spirit. The book of Ephesians 4:30-32 reveals to us that anger and bitterness caused Gods spirit to be grieved. By having a forgiving heart, these two things (anger and bitterness) can be avoided and thus such a person will have God's spirit and his presence with him.

³⁰ And do not make God's Holy Spirit sad; for the Spirit is God's mark of ownership on you, a guarantee that the Day will come when God will set you free. ³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, passion, and anger. No more shouting or insults, no more hateful feelings of any sort. ³² Instead, be kind and tender-hearted to one

another, and forgive one another, as God has forgiven you through Christ.- Ephesian 4:30-32(GNT)

Forgiveness also grants you a place in Gods kingdom, because when you forgive, your own sins are also forgiven and thus you have free access to heaven.

It makes God fight for us.

Forgiving others helps you not to take matters into your own hands. This then makes God fight for you because you did not avenge yourself.

17If someone has done you wrong, do not repay him with a wrong. Try to do what everyone considers to be good. 18 Do everything possible on your part to live in peace with everybody. 19 Never take revenge, my friends, but instead let God's anger do it. For the scripture says, "I will take revenge, I will pay back, says the Lord." 20 Instead, as the scripture says: "If your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them a drink; for by doing this you will make them burn with shame." 21 Do not let evil defeat you; instead, conquer evil with good.

Romans 12:17-21 (GNT)

It brings the blessings of God.

According to Psalms 32:1-2, God teaches us through King David that the man whom God forgives his sin is blessed. In order to get God's

blessings, you need his mercy and to get his mercy you need to be merciful to others.

1 Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered. 2 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit.

Psalm 32:1-2(NKJV)

CONSEQUENCES OF UNFORGIVENESS

It makes God not to forgive you.

In Matthew 6:14-16, Jesus made it clear in the Lord's Prayer that the only way to get forgiveness from God is to forgive others and that any man who does not forgive will not be forgiven by God.

14 "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. 16 "Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

Matthew 6:14-16 (NKJV)

It brings God’s anger and punishment upon you.

Unforgiveness makes God angry with a man and inflicts punishment on such a person. In Matthew 18:23-25, Jesus taught the parable of the unforgiving servant who did not forgive his fellow servant, whereas he was forgiven by a king whom he owed much.

23 because the Kingdom of heaven is like this. Once there was a king who decided to check on his servants' accounts. 24 He had just begun to do so when one of them was brought in who owed him millions of dollars. 25 The servant did not have enough to pay his debt, so the king ordered him to be sold as a slave, with his wife and his children and all that he had, in order to pay the debt.

Matthew 18:23-25 (GNT)

According to this story, Christ states that if you don’t forgive your fellow man, you will face the wrath and punishment of God.

It makes you lose Gods Spirit and presence.

When you harbour bitterness towards another person, you grieve God and as such makes His Spirit far from you. Apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:31-32 (NKJV) says that we should “put away all anger, wrath, bitterness and that we should forgive one another for Christ sake”.

It causes disunity among brethren.

A very important tool in keeping people together is love, but where Unforgiveness exist, love is absent. Hence when there is Unforgiveness among individuals in a marriage, group and church etc. it brings about disunity and separation.

It hinders our prayer.

As stated before, when you hold grudges against others, it makes God not to forgive you, hence if God doesn't forgive you it, therefore, means that your prayer will not be answered by him.

It gives a place for the devil.

When you don't forgive others, it gives a place for the devil to enter your heart. This results in your loss of freedom and keeps you bound under his control. Also, the devil gains access to steal, kill and destroy you.

26 If you become angry, do not let your anger lead you into sin, and do not stay angry all day. 27 Don't give the Devil a chance.

Ephesians 4:26-27(GNT)

10 The thief comes in order to steal, kill, and destroy. I have come in order that you might have life - life in all its fullness.

John 10:10(GNT)

HOW MANY TIMES WE SHOULD FORGIVE

First of all, before considering how many times you should forgive, you should first bear in mind that people will certainly offend you in one way or the other; either willfully or unintentionally. Having this at the back of your mind will help you face the offence when they eventually come.

Now as regarding how many times you should forgive, Jesus said 70 times 7 (i.e. 490 times). Sincerely speaking, it is rare, if not impossible that a particular person offends you up to 490 times, so we can simply say Jesus meant that we should forgive continuously whenever someone offends us.

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.- Matthew 18:21-22 (NLT)

HOW TO SEEK FORGIVENESS

As the saying goes, no one is perfect, there are times you would offend others by either your words or actions; hence you also need to ask for forgiveness from them. The scripture makes us understand that you can seek forgiveness from God if your offence is towards him or from anyone we have offended.

Isaiah 1:18 talks about how willing God is to forgive you when you offend him. 2Chronicles 7:13-14 and 1John 1:8-9 also makes us aware of God's mercy for as many that will confess their sins unto him. In the book of James 5:16, the bible says you should confess your sins one to another (i.e. confess to those you have offended) so you will receive healing.

The Lord says, "Now, let's settle the matter. You are stained red with sin, but I will wash you as clean as snow. Although your stains are deep red, you will be a white as wool.- Isaiah 1:18(GNT)

Whenever I hold back the rain or send locusts to eat up the crops or send an epidemic on my people, ¹⁴ if they pray to me and repent and turn away from the evil they have been doing, then I will hear them in heaven, forgive their sins, and make their land prosperous again. - 2 Chronicles 7-13-14(GNT)

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and there is no truth in us. But if we confess our sins to God, he will keep his promise and do what is right: he will forgive us our sins and purify us from all our wrongdoing. - 1John 1:8-9(GNT)

So then, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you will be healed. The prayer of a good person has a powerful effect.. - James 5:16(GNT)

As regards asking for forgiveness from God, you can do so in prayers or you can confess to your pastor. Also, ask for Gods help to avoid going back to the sin (for by strength shall no man prevail).

Aside from seeking forgiveness for yourself, you can also seek forgiveness for other people by interceding for them either through prayer or helping them in asking for mercy from those they have offended (Job 1:5).

The morning after each feast, Job would get up early and offer sacrifices for each of his children in order to purify them. He always did this because he thought that one of them might have sinned by insulting God unintentionally. - Job 1:5(GNT)

BENEFIT OF SEEKING FORGIVENESS

It grants unto you mercy.

Whenever you seek for forgiveness from God or man, you get mercy and your sins or offences are pardoned(Isaiah 1:18). An example of a man who was forgiven because he asked for mercy was David. He begged for forgiveness after sleeping with Bathsheba and God forgave him (2Samuel 11,12). Jacob also received forgiveness from Esau after he has taken his blessing (Gen 33).

It saves you and your children.

Exodus 20:5-6 states that God visits the iniquity of the father upon the children. To prevent this, it is good that you ask for forgiveness so that

the punishment for your sins won't be visited on your children, but rather mercy will be granted to them.

Do not bow down to any idol or worship it, because I am the Lord your God and I tolerate no rivals. I bring punishment on those who hate me and on their descendants down to the third and fourth generation. 6 But I show my love to thousands of generations of those who love me and obey my laws.

Exodus 20:5-6(GNT)

It brings God's blessing on you.

When you ask for forgiveness from God, it makes him bless you, just as the Bible tells us in Psalm 32:1-2. When you pray and intercede for others, it also grants you Gods deliverance and blessings (Job 42:10).

"1Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.2 Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity..." - Psalm 32:1-2(KJV)

"Then, after Job had prayed for his three friends, the Lord made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had had before". - Job 42:10 (GNT)

It clears our conscience from guilt.

Seeking forgiveness from God and man frees you from guilt thus giving us a clear conscience. After confessing your sin, the devil no longer has anything to accuse you off anymore.

It makes you united with the person you have offended.

When you ask for forgiveness, it brings us together in unity with those we have offended thus establishing friendship and peace. You can find this in the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-24.

PRAYER

Dear God, I thank you for you are merciful and forgiving, and also that you have given me your nature through Christ, thus making me merciful also. I ask that you forgive my sins and grant me the grace to forgive others, also grant as many as I have offended the grace to forgive me so that we all shall live in unity and be like you. In Jesus name. Amen.

