

How To Maximise Your Life / Brian Houston

31 Day Devotional

DAY 1: A Blessed Life

It is God's desire and plan that everyone should live a blessed life. In scripture, 'blessed' has layers of meaning. To live 'blessed' encompasses living happy, prosperous and enjoying an abundant life. Over the next 31 days, I will unpack more of what it means to live 'blessed by God', regardless of your current circumstances.

On pages 17-19 of *How To Maximise Your Life*, I talk about the blessed man of Psalm 112 and just what it was that made his life that way. *As we spend time in the next week looking at the life of this man, I pray that you are encouraged.*

The very first thing the Psalm begins with is a declaration of praise, "*Praise the Lord!*" Isn't that interesting? A blessed life begins with knowing God and out from that relationship flows a heart of praise and thankfulness. The Bible teaches us that a heart that is thankful to God is a worshipping heart. You see, worship is not a ritual or an obligation. It is not just songs at the beginning of a corporate church service. Worship is a heart-response of gratitude and honour to God - wherever you are and whatever you are doing. You don't have to wait until you can find a church building before you can praise and worship God - worship is a way of life.

What is weighing heavily on your heart? Are you experiencing lack or sickness in your body? When your focus changes from the problem to the One who is your solution, your perspective begins to change. A blessed life with God isn't a trouble-free life, but amid the changing seasons, the ups and downs of this life, we can live with a revelation that God is good and we are blessed. Even in the middle of a challenge or trial, you have access to God's blessing.

God is not distant. He is a close and loving Saviour, a friend, and a confidante. No matter what circumstances you find yourself in today, no matter how small or great the task is before you, take your first step toward living a blessed life - lift up your voice and praise God!

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Psalm 112:1 (NKJV)

“Praise the Lord! Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, Who delights greatly in His commandments.”

PRAYER: Worthy are You, Lord! Thank you for this life. Thank you for Your Word and for Your constant care and concern for me. Open my eyes to see the blessings You have given me. May my heart be always thankful for Your provision, and may the words of my mouth and meditations of my heart be pleasing to You today.

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DAY 2: Generations of Influence and Impact

Psalm 112:2 (NKJV) says: *“His descendants will be mighty on earth; the generation of the upright will be blessed.”*

A blessed life has more impact and influence than we realise. You may think that you are an exception to that rule, however, every interaction we have with another has some kind of effect; a parent and child, a teacher and student, a friend, colleague or a neighbour...

I think most people would like to know that they have some degree of positive impact on other's lives – especially the ones close to them. So how can we ensure that we do?

Build your life according to God's principles, just like the blessed man described in Psalm 112 who finds great delight in His commands. Verse 2 says, *“His descendants will be mighty on earth”*. This speaks of people who are strong, influential and making a positive difference in the world. The blessed man or woman will also be the means of blessing for the generations that follow them.

Think about your own life. What example are you setting for the generations that follow? Proverbs 13:22 reminds us that *a good man leaves an inheritance for his children's children*. You don't have to have children of your own to apply this verse to your life. What example are you giving to your family or your colleagues? What is it about your life that will cause them to stop and take notice?

If you feel disqualified from setting-up the next generation for blessing because of your upbringing or experiences, I have good news for you! Not so!

In my book *How to Maximise Your Life*, pages 22-23 talk more about the power of choice. When we make the decision to follow Christ, we can change the course of our future despite the road of those who went before us. When we turn from our old ways and live our lives according to God's principles, we are passing on blessing to future generations.

Today, keep the future in your sights. Make the decision right now to choose the pathway of blessing that God has laid out for you in the Bible, so that long after you have gone, your legacy of blessing will live on.

SCRIPTURE: Deuteronomy 28:12-14 (NIV)

“The Lord will open the heavens, the storehouse of his bounty, to send rain on your land in season and to bless all the work of your hands. You will lend to many nations but will borrow from none. 13 The Lord will make you the head, not the tail. If you pay attention to the commands of the Lord your God that I give you this day and carefully follow them, you will always be at the top, never at the bottom. 14 Do not turn aside from any of the commands I give you today, to the right or to the left, following other gods and serving them.”

PRAYER: Lord God, I pray that I will always look to the future knowing you have gone before me. I ask for the grace to be a good steward of the blessings you have given me and for help to live well in order to be a blessing to the generations to come.

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DAY 3: Make Room for Blessing.