GOD'S WORD

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light to my path". Psalm 119:105 (KJV).

As children of God, his greatest gift to us is his word. The word of God was specially written by men inspired by his Holy Spirit, and it serves as a manual or guide to direct the affairs of men for them to live according to God's purpose/plan (2 Timothy 3:16-17). God's word can also be described as a letter from a loving father unto his children to teach them what he desires from them and to show them how to live rightly.

¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.

¹⁷ God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work. - 2Timothy 3:16-17(NLT)

WHO IS GODS WORD?

"So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son." - John 1:14(NLT)

To many people, God's word is merely a book (the Bible), but in the real sense, the scripture quoted above makes us understand that God's word lives – it is alive, a living thing. And that word is JESUS the only begotten son of God. In the book of John 5:39, Jesus directly states that the

scriptures tell us about him, and in chapter 17 verse 3 of the same book, he said that studying (knowing) and the father brings eternal life.

“You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me! - John 5:39(NLT)

And this is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth.

John 17:3(NLT)

STUDY THE SCRIPTURE

“Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do”

Joshua 1:8(NLT)

As stated earlier, the Bible is like a letter from God to us his children. However, every letter is written to be read by the recipient, thus God expects what has been written to be read, understood and lived. From Joshua 1:8 we pick out certain procedure or steps to follow when studying the Bible.

STEP 1- READ IT.

The first step in Bible study is to read. It is best if you read the Bible in a quiet place and at times when you are not busy, this is to avoid distractions. However, on busy days, you should create time to study. Before you start reading, I will advise that you should sing some songs to adore God and also pray. This will help you welcome God's presence and make you hear from him.

STEP 2- MEDITATE

According to the advanced learner dictionary, to meditate means to reflect deeply on a subject, to gain an understanding of it. So after reading a portion of the Bible, you need to reflect or think about it. For you to get a good understanding, you need God's spirit for a proper explanation, and also you should not be in a hurry when you study.

The way you read can also help you with meditation. First of all, not all books of the Bible should be read the same way, because some are written as songs, advise, in story form, etc. Take, for example, the book of Samuel talks mainly about King David, and to understand it better, you may have to read a chapter or many chapters, however, books like Proverbs and Ecclesiastes will give you understanding if you read only one or two verse. So to aid meditation, know the nature of the book you are reading. Also learn to read slowly, and check the meaning of certain words in the dictionary for better comprehension. When you read a verse, try to

compare it with other verses, and other translations to gain a better understanding, as some verse helps you explain others. When you are done meditating, pray and give thanks.

STEP 3: PRACTICE (OBSERVE).

When you are done studying, the next thing is to be doers of what you have read. James 1:22 states that you should give yourself totally to what you have studied in from God' word, and be doers of it. To do what you have heard, you first need to believe it, that is why you must study with faith.

It is also encouraged that you share what you have studied others when the need arises so that they too can be edified (1 Timothy 4: 13,15-16).

“But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves”

James 1:22 (NLT)

¹³ Until I get there, focus on reading the Scriptures to the church, encouraging the believers, and teaching them. ¹⁵ Give your complete attention to these matters. Throw yourself into your tasks so that everyone will see your progress. ¹⁶ Keep a close watch on

how you live and on your teaching. Stay true to what is right for the sake of your own salvation and the salvation of those who hear you.

1 Timothy 4: 13,15-16(NLT)

THE BENEFITS OF STUDYING GOD'S WORD

1. It guides you in the way of righteousness

The Bible is based on righteousness, as it talks about the perfect and righteous God. Therefore by giving you his word, God wants us to be like him, and you can attain this by regularly studying the Bible. In Psalm 119:105, the Psalmist wrote: " Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path". Both light and lamp signify guidance, and inspiration from God's word guides you on the right path.

*⁹ How can a young person stay pure? By obeying your word.
¹⁰ I have tried hard to find you— don't let me wander from your commands. ¹¹ I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. - Psalm 119:9-11 (NLT)*

2. It gives eternal life:

In John 6:63, Jesus said that the words that he speaks are spirit and life, and also in John 5:39, he points it out that the scripture tells about him and studying it gives eternal life. In John 17:3(KJV) he also added that " And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and

Jesus Christ whom You have sent". Putting all these together it means that the study of God's word is the way for you to gain eternal life.

“Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me”. - John 14:6(KJV)

3. It corrects and reproves

In 2 Timothy 3:16, we see that God's word is written to correct and reprove you when you do what is wrong. In time past God gave laws to correct his children when they did wrong, in the present-day God's laws are embedded in his word and they still perform the function of correcting people, so they can become perfect by abstaining from wrong acts. (Hebrews 12: 6,10).

All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.

2 Timothy 3:16(NLT)

⁶ For the LORD disciplines those he loves, and he punishes each one he accepts as his child.¹⁰ For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God’s discipline is always good for us, so that we might share in his holiness.- Hebrews 12:6,10(NLT)

4. It helps in overcoming temptation

The word of God serves as a resistance to temptation. Matthew 4:1-4 tells us about the temptation of Jesus and throughout the temptations, you can see that Jesus was always countering the devil using the scriptures; as he would always say "it is written". Temptations will certainly come, but if you are grounded in the word of God just like Jesus, it becomes easier to overcome them.

¹ Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted there by the devil. ² For forty days and forty nights he fasted and became very hungry. ³ During that time the devil came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become loaves of bread." ⁴ But Jesus told him, "No! The Scriptures say, 'People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God'" - Matthew 4:1-4(NLT)

5. It shows you the truth:

Jesus is the word of God, and he said in John 14:6 that he is also the truth, thus by studying the Bible you learn about the truth. In this end times, lots of false doctrines pop up, but to remain in the right way (in the truth) you need to study and believe God's. (John 17:17).

"Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth."

John 17:17(NLT)

6. It teaches you how to live with others and fear God

The Bible in addition to spiritual things also teaches on how you should live with those around you. For example in the book of Leviticus 17:9-37, gives several laws on how you should live with your neighbours. Other scriptures also tell on how you can have peaceful coexistence with your fellow man. (Matthew 5, Luke 6:20-38)

Don't plot harm against your neighbor, for those who live nearby trust you.- Proverbs 3:29(NLT)

Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone

Romans 12:8(NLT)

7. It serves as the sword of the spirit

Apostle Paul in Ephesians 6:17 describes God's word as the sword of the spirit because of the way it functions when you put it into action. The sword is a weapon of offence (for attacking foes), in like manner when you declare the word of God with faith it goes into action and fights away your foes. Jesus used it against the devil when the devil tempted him, so also when you apply it with faith you will get the same result.

“Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” - Ephesians 6:17(NLT)

8. It helps us in witnessing for Christs:

Any true gospel preached by anyone must be based on God's word or else it is false. It is, therefore, necessary that we have a good knowledge of the Bible as it helps us in backing what we preach, for some people will never believe what we say until we explain it with the scriptures. God's word also helps to build our lifestyle, so that people see Christ in us and believe in him, even when we didn't speak to them. (1 Timothy 4:13-16, 2 Timothy 3:15-17, 2:15).

“Work hard so you can present yourself to God and receive his approval. Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth” - 2Timothy 2:15 (NLT)

9. It assures us of the kingdom of God:

The Bible tells us about God's kingdom and how we can be a part of it. In Isaiah 35 we get a clear picture of what life will be like in God's kingdom and also we are enlightened as to who can enter into it. Revelation 21 also passes the same message. From there, we understand that the study of God's word helps us know more as regards his plan for humans and how we should live so we can enter into his kingdom.

10. It comforts us and teaches us how to overcome life's challenges

Troubles come to everyone, and the way for us to find comfort and gain victory over them is through confiding in God's word. Below are some challenges and scriptures to overcome them

- a. Anxiety and worry (Matthew 6:31-34, Philippians 4:6-9, John 14:1, Psalm 16:11).
- b. fear (2 Timothy 1:7, Psalm 27:1 Proverbs 3:25, Joshua 1:9).
- c. Loss of loved ones (Deuteronomy 31:8, Psalm 27:10,119:50).
- d. Sickness (James 5:13-15, Psalm 41:3, Isaiah 53:5).
- e. Guilt (Ephesians 1:7, Romans 8:1, 2 Corinthians 5:21).
- f. Peer pressure (Proverbs 1:10-15, Titus 1:11-15).

11. It helps you in knowing God more:

of all the benefits stated above, the most important benefits of God's word is that it helps our fellowship with God and enables us to know him more. In fact, this is the main reason that Jesus (God's word) was sent to us so that we might have a better relationship and access to the father.

These benefits stated above are few of the relevance of God's word to us, as there are many others e.g the Bible also teaches us about God's commandment, what he loves and does not like, how to pray, how to have

a successful marriage, how to succeed in your endeavours etc. In conclusion, as Christians if we must grow in the knowledge of God and if we must live rightly then we need to make God's word our companion. Read it, meditate on it, believe it, preach it and live it. (Proverbs 8:8-36, Psalm 119:38, 41-48, 97-100).

⁹⁷ Oh, how I love your instructions! I think about them all day long. ⁹⁸ Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are my constant guide. ⁹⁹ Yes, I have more insight than my teachers, for I am always thinking of your laws. ¹⁰⁰ I am even wiser than my elders, for I have kept your commandments.

Psalm 119:97-100(NLT)

PRAYERS

Dear God, I thank you for your word which you have given unto me to direct my path unto righteousness and to make me a better man. I pray that you give me the grace to study your word from today henceforth, with the understanding that comes from your spirit in Jesus name.

PRAYER

"Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, "

Luke 18:1(NKJV)

We live in a modern era, where it is possible to put a call across to someone at the other end of the world with just our phones; however, long before this breakthrough in communication; there existed a far better way of communication which is capable of connecting man and his creator, and this means of communication is what is known as prayers.

WHAT IS PRAYER?

Prayer means to ask or communicate with a deity or somebody. In the Christian sense, it means to communicate with God. Through prayer, you can make a request to God and also hear and receive from him. In Luke 18:1-18 Jesus spoke a parable about a judge and a woman. He made us understand that though the judge did not fear God or regard man, yet he avenged the woman who had been pleading with him to help her.

He further puts it to us that if the unrighteous judge could answer the woman, how much more will God Almighty who is perfect and good, answer us when we pray to him. This passage, therefore, encourages us that as Christians we indeed need to ask our needs and desires in prayers and expect answers.

HOW TO PRAY

Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray....,

So He said to them, "When you pray, say "Our Father in heaven, Hallowed 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 forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one."

Luke 11:1-4 (NKJV)

The scriptures above is a model of prayer by the Lord Jesus. Below is a more detailed explanation of the various steps in prayer you can get from that model.

Worship and bless God:

The word "hallowed" from the first statement in the prayer above means holy, clean, sanctified. We can therefore rephrase the initial part of the prayer as "*our Father in heaven, holy and sanctified is your name*". This means you should always start your prayers by blessing God's name I.e give him thanks and praise. An adage says that the one that shows appreciation is the one more should be done for; so by showing appreciation you motivate God to do more for you.

Ask For God's Kingdom and his will be done:

The next two phrase says *"thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as in heaven"*. This signifies that after appreciation, the next thing to do is to start asking. But in asking, the first thing you should ask for is God's kingdom (Matthew 6:33) and his will to be done. As a Christian, it is of uttermost importance that you ask for God's kingdom above other things, because while the earthly things you desire are perishable, God's kingdom is for eternity. Another reason you should ask for God's kingdom and His will to be done here on earth is that if God's kingdom does not come, then the evil of this present world will not come to an end.

"Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need."

Matthew 6:33 (NLT)

¹⁵ Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. ¹⁶ For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world. ¹⁷ And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave. But anyone who does what pleases God will live forever.

1 John 2:15-17(NLT)

Ask for your need

After the first two steps, you can then ask what you desire. This includes your needs, forgiveness from sin, deliverance from evil and temptations etc. When asking, we should ask in faith, as this is the way we can receive from God.

⁹ “And so I tell you, keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. - Luke 11:9-10 (NLT)

²² Then Jesus said to the disciples, “Have faith in God. ²³ I tell you the truth, you can say to this mountain, ‘May you be lifted up and thrown into the sea,’ and it will happen. But you must really believe it will happen and have no doubt in your heart. ²⁴ I tell you, you can pray for anything, and if you believe that you’ve received it, it will be yours. - Mark 11:22-24 (NLT)

Adore and give thanks:

You should conclude by adoring God and giving thanks. In addition, you should ensure you pray through the name of Jesus, for it is the only way God hears your prayers(John 14:6, 13-14).

⁶ Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.¹³ You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, so that the Son can bring glory to the Father. ¹⁴ Yes, ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it! - John 14:6, 13-14(NLT)

HINDRANCE TO PRAYERS

1. Sin

Sin according to the scriptures means anything unrighteous (not conforming to moral principles). In Isaiah 59:1-2, the Bible states that God is not deaf or out of reach, but sin is what can separate him from you. Thus you must avoid sin for God to answer your prayers, and ask for mercy if you have done wrong.

¹ Listen! The LORD 's arm is not too weak to save you, nor is his ear too deaf to hear you call. ² It's your sins that have cut you off from God. Because of your sins, he has turned away and will not listen anymore. - Isaiah 59:1-2 (NLT)

2. Doubt

Doubt is a major reason why prayers are not answered. Hebrews 11:6 made us understand that doubt displeases God, while James 1:6-8 states that “*he who doubts is like a wave of the sea tossed to and fro, such a person should not think he shall receive anything from God.*”

¹⁸ And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour. ¹⁹ Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" ²⁰ So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. - Matthew 17:18-20 (NKJV)

3. Unforgiveness:

In Matthew 6:14, Jesus makes it clear that if you want to be forgiven, then you need to first forgive others, hence when you hold grudges against others, you cannot get answers to your prayers.

"For if you forgive men their trespasses, you heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will you Father forgive your trespasses."

Matthew 6:14 (NKJV)

4. Praying Amiss (With wrong motives):

This means not praying rightly. According to James 4:3, praying amiss entails requesting what you don't really need or what is not rightful

for you to have, just because you want to satisfy your lust. Take, for example, a youth not up to the age of marriage is asking God for a wife, or a married man asking for a wife when he is already married.

“And even when you ask, you don’t get it because your motives are all wrong—you want only what will give you pleasure”

James 4:3(NLT)

Praying amiss also involves complaining to God rather than asking him for your need. This is common, even Christians sometimes complain rather than ask. Let's consider the following prayer made by a couple whose child is sick.

"O God, you know that our daughter is with cancer. The doctor said the bill for her treatment will cost a million naira and that her chance of survival is slim. We have not paid our rent and things are not going well with us. We have lost all our savings due to this terrible situation, so God show yourself and prove to us that we have not been paying tithes for nothing. If you don't get us out of this mess, then we might quit serving you. In Jesus name Amen.

From the prayer above, you can see that all the couple did was complain and even threaten God that they might stop serving him.

Consider also the following prayer by another couple in the same circumstance.

"Dear God, we thank you for the life of our daughter who is sick of cancer, we know you are the great healer and that you are able to save our little girl. Though things may not be alright financially, we believe you will make all things work out for our good and that you will supply our needs according to your riches in glory by your son Jesus Christ. We thank you and ask that make us see good again and rejoice in you. this we ask through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

God will certainly answer the second prayer and not the first. So you see how important it is to pray rightly.

THINGS THAT MAKE PRAYER EFFECTIVE

1. Faith:

In Mark 11:24, Jesus states that *"whatever we desire, that when we pray, we should believe (have faith) that we have received them and we shall have them"*. This tells you how necessary faith is to prayers; in Hebrew 11:6, we are taught that without faith, it is impossible to please God, while James 1:6 says that you should ask your desires in faith.