There is a phrase I often use in our church - "We are blessed to be a blessing". I think this encapsulates God's whole purpose for blessing. Abundance and success were the very first covenant commandments He spoke to man. *Be fruitful, multiply, replenish, have dominion...* God wasn't only speaking about offspring, but of an entire life and environment of perpetual and generational blessing and increase. This blessing and increase had a purpose then that continues today. We are blessed in order to be a blessing to others and to display God's goodness in our lives.

If we are to be a blessing to others, our thinking must come into agreement with what the Bible teaches about living blessed.

In this way, our understanding of abundance and wealth is crucial. Unfortunately there are many Christians who don't realise that wealth and greed are not the same. The Bible handles these issues in different ways because they are not the same thing. Psalm 35:27 says, "Let the Lord be magnified, Who has pleasure in the prosperity of His servant."

God is our Father and like any loving parent He enjoys His children being blessed in every way, including financially. Simply put, it is God's desire to bless us because He loves us!

Also, our attitude toward money is equally important. The Bible consistently confronts our attitude toward money and possessions - not whether we have them or not. 1 Timothy 6:10 states that "the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil". The key to aligning your attitude with blessing is what you put FIRST in your life. "Seek FIRST His Kingdom and all these things will be added to you." (Matthew 6.33)

What you need to examine in your own heart is the issue of *why* you desire to live a prosperous and blessed life – what are the purposes of your heart? Make room to receive blessing in your life by determining to understand the truth about Godly prosperity and by putting His Kingdom first, every step of the way. Then, decide you are going to live your life blessed to be a blessing to others.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Psalm 112:3 (NKJV)

“Wealth and riches will be in his house: and his righteousness endureth forever”

PRAYER: Dear God, I pray that you would speak to me about Your will and desire for me financially. Give me eyes to see and ears to hear of the need all around me. May I be Your hands and feet, ready and available to bless others.

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DAY 4: Growing through Challenges.

Ps 112:4, 6-7 says: *Unto the upright there arises light in the darkness; He is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous... Surely he will never be shaken... He will not be afraid of evil tidings; His heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD.*

How is it that some people come through incredible challenges the better for them, yet others are crushed by lesser things? How can we remain unshaken and unafraid of bad news like the person spoken about in Psalm 112?

James 1:2-4 in the Message says, *Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. You know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors. So don't try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work so you become mature and well-developed, not deficient in any way.*

Strong convictions strengthen.

Growing through challenges has to do with your convictions - what you truly believe. How do you see God? Do you see Him as forgiving and loving? If so, you will be able to trust Him to sustain you through difficulties. But if you see God as a distant, harsh judge who waits for you to slip up so He can punish you, then you will run from Him in hard times because you'll see Him as the problem instead of the answer.

Worry and fear will rob you of faith and prevent you from moving forward. But when you trust God you will have a firm belief in His reliability and a confident expectation that He will carry you through anything that confronts you.

Maximising your life means taking every opportunity to learn and grow. No one escapes challenges and trials; the difference is in how you face them. Take James's advice and consider these 'a gift', then you'll approach any hardship from a position of strength and come through with increased confidence in God. If you live this way you are like the righteous man in Psalm 112 - you will increase in wisdom and discretion and continue to progress.

Is your life anchored?

Today, develop strong spiritual 'muscle' by spending time in His Word and taking it to heart. Determine to know God more intimately and through every storm, keep your hope anchored in Jesus.

PAGE REFERENCE: If you have my book *How To Maximise Your Life*, go to pages 30-33 and check out how you can unpack this principle more.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Hebrews 6:19 (NIV)

We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain...

PRAYER: Thank you Lord that my hope is anchored in You. No matter what comes my way, I choose to believe that You love me, You will provide for me and that my future is secure in Your hands.

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DAY 5: Dealing Wisely.

The blessed man in Psalm 112 guided his affairs with discretion – this includes dealing graciously, having integrity and using Godly wisdom.

Life is built line upon line, decision upon decision. That's why the foundation you begin with is so important. As we saw yesterday, the person who wants to live a successful life must live from a place of conviction and stability. When your life is set on solid foundations of belief in God and trust in His Word, your outlook is clearer and your direction established.

Just as the man who built his house upon the sand lost everything when storms came, if you build your life on anything apart from God, your reference point toward the future is unstable - eventually things begin to unravel. A wise person has firm foundation. They are the one to whom others look for guidance and direction.

If you always look to others to meet your needs, they can control you. Furthermore, you can't do much to help others when you consistently need help yourself – you cannot give what you do not own. But ownership puts you in a position to help others.