In Matthew 17:20, Jesus stated that even if your faith is as small as a mustard seed, you can say to a mountain "remove hence to yonder place

and it shall remove; nothing shall be impossible unto you". This means that even if your faith is little, as long as you believe, then your prayers; no matter how impossible they may seem, will receive answers. However, you can grow your faith by getting more of God's word.

"...for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you"

Matthew 17:20 (NKJV)

"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

Romans 10:17 (NKJV)

2. Unity

Jesus made us understand that a house divided against itself cannot stand, this also applies to prayers. If in a group prayer the people involved don't pray in one accord, then their prayers will not be answered. In Matthew 18:19, Jesus taught us that if we agree together on anything, that it shall be done for us, hence praying in harmony is necessary to get answers.

"And I tell you more: whenever two of you on earth agree about anything you pray for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven." - Matthew 12:17(GNT)

3. **Fasting**

fasting means to avoid eating food (sometimes avoiding water may be included). In Matthew 17, the Bible tells of how the apostle of Jesus tried to cast out a devil, but could not. In verse 21 of the same chapter, after Jesus had cast out the devil, his disciples asked him why they could not, to this he replied that “this cannot come out except by fasting and prayer”.

Certain situations cannot be made right except you add fasting to your prayers. In Daniel 10:1-12, the Bible speaks about how the angel that God sent to answer Daniel's prayer was held back by the prince of Persia, but as Daniel fasted and prayed God sent another angel who helped the first angel, and Daniel got answers to his prayers.

From this story of Daniel, you can see the power of adding fasting to prayers and how fasting also helps your prayers to get a quick response. Even Jesus himself knew the importance of fasting and praying, that's why he fasted and prayed for 40 days and night before starting his ministry here on earth.

The book of Matthew 6:16-18, teaches about some of the things you should do when fasting.

¹⁶ "And when you fast, do not put on a sad face as the hypocrites do. They neglect their appearance so that everyone

will see that they are fasting. I assure you, they have already been paid in full. ¹⁷ When you go without food, wash your face and comb your hair, ¹⁸ so that others cannot know that you are fasting - only your Father, who is unseen, will know. And your Father, who sees what you do in private, will reward you. - Matthew 6:16-18(GNT)

4. Keep His Command

keeping God's command makes God answer your prayers. 1 John 3: 22-23 makes it clear that he commands that you should believe in the name of his son Jesus, and also that you show love to others, as long as you do this, your prayers will be answered.

²² We receive from him whatever we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him. ²³ What he commands is that we believe in his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as Christ commanded us. 1 John 3: 22-23 (GNT)

5. Forgiveness

Matthew 6:22-24 says that God will only forgive those who forgive others, and it is only when you have God's forgiveness that is when you have answers to your prayers. Mark 11:25 also says the same thing.

“And when you stand and pray, forgive anything you may have against anyone, so that your Father in heaven will forgive the wrongs you have done.” - Mark 11:25(GNT)

6. Confess Your Sins

Confession of sins means to tell your fault to whom you have wronged. 1 John 1:8-9 puts it that “if we say we have not sinned, we are deceiving ourselves, but when we confess them, God will forgive us and cleanse us”. There are certain sins you should confess to people, that you have wronged (James 5:16). you can also confess to your pastors or God Almighty.

“Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed....” - James 5:16 (NLT)

³ When I refused to confess my sin, my body wasted away, and I groaned all day long. ⁴ Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me. My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat. Interlude ⁵ Finally, I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide my guilt. I said to myself, “I will confess my rebellion to the LORD .” And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone.

-Psalms 32:1-5 (NLT)

7. Having Gods Spirit And pray according to His will:

God's Spirit helps in making your prayers effective and also helps you to pray. As humans, there is a high tendency to pray amiss sometimes, but praying according to God's will helps you get answers. God's Spirit helps you to pray according to God's will.

²⁶ And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. ²⁷ And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will. - Romans 8:26-27(NLT)

8. Asking in the name of Jesus :

In John 14:6 Jesus made us understand that he is the way, and no one comes to the father except through him. This applies to prayers as well, it is only when you pray through the name of Jesus, that God answers

At that time you won't need to ask me for anything. I tell you the truth, you will ask the Father directly, and he will grant your request because you use my name. - John 16:23 (NLT)

BENEFITS OF PRAYER

1. It Allows you to communicate with God.

Prayer is beneficial to you as a Christian because through it you can speak to God, hear from him and also receive your heart desires. In Mark 11:24 Jesus said that *“if you ask your desires in prayers, you shall receive them”*. In 1Corinthians 12:9, we see how Christ spoke to apostle Paul when he prayed, thus prayers is also a means of hearing God.

⁸ Three times I prayed to the Lord about this and asked him to take it away. ⁹ But his answer was: "My grace is all you need, for my power is greatest when you are weak"

1 Corinthians 12:9 (GNT)

2. It helps you in overcoming temptations:

As a Christian one thing is certain and that is the fact that temptations must come, however, even if you can't prevent it from coming, you can overcome it when it comes. Studying the life of Jesus, we see that even he was tempted, and that is a sign that no one is above temptation. However, Jesus overcame and in Matthew 26:41, he gave a solution that you should "*watch and pray that you do not fall into temptation*"; this, therefore, means prayers are very necessary for overcoming temptation.

3. It grants you Strength:

Prayers give strength in times of weakness. In Luke 22:39-45, we see how Jesus prayed in Gethsemane when he was about to die, and he was strengthened by God's Angels. You also can receive strength to overcome circumstances and tasks that seems to great for you.

³⁹ Jesus left the city and went, as he usually did, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples went with him. ⁴⁰ When he arrived at the place, he said to them, "Pray that you will not fall into temptation." ⁴¹ Then he went off from them about the distance

of a stone's throw and knelt down and prayed. ⁴² "Father," he said, "if you will, take this cup of suffering away from me. Not my will, however, but your will be done." ⁴³ An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. - Luke 22:39-45 (GNT)

4. It Delivers from death and brings Healing:

Prayers are important in the life of a Christian because it grants healing and deliverance. In Acts 16:16-26, Paul and Silas were thrown in prison because they had cast out a devil from a girl, but when they began to pray and sing, the Bible makes us understand that there was a great earthquake and they were set free.

In Acts 12:1-17 you can see how prayers were made for Peter by the church and how he was delivered. From these two-story, you can see that through prayers, you can be set free from bondage. James 5:14-15 and 2 Chronicle 7:14 shows that prayer can cure human illnesses and solve problems in the land.

⁴ Are any among you sick? They should send for the church elders, who will pray for them and rub olive oil on them in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ This prayer made in faith will heal the sick; the Lord will restore them to health, and the sins they have committed will be forgiven. - James 5:14-15 (GNT)

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

PRAYER

Dear God, I thank you for giving me the privilege to ask and the assurance to receive from you. Help me to be a prayerful Christian, and as I pray may there be answers through your son Jesus Christ. Amen.

PATIENCE

“But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”- James 1:4(NKJV) .

WHAT IS PATIENCE

Patience is the ability to wait for an expectation either from God or from man. It can also mean not being in a hurry in what you do. For Gods children, patience is an important virtue. The scripture above (James 1:4) makes us understand that a patient man is perfect, complete and lacks nothing; and this means that for you to receive all your desire and be like God you need to exercise patience. Briefly let’s consider some of the people in the Bible that exercised patience and how it profited them.

1. Abraham

Abraham was considered a friend of God because he had faith in God and also he was very patient. For you to exercise patience, faith is a necessary thing to have, because faith has to do with having confidence or believing in someone that he/she will do what they have said and for you to wait for somebody; it is because you believe that the person will fulfil what he/she has said.

For Abraham, the Bible makes us understand that he was not having a child with his wife Sarah. In Genesis 12:1-7, we find out that God promised to make Abraham and his seed great, but this promise was not fulfilled until when Abraham was a 100years old (Genesis 21:5) whereas the promise was made when he was 75years old (Genesis 12:1-5).

So you see how Abraham's faith and patience in God made his expectations to become a reality thus as a Christian, no matter how long you have waited for God on a particular issue, you should not let your trust in him waver, but rather you should continue to remain patient for certainly at God's own appointed time, those things you desire will come to you.

I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. - Genesis 12:3-4 (NKJV)

5 Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. - Genesis 21:5 (NKJV)

2. Isaac

Isaac was the son that God gave Abraham. As seen in the preceding paragraph, Abraham had to wait for 25years to receive a son (Isaac); Isaac too did not have children early, he had to wait for twenty years after marriage before his wife Rebekah could conceive (Genesis 25:20-21,26). At another time in Isaac's life, there was a famine in the place that he was living, but Isaac believed and waited patiently on God's promise. That same year the Bible recorded that God blessed him and he received a hundredfold of that which he sowed.

²⁰ Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah as wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan Aram, the sister of Laban the Syrian. ²¹ Now Isaac pleaded with the Lord for his wife, because she was barren; and the Lord granted his plea, and Rebekah his wife conceived.

²⁶ Afterward his brother came out, and his hand took hold of Esau's heel; so his name was called Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them - Genesis 25:20-21,26 (NKJV)

3. David

David was anointed to be king over Israel while he was still very young, but he was not in haste to attain the throne. Even when he had the opportunity to kill King Saul and take over the throne; he refused to do it, instead he waited for God's time and in due season he became the king.

Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel arose and went to Ramah

1 Samuel 16:13 (NKJV)

⁹ And David said to Abishai, "Do not destroy him; for who can stretch out his hand against the Lord's anointed, and be guiltless?" ¹⁰ David said furthermore, "As the Lord lives, the Lord shall strike him, or his day shall come to die, or he shall go out to

battle and perish. ¹¹ The Lord forbid that I should stretch out my hand against the Lord's anointed - 1 Samuel 26:9-11 (NKJV)

Therefore all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the Lord. And they anointed David king over Israel. - 2 Samuel 5:3 (NKJV)

4. The Disciples of Jesus Christ:

The apostles of Christ are also examples of people who exhibited patience. The Bible makes us understand in Luke 24:49 that before his ascension, Jesus told his disciples to wait for the promise of the father (i.e. the gift of the Holy Spirit) in Jerusalem; and because he kept this command and waited patiently for this promise; the book of Acts 2:1-4 tells us that at the day of Pentecost they received the Holy Spirit and spoke with new tongues.

So from these few examples stated above, we see that as God's children we should always be patient and wait diligently on him, no matter how long it may seem. All we need is to believe that he is too faithful to fail and that he cares about our needs and is willing to meet these needs.

And I myself will send upon you what my Father has promised. But you must wait in the city until the power from above comes down upon you.. - Luke 24:49 (GNT)

¹ When the day of Pentecost came, all the believers were gathered together in one place. ² Suddenly there was a noise from the sky which sounded like a strong wind blowing, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ Then they saw what looked like tongues of fire which spread out and touched each person there. ⁴ They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to talk in other languages, as the Spirit enabled them to speak.

Acts 2:1-4 (GNT)

BENEFITS OF PATIENCE

1. It helps you to endure trials and still remain focused on your goals:

When we cultivate the habit of patience it helps us not to lose sight of our vision (goal) even when circumstances are unfavourable. In the Bible, Nehemiah was a perfect example of one who was very patient. At a certain time, the temple of God was destroyed, and Nehemiah and those with him set out to rebuild it but was faced by some oppositions. Despite various trials and oppositions from his enemies; he still had trust in God and believed that with God's help, he and those with him can complete what they have set out to do; and because he waited patiently on God and had faith God helped him (Nehemiah 2,4,6,7).

2. It helps you to receive god's promises and kingdom

Abraham was 75years old when he received the promise of a son from God, but he had to wait until he was a 100years old before he received this promise; you see that when you wait for God, he will certainly keep his promises and word. If Abraham had given up because the promise was taking too long to be fulfilled, then today, we would not be celebrating him as the father of many nations; because probably he may have ended up with no son with his wife Sarah or even if they got the child through other means that are not of God, Abraham would not be the one God will establish this covenant with anymore.

In James 5:7-8, states that you should wait for the coming of our Lord Jesus (coming of God's kingdom), many a time, some people say that they have heard that Christ will come since the time of their forefathers, but it has not yet happened and so they don't believe it will ever come to pass. Well, the Bible should be your standard of living as a child of God, and it has given assurance that Christ will come again and that his kingdom is at hand and to be partakers of this kingdom, you need to be patient and wait for it (Hebrews 10:36-39).

Be patient, then, my friends, until the Lord comes. See how patient farmers are as they wait for their land to produce precious crops. They wait patiently for the autumn and spring rains. You also must be patient. Keep your hopes high, for the day of the Lord's coming is near. - James 5:7-8 (GNT)

³⁶ *You need to be patient, in order to do the will of God and receive what he promises.* ³⁷ *For, as the scripture says, "Just a little while longer, and he who is coming will come; he will not delay.* ³⁸ *My righteous people, however, will believe and live; but if any of them turns back, I will not be pleased with them."* ³⁹ *We are not people who turn back and are lost. Instead, we have faith and are saved.* - Hebrews 10:36-39 (GNT)

3. It helps you wait for god's time for those things you desire

When you cultivate the habit of being patient, it helps to overcome anxiety and worries and to wait diligently on God's appointed time for those things you desire. The Bible encourages us to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God (i.e. to wait patiently for him) so that he will exalt us in due time. So rather than being in a hurry, you need to learn to be at ease, wait patiently and cast your care upon God with the mindset that he cares for you

Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you. - 1 Peter 5:7 (NLT)

³¹ *"So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?'"* ³² *These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs.* ³³ *Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you*

need. ³⁴ “So don’t worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today’s trouble is enough for today.

Matt 6:31-34 (NLT)

4. It helps you remain healthy, calm and prevents hypertension

Patience is good health-wise. The reason a lot of people die through hypertension is that they can’t control their anxiety; these people could have prevented their death if only they can learn to wait for their desires without being anxious for them. In the book of Philippians 4:6, the Bible say you should be careful (anxious) for nothing but that you should commit your desire through prayer and supplications unto God. In Matthew 6:25-34, Jesus also added that you should take no thought for your lives (i.e. you should not worry about anything), he emphasized that sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof; meaning that when you worry for things before their time, you will only get sorrows and unease. Thus to live a happy life, you need to do away with worry and anxiety, learn to wait patiently for those things you ask; for certainly, God has assured you that he will supply your needs when you ask from him.

²⁵ *“That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn’t life more than food, and your body more than clothing?*
²⁶ *Look at the birds. They don’t plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren’t you far*

more valuable to him than they are? ²⁷ Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? - Matthew 6:25-34 (NLT)

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.

Philippians 4:6 (NLT)

5. It helps us make right decisions

Most people end up making wrong decisions because they were in a hurry in making it; they never thought things through. Deciding in haste is usually not advisable (though in some cases instant decisions are needed), because those decisions have not being weighed if they will be favourable or not. Exercising patience in decision making can help you to make a more reasonable decision with little or no errors, this is because you take time to evaluate your options before picking the best one. In Luke 14:28-30, Jesus gave an illustration about a man willing to build a house, from the illustration you can learn that just as anyone who does not consider the cost of building a tower before starting to build will come to shame, so also if you that do not think things through (not patient in making decisions) you will only end up making decisions that will lead to shame, but if you patiently make decisions, you have a better chance for success

PRAYER

Dear Lord, thank you for the gift of life, and the assurance that whatever I ask in prayers according to you will, will be granted. Help me to be patient so that your promises to me will certainly become fulfilled in Jesus Name.

Amen

LONG SUFFERING

“Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ”

2 Timothy 2:3 (KJV).

The word long-suffering means to endure hard circumstances. God never promised that there will not be difficult times or terrible storms; even his word in Psalms 34:19 stated that “many are the afflictions (troubles, difficulties) of the righteous.