Life is full of choices and depending on which choices you make will determine the course your life takes. But God's way will always point you in the direction of His purpose and fulfilment.

Perhaps you think you've gone too far down the wrong road, made too many bad decisions to ever live a life of wisdom and discretion. Maybe you feel like you've completely lost your way and can't find the way out...

Don't despair! It's NEVER too late to make the change and choose God's path for your life. His way is Jesus (John 14:6) and His Word is the light that shows you the direction to go (Psalm 119:105). God's grace will begin to relocate you onto the right road and establish your life on a foundation that will stand in a time of storms and teach you how to make wise decisions for the future – a blessed life!

Look to the Bible for guidance and wisdom. Pray and talk with God every day, ask Him to reveal His purposes and direction for your life.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Psalm 112:5

“A good man deals graciously and lends; He will guide his affairs with discretion.”

PRAYER: God, give me the discretion and wisdom to deal with everything life throws at me. May I hunger and thirst for your Word, so that when the storms come, I am firmly anchored and guided by Your wisdom.

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DAY 6: The Pathway for Success.

A blessed life is one that will know success. Believe it or not, *success* is a Bible word.

In Joshua 1:8 God promises that meditating on His word and living by it will, *"...make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success."*

What does success look like to you?

You may have heard the saying, "Success is a journey, not a destination; the doing is often more important than the outcome." (Arthur Ashe). This is true of the blessed man's life. Too many people have the idea that success is a formula. Books have been written promising to reveal the "secret of success" but the truth is, success is a pathway, a lifelong approach to living by God's principles.

Hebrews 6:12 tells us that the promises of God are accessed through faith and patience. Faith is believing, but patience is the decision to keep on believing until those promises are realised. Patience is faith's best friend and without it, your life quickly gets off-course and confused - especially when you want to follow God's plan for your life. Impatience will cause you to make unwise or rash decisions because you haven't factored in the element of time.

A successful farmer understands the value of time. He sows his seed according to the crop he wants to harvest but he doesn't expect the crop to grow overnight! It takes time for anything of value to develop, and the same is true in your life. Seed – time – harvest.

Of course, life has a way of throwing curve-balls while the 'seeds of success' are in the ground. But take a leaf out of the righteous man of Psalm 112's book:

1. *His heart is established* – He is anchored. There is foundation in his life.
2. *He will not be afraid* – he has confidence and faith in God to see him through challenges to the desired outcome.
3. *He has dispersed abroad, he has given to the poor* – he is generous and lives for others.
4. *His horn will be exalted with honour* – he lives with eternity in his heart and the generations in his sights.

Make the daily decision to believe God at His Word, and that His promise for you is for success as you sow the seeds of faith and patience.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Psalm 112:8-9

“His heart is established; He will not be afraid, until he sees his desire upon his enemies. He has dispersed abroad, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever; his horn will be exalted with honor.”

PRAYER: Lord, help me to be patient as I wait for your promises over my life to be fulfilled. Fill my heart with hope and trust, knowing you are a good God and you desire good things for my life.

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DAY 7: Life Assurance. Pg 40-41

Even the blessed man faces opposition. Even though nobody escapes challenges or hardship in their life, God's Word offers us assurance of protection.

Trusting God and living a life of integrity, righteousness and respect are keys to guarding against the enemy's attack prevailing in our life - that's why our friend in Psalm 112 was able to withstand whatever confronted him; even when wicked men plotted against him, they could not harm him.

Nothing has changed today. The book of Proverbs is full of Godly wisdom that we can apply to our daily lives. It is instruction for life - how to avoid pitfalls and the strategies of the enemy.

"When wisdom enters your heart, and knowledge is pleasant to your soul, discretion will preserve you; understanding will keep you, to deliver you from the way of evil, from the man who speaks perverse things" (Proverbs 2:10-12 NKJV)

Weapons will be formed against you and attacks will come, but don't give them an open invitation! Satan will look for any opportunity or permission to wage an offensive against you - he looks for any advantage. But you can cut off his 'angles' of advantage by living like the righteous man of Psalm 112. Flee sin, refuse to take offense, forgive quickly and continue to use wisdom in the daily decisions of your life.

Trusting and living for God isn't insurance against trouble but it does mean that when it comes you can be confident that God will deliver you. Determine not to draw back when difficulties come - don't give the enemy that kind of advantage - "Resist the devil and he will flee from you"(James 4:7). Stay anchored in God's Word, stay in church and be assured of God's good promises over your life.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Psalm 112:10

"The wicked will see *it* and be grieved; he will gnash his teeth and melt away"

PRAYER

Whenever trouble comes, I will trust in you. I believe what Your Word says, that "no weapon formed against me shall remain" and I claim that now in Jesus Name.