Though there will be afflictions, he assures you that he will deliver you from them all(Psalms 34:19b, Isaiah 43:1-2). From the opening text (2 Timothy 2:3), the Bible describes believers as soldiers of Christ. The word soldier was used because soldiers are known to go through vigorous and difficult training, so also as a child of God, any hard circumstance that you face is just like training. God allows you to go through these hardships so you can become a better and stronger person; and not because he wants to see you suffer.

¹ But now, O Jacob, listen to the LORD who created you. O Israel, the one who formed you says, “Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine. ² When you go through deep waters, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you. - Isaiah 43:1-2 (NLT)

The righteous person faces many troubles, but the LORD comes to the rescue each time. - Psalms 34:19b (NLT)

Another reason God allows tough circumstances to happen is to teach you certain lessons, so you too can use these lessons to encourage or advice others. I remember once in my life, I faced difficulty in thinking right, all that came to my mind were negative thoughts that almost made me go mad; it was so bad that I thought about committing suicide. I would speak to myself even when other people were around, and to them, it appeared as if I was crazy. This circumstance lasted for about a year and a few months, but today I no longer have these problems. I believe if God had not allowed me to pass through that circumstance, this advice you are reading would probably not be written. God allowed me to face it so I can help those who may also be facing similar trouble or will face it.

The Bible gives several examples of people who went through hardship but endured and overcame the trials they faced. Some examples are

1. Jesus

During his earthly ministry, Jesus was accused and faced several trials from the Pharisees, scribes and Sadducee. His trials were even more during the later parts of his life on earth when he was about to die. The Bible made us to know that he was beaten, mocked, accused of blasphemy, forced to carry his cross and so on, before his death (Luke 22:63-71, 23:1-38). Despite all the things he went through, he remained faithful unto the

end (i.e. till he died); but the Bible also told us that because of his faithfulness he was resurrected by God and now sit upon the right hand of God, ruling over all principalities and powers. He has also been given a name that is above every other name (Hebrews 12:1-3).

¹ Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. ² We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne. ³ Think of all the hostility he endured from sinful people; then you won't become weary and give up.

-Hebrews 12:1-3 (NLT)

2. Joseph

Joseph was the 11th son of Jacob (Israel) and was God-fearing; but because of his dreams, he was hated by his brothers and sold to Egypt as a slave. While in Egypt, he was cast into prison because he upheld his integrity by not sleeping with his master's (Potiphar) wife; despite all these, he was still faithful to God and a few years later he was taken from prison and became the prime minister of Egypt. This tells you that if you remain

faithful during your trials, God will certainly reward you. (Genesis 37, 39,40 and 41).

3. Job

Job is indeed one of the men that endured extreme hardship but never betrayed God. The Bible made us understand that Job was the richest man on the east and that he was perfect before God. However, God allowed Satan to try Job severely; he lost all his seven children, his livestock, he was despised by his friends and associates, and even told by his wife to curse God and die. Despite all these though, Job remained faithful to God and God rewarded him by giving him twice what he had before his trials. God allowed Satan to tempt Job because he (God) was confident that Job would still serve him even if he didn't give him riches. God also expects you to love and worship him, not because of what he gives to you, but rather because he deserves to be worshipped (Job 1, 2 and 41).

4. Apostles of Christ

The Apostles of Christ faced difficult times, especially from the rulers of their time. Several times, they were arrested, some killed with the sword, crucified, stoned to death, placed in boiling oil and so on. These hardships they faced did not stop them from preaching the gospel, rather they surged on because they had confidence in the promises of Christ (Acts 7:54-60, 12).

HOW TO OVERCOME HARDSHIP AND DIFFICULTIES

1. Study God's Word

The word of God serves as a source of comfort in times of difficulties. By studying, believing and proclaiming it, you can gain courage and confidence in God; that he can and will deliver you from the whatever trials you face. This in turn can give you the strength to endure the trials and overcome them. (Psalm 119:49-50, 89-93).

Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me. - Psalm 119:49-50(KJV)

⁸⁹ Your word, O Lord, will last forever; it is eternal in heaven. ⁹⁰ Your faithfulness endures through all the ages; you have set the earth in place, and it remains. ⁹¹ All things remain to this day because of your command, because they are all your servants. ⁹² If your law had not been the source of my joy, I would have died from my sufferings. ⁹³ I will never neglect your instructions, because by them you have kept me alive. - Psalm 89-93 (GNT)

2. Be Prayerful

In the book of Luke 22:41-43 when Jesus was about to face death, the Bible stated that he was filled with agony and he prayed to the father, who in return sent an angel to strengthen him. In like manner, through

prayer, you too can receive strength to endure and overcome any challenge that the devil brings. The Bible also told us about king Hezekiah (a God-fearing king) who became sick and was told that he was going to die. He never accepted death but rather prayed to God, and God added 15 years to his life (Isaiah 38:1-8). This points it out that you can get God's help through prayers.

⁴¹ Then he went off from them about the distance of a stone's throw and knelt down and prayed. ⁴² "Father," he said, "if you will, take this cup of suffering away from me. Not my will, however, but your will be done." ⁴³ An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. Luke:41-43 (GNT)

3. Get counsel from God's people

A proverb says that a problem shared is a problem half solved. When you share your problems with others (Godly people, especially those whom you know has faced a similar problem and overcame it) you open the doors to receive counsel that can help you get out of your situation. You may share your problems with your pastor, family member or a friend; as long as they are believers and are filled with God's Spirit. In Genesis 41:1-40, the Bible tells us how Pharaoh shared the dream that troubled him with Joseph, and through God's inspiration, Joseph interpreted the dream and also provided a solution to the problem. If Pharaoh had kept his problem to himself, he would not have gotten rest and able to overcome the famine that was to come on the earth.

4. Develop your Faith in God and listen To Testimonies of other believers

Listening to the testimonies of other people helps you build your faith in God. When you listen to these testimonies, you learn about how God helped them during their times of trouble and this gives you the assurance that if you also have faith in God, then you can receive answers to your problem (Revelations 12:11).

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. - Revelations 12:11 (NKJV)

5. Be patient

Being patient helps you to wait for God’s intervention in times of difficulty. The book of James 1:2-4 stated that “*the trying of our faith worketh patience*” and that when you let patience have her perfect work, then you would be complete and lack nothing; this simply means that when you exercise patience in God, he will certainly make those trials of yours lead to your breakthrough and success.

THE BENEFITS OF LONGSUFFERING

1. It makes you stronger and equip you to face life challenges

As believers, we are assured of victory over trials when they come. However, overcoming one trial does not mean that you will not face another. In Genesis, Exodus and even up to Judges and beyond; you can

see that the Israelite faced subsequent battles. Each battle they faced and won served as a boost to their faith in God, that he can save them and give them victory over future troubles.

In the book of Numbers 13 and 14 you can observe that even when some of the Israelite murmured that they could not conquer the land of Canaan, Joshua and Caleb remained confident. This confidence of theirs (i.e. Joshua and Caleb) was because they had seen the many miracles God has done for them in the past.

David also fought many battles during his lifetime, he endured so much difficult times to the extent that he became strong and used to wars and even declared in Psalms 144:1-2 that God has been his strength and teaches his hands to war and his finger to fight. From the examples above you can conclude that when you remain in God, he will give us the strength to overcome whatever life throws at you.

A Psalm of David. Blessed be the Lord my Rock, Who trains my hands for war, And my fingers for battle-- My loving-kindness and my fortress, My high tower and my deliverer, My shield and the One in whom I take refuge, Who subdues my people under me.

Psalms 144:1-2 (NKJV)

2. It teaches us lesson that we can pass to others

God is a merciful father who does not want evil to come to his children, but as earlier stated; he sometimes allows his children go through

trials, so that they may learn certain lessons that they can use to teach and encourage others. You get encouragement from the Bible when you study the stories of men and women who at some point in their life, went through difficulties, but ended up victorious. The life of apostle Paul, for example, was full of many trials (as seen in the book of Acts), through these trials he wrote many of his epistles that now serve as admonition and encouragement to us today. (2 Corinthians 1:8-9, Acts 16:16-40).

For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead. -

2 Corinthians 1:8-9 (NKJV)

3. It corrects us and make us holy

Sometimes, God can allow you to go through hardships to correct you when you make mistakes. An example of this is seen in the life of King David when he slept with Bathsheba and killed Uriah (Bathsheba's husband). God punished him by killing the child born from this adulterous act, and also God caused King David's son (Absalom) to rebel and fight against David (2 Samuel 11, 12, 14 and 16). God allowed all these troubles to happen to David, not because he hated him, but rather to correct him and make him Holy. The book of Hebrews 12:6 and 11 also encourage say that

when God chastises you (punish you for your wrong), it is to correct you and make a better person.

⁶Because the Lord corrects everyone he loves, and punishes everyone he accepts as a child."... ¹¹When we are punished, it seems to us at the time something to make us sad, not glad. Later, however, those who have been disciplined by such punishment reap the peaceful reward of a righteous life.

Hebrews 12:6 and 11(GNT)

4. It makes us receive reward from God

When you hold to your belief in God during trials, he will reward you. In Hebrews 12:1-2, you can see how Christ endured hardships by dying on the cross and how he was rewarded by God. Job was also rewarded by God because he remained faithful during his time of difficulty (Job 42:10-17). Joseph also got rewarded (Genesis 37, 39, 40 and 41) for being faithful.

***1** Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. **2** We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne. - Hebrews 12:1-2 (NLT)*

PRAYER

I thank you, Father, for teaching me about enduring difficulties and the reward that follows when we remain faithful to you. Give me the grace to remain steadfast even times of difficulties, so I will not miss my reward.

THE SPIRIT OF GOD

"And I will pray the father and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth....."

John 14:16-17(KJV).

You may have wondered how some people heal the sick by praying for them, perform miracles or speak and mighty things takes place. Well, these are not magic, they are real and possible because a special person dwells in these people, that makes them do extraordinary things. You may wonder who this person is; well it is the Holy Spirit of God (also known as the comforter). The Holy Spirit is a must-have for all believers (including you reading this book) because it's him that God uses to make you a better person and also to teach you how to carry out those things that pertain to Godliness (John 14:26).

WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

Some people believe the Holy Spirit is not a person but God's active force, however, in the Bible when the Spirit of God is referred to (mainly in the new testament), the word "He" is used, this signifies that he is a person and not a thing, If he was a thing the word " It" would have been used. Though being a person he is still God's active force that he uses to make things happen, as seen during the creation of the world.

What gives life is God's Spirit; human power is of no use at all. The words I have spoken to you bring God's life-giving Spirit.

John 6:63(GNT)

In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him.

John 1:1-3(NLT)

The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light

Genesis 1:2-3 (NLT)

HIS WORKS

The works of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer are innumerable. Some of them are listed below.

1. He comforts and give hope that does not disappoint. (John 14:16, Roman 5:5, Acts 9:31).
2. He counsels , give wisdom and understanding (Isaiah 11:2, Mark 6:2, Luke 2:40).
3. He gives life (2 Corinthians 3:6, John 6:63)
4. He gives boldness and might (Isaiah 11:2, Acts 4:31).

5. He grants you excellence in what you do and promotes you (Daniel 6:3).
6. He helps you in doing good works (Acts 10:38).
7. He gives you power over the enemies and over circumstances (Luke 10:19)
8. He makes you to do things willingly for his glory and makes you to live circumspectly (think carefully before doing things). (Colossians 3:17-24; 1 Corinthians 10:31, Ephesians 5:15).
9. He gives inspiration (2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:20-21).
10. He keeps you from falling (Jude 24).
11. He helps you to live in unity with others (Psalm 133:1-3, Ephesians 4:13).
12. He seals believers unto the day of redemption (makes them remain in God till the second coming of Christ). (Ephesians 4:30).
13. He gives life to the word you speak and makes it spiritual, active, living and creative (John 6:63, Roman 4:17).
14. He reveals the secret thing of God. (Daniel 2:22, John 16:13,14 and 1 Corinthians 2:10).
15. He gives understanding of God's Word and makes it to abide in you (Psalm 119:11, Proverbs 1:23, Ephesians 1:17).
16. Helps you in prayer. (Jude 20; Romans 8:26).
17. He bears witness with you that you are the children of God (Romans 8:16)

18. He grants you remembrance of the teachings and doctrines of God. (John14:26).
19. He guides you into all truth. (John 16:13).
20. He gives you the power to abound in faith and hope, and also he grants you peace and joy. (Romans 15:13).

*(*This list of the works of the Holy Spirit, is adapted from the book “**thank you Holy Spirit**” by Dasho Gbenga Matthew)*

HIS GIFT

“There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all”. 1Corinthians 12:4(NLT)

“But it is one and the same Spirit who does all this; as he wishes, he gives a different gift to each person. Christ is like a single body, which has many parts; it is still one body, even though it is made up of different parts”- 1Corinthians 12:11-12 (GNT).

Many times in church or outside the church, you see or hear people exhibit different gifts of the Holy Spirit. Some perform miracles, others speak in tongues and so on. Actually, no single person has all the gifts, but it is possible to have more than one of them. The reason God choose to distribute the gifts and not put it all in one person is to make sure that everyone works together to his (God) glory because if it were all in one man, such a person might begin to feel he does not need others (he may

become proud). Also, of the different gifts, no one is of little importance, but they all function together just as every part of the bodywork together to form a complete person.

According to 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 and Romans 12:4-8, several gifts of the Spirit were stated, some were repeated in the different verses. These gifts include

⁸ To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. - 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 (NLT)

⁴ For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; ⁷ if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; ⁸ if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is

giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully. - Romans 12:4-8 (NLT)

1. GOVERNMENT (Leadership)

Government, refers to the ability to lead, either in church groups (as in administering the work of God) or outside the church. But you may ask why God would want his children to be involved in political issues? The answer to that question is that it is only when a righteous person is in power, that godliness can be established, if the children of God were to back down from politics, then it is the ungodly people that will take over, and they will certainly bring ruin to the nation or group of people they are leading.

Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin condemns any people.

Proverbs 14:34 (NLT)

2. HELP (to serve others)

To help refers to assisting others in their duties or calling. some people need to be encouraged through advising, finance etc. for them to achieve their goal. As a person with the gift of help, your main duty is to assist them as the Lord leads you.

3. WISDOM

Wisdom in this sense refers to the ability to apply the principles of God's word to the practical, everyday circumstance and choices of life, to

determine the will of God both for yourself and others. Sincerely speaking, the gift of wisdom is present in all children of God, who spend time studying God's word and praying.

O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.

Psalms 119:97-100 (KJV)

4. KNOWLEDGE:

The gift of knowledge refers to being able to study and comprehend Spiritual and physical facts and being able to break it down to others. Everyone might have the knowledge to a certain degree, but if you have the gift of knowledge, you can easily comprehend mysteries that are hidden to the carnal man.

5. SPEAKING IN TONGUE

This is the ability to speak in an unknown tongue. In some churches today, some pastors teach their followers how to speak in tongues, however, this is not scriptural because speaking in tongue is a gift and not every Christians have it. Some people even say that if you do not speak in tongue then you don't have the Holy Spirit, but this is a false teaching because it may be that you can't speak in tongue but you possess other gifts

of the Spirit. For more insight about speaking in tongues, read 1 Corinthians 14

6. EVANGELISM

This refers to proclaiming the gospel to individuals or groups to win them to Christ. In a sense, all Christians have this gift for direct or indirect use (directly means preaching to the individuals personally or using of materials like tracts, while indirectly refers to preaching by your character and lifestyle).

7. TEACHING

This refers to communicating biblical truth to others and helping them to understand the Bible.

8. PROPHESYING

To prophesy means to say what will happen in the future. In the bible, we find out that during old testament times, God worked a lot using various prophets to say what will happen later on. You should bear in mind that whatever a prophet says (as long as such a prophet is from God) is likely to happen. The word “likely” is used because God may decide to stop it from coming to pass. For example, Isaiah 38:1-6 tells us how God told prophet Isaiah to prophesy unto king Hezekiah that he was going to die, but because Hezekiah prayed to God, the prophecy was aborted (stopped from becoming a reality).

9. EXHORTING (encouragement)

To exhort means to encourage, motivate and strengthen others in the faith, to confront them with their behavior, and to challenge or advise them in conforming to the will of God as it is revealed in his word.

10. GIVING

This entails giving your energy, time, finance etc to move the work of God forward and also to help others. Actually, everyone can give, but those with the gift, tend to give out lavishly

11. FAITH

An unusual trust in God, enabling the individual to launch divinely ordained projects that turn vision into reality. Every believer should have faith, however, the faith spoken about in this sense is the unusual type. Unusual here means that those with this gift have a greater or extraordinary level of faith than the average Christian.

12. HEALING

This the ability to pray for sick people and they receive healing. All Christians who believe in God have this ability to an extent, but for some, it is more pronounced.

13. INTEPRETATION OF TONGUE

The ability to understand and interpret tongues. This is different from being able to understand and interpret languages.

14. DISCERNMENT OF SPIRIT

The ability to distinguish between Gods spirit and false spirit

15. MINISTERING

The ability to serve diligently. People with this gift always enjoy helping others in achieving their goal and they are content with just rendering of services.

16. WORKING OF MIRACLE

The ability to perform signs and wonders (miracles). People with this gift can perform extraordinary things e.g raising of the dead, causing the lame to walk etc.

17. PASTORING

Ability to guide and shepherd the flocks of God in the way of truth.

18. APOSTLE

One commissioned by God with a special task or message unto the people of the world (e.g apostle Paul). It should be noted that these gifts can be coveted. I mean that you can ask God for a particular gift if you don't possess it.

“³⁰ Do we all have the gift of healing? Do we all have the ability to speak in unknown languages? Do we all have the ability to interpret unknown languages? Of course not! ³¹ So you should earnestly desire the most helpful gifts...”

Corinthians 12:30-31(NLT)

(some of These gifts stated, are adapted from the book “why you act the way you do” by Tim Lahaye)

THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT

“But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance”.

Galatians 5:22-23(KJV).

Trees are identified by the fruit they bear, in like manner you as a child of God can be distinguished from children of the devil by the character (fruits) you exhibit. The verse above lists out the various characters that you as a child of God should exhibit, and all these characters will only be made manifest when you have the Spirit of God. These characters include

1. **Love**

Love refers to unselfish, loyal and benevolent concern for the good of another. In a simple sense, it means to show care and concern toward others. As believers, the Spirit of God helps you to love God and your fellow man.

2. **Joy**

A feeling of great happiness. When the Spirit of God dwells in you, he makes you happy always, even when situations are not appealing

(pleasant). In the Bible, we see how Paul and Silas praised God even when they were imprisoned; this shows that they were not moved by their situations but they were joyful even in hardship. For most worldly people, they are only cheerful when they get their desires, but as a person with God's Spirit your joy does not depend on whether your desires have been fulfilled or not, you remain lively and cheerful at all times.

3. Peace

Peace refers to a state of quietness, freedom from worry and disturbance, freedom from oppressive thought and emotions. We can also define it as harmony in personal relations. Putting these together shows that God's Spirit help you remain calm and keeps you in the right state of mind, he also helps you live in harmony with others

Try to be at peace with everyone, and try to live a holy life, because no one will see the Lord without it.

Hebrews 12:14(GNT)

Don't worry about anything, but in all your prayers ask God for what you need, always asking him with a thankful heart. And God's peace, which is far beyond human understanding, will keep your hearts and minds safe in union with Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6-7 (GNT)

4. Long-suffering

This is the ability to endure hardness or harsh circumstance without compromising your faith. It can also mean to be patient in times of trials. The Spirit of God helps you endure trying times and wait for God's help.

5. Gentleness

Gentleness refers to being kind, friendly, amiable and not being violent. The Holy Spirit helps you to be friendly, kind and loving to others. He grants you the grace to tolerate the bad behaviour of others without reacting violently.

6. Goodness

Goodness means having a favourable or right character (Godly character). God's Spirit teaches you how to act in the right way so that you can exhibit a character that portrays Godliness to those people of the world.

7. Faith

Faith refers to total belief in God. when the Spirit of God dwells in you, he guides you into having absolute confidence in God and his word.

8. Meekness

Meekness means being mild and submissive i.e being humble towards God and righteous authorities. Being meek does not mean being weak as some people think it to be, but rather it means "strength under control". I sometimes hear believers say that they are not fools and so they

will react or deal with those who offend them or take them for granted; however as a child of God, God's Spirit helps you remain submissive and calm even when you are not the one who is wrong in a matter. As a meek person, you should always be humble and learn when you are corrected and obedient when instructed.

9. Temperance

The ability to be able to control your thought, action or feeling; in a simple sense temperance means moderation (self-control) in your actions or feeling. God's Spirit help you do things in a modest way (not too less nor too much).

Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.

Philippians 4:5. (KJV)

HOW TO RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

“if ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly father give the Holy spirit to them that ask him?” - Luke 11:13(KJV)

God desires to grant you his Spirit, more than anything else. As seen from the passage above; Christ tells us how much the father desires to grant this good gifts (the Holy Spirit) unto those who ask for it; however, to receive it, certain steps need to be taken. These steps are given below

1. **Repentance**

For you to receive the Holy Spirit you need to repent (feel remorse or be sorry) from your sins. In Acts 2:38, Peter said unto the people that were present in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost that they should “*repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*”. This implies that you must repent from wrongdoings in for order to receive the Holy Spirit. You should confess your wrong unto God so you can be forgiven.

2. **Be Converted And Accept Jesus**

The next step after repentance is to be converted (turn away from sin) and then accept Christ as Lord and saviour (that is if you are not a believer already). When you are converted, you need to pray for the grace to not return to past sins. This is not easy by human power, and in some cases, it may take some time to completely stop a particular sin, however, as long as you are willing to stop and you make efforts to do so, God will give you the grace to overcome it (2 Corinthians 12:9, 1 Peter 5:5). In addition to conversion, you need to be baptized in the name of Jesus. To be baptized in the name of Jesus means to believe and confess Jesus as Lord and saviour. This baptism is different from water baptism, as it occurs the moment you ask Jesus to come into your life.

“...for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.” - 1 Peter 5:5 (KJV)

“And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness...”

Corinthians 12:9 (KJV)

3. Be obedient to God

In receiving the Holy Spirit, you need to be completely obedient to God. In the book of John 14:15-16, Jesus said unto his disciples *“if ye love me, keep my commandments, and I will pray the father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you forever”*. From this passage, we see that keeping God’s commands is a necessary step in receiving the Spirit of God. Obeying God simply involves keeping his word and doing what he asks you to do: sometimes, it seems some of God’s commands are not so convenient to the flesh; however, according to Jesus in John 14:15 (as earlier stated), you should keep his commands because we love him. When you learn to obey God because you love him, it makes it easier for you.

4. Desire the Holy Spirit of God and ask for Him.

For you to receive God’s Spirit, you must have a strong desire to receive him and then ask God to fill you. On a normal situation, humans tend to ask for those things they desire; and for God to answer your prayer, he must be convinced that you truly want what you are asking for (Mark 11:24). In Luke 11:9, Jesus taught his disciples to ask and they would be

given, while verse 13 of the same chapter stated that God would grant his Holy Spirit to those who ask for him.

⁹And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. ¹³ If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him? - Luke 11:9 and 13 (KJV)*

Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.

Mark 11:24 (KJV)

PRAYER

Thank you, heavenly father, for teaching me about your spirit, how to receive him and his works in my life, please I ask in the name of your son Jesus that you fill me with your spirit so I can walk in your footsteps in Jesus name. Amen.