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DAY 8: Guaranteed Victory. Pg 42-45

Psalm 112:10 “The desire of the wicked shall perish.”

I love how Psalm 112 ends with this statement. What an awesome conclusion to a blessed life! God’s purposes for our life will stand in the final outcome. Our victory is guaranteed but it’s not something we can be passive about; there is something we must do to make sure we access that victory for ourselves. In yesterday’s devotional, we looked at the inevitability of challenges in life and the importance of staying strong through them. Although it is God’s desire to complete what He has started in your life, there will be times you are tempted to give up on believing God.

The key is to take on the spirit of an overcomer and ‘come over’ those mountains that face you. Galatians 6:9 (NKJV) reveals the profile of an overcomer:

And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

An Overcomer:

1. Refuses to grow weary.
2. Keeps on doing good.
3. Recognises their due season is coming.
4. Is committed to reaping.
5. Does not lose heart.

What specific challenge are you facing today? If you look at this situation through these characteristics of an overcomer, how would it change the way you see things?

An overcomer’s perspective is from the top of the ‘mountain’ instead of the bottom. When you understand that the Greater One lives in you and gives you the power to overcome, you change your standpoint.

Just like the man in Psalm 112, putting God first in your life, applying Godly wisdom and allowing Him to develop Godly character in you is the pathway for a truly blessed life.

Victory is assured when you do this – a promise you’ll find many times in Scripture. As you read Rom 8:37, 1 Cor 15:57 and 2 Cor 2:14, meditate on them and see yourself overcoming your challenges and living in the place of victory.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Philippians 1:6 says, “He who has begun a good work in you will complete *it* unto the day of Jesus Christ.”

PRAYER: Lord, I desire to live a blessed life - the good life that you have planned for me. Help me always have the spirit of an overcomer as I navigate life with You. Remind me to keep my eyes on Jesus, to not grow weary and lose heart, but to walk in Your victory! The Greater One lives in me and has overcome the world for me.

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DAY 9: The Power of Great Relationships / pg 49

Relationships are foundational to life, so it's worth spending some time looking at how to develop great ones. Human beings were made for relationship and every connection we have with others has some kind of impact – relationships even have the power to make or break us. We simply can't afford to take them for granted, neither can we expect to have great relationships if we only invest effort into them when something goes wrong...

What words would you use to describe the kind of relationships you would like to build throughout your life? There's a good chance qualities such as faithful, loyal, honest and wise would be right up there on your list. You don't have to think too hard to know why that is so. And yet all of us can probably think of a relationship that has caused us great hurt.

In life, I believe we should look at the foundation of all our relationships in the same way that God does – of the highest value and worthy of our very best.

Apart from Himself, people are the greatest gifts God has given us. When God wants to invest into us and bless our life, he will often use people. The greatest gift He could have given us He gave in His only Son, Jesus. Such an act reveals how measurelessly valuable we each are to God.

Are you experiencing problems in any of your relationships? Maybe in your marriage or with your children or perhaps you are struggling with your boss or employees. Don't despair, God has answers for you that are guaranteed to succeed when you put them to work. The Bible is loaded with advice for building great and lasting relationships in marriage, friendship, parenthood, leadership, employer relations and partnerships.

Remember first that the foundation of all great relationships begins with your own relationship with Jesus. Make investing into that relationship your priority and He will teach you how to nurture and build a life of strong, healthy connections.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Proverbs 13:20

“He who walks with wise *men* will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed.”

PRAYER: Dear God, I pray that you would bring great relationships into my life. Help me to be the kind of friend to others that you are to me. Bring people into our lives that will build Godly principles and healthy habits into our home.

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DAY 10: The Power of Friendship / Pg 50-56

I consider friendship to be one of the key elements of a blessed life; but to really experience the power of friendship, you must be a great friend yourself. The Bible has quite a bit to say about friendship. Proverbs 18:24 teaches us two important things when it comes to being a friend:

- If we want to have friends, we must first sow friendship.
- If we try to be a friend to everyone then we cannot be a true friend to any.

Like-minded people are drawn to each other and the attitudes of those you spend time with tend to rub off on you. When it comes to friendships, who you keep company with matters a great deal. Who we choose as our friends is so very important. Friends should build us up and take us forward.

A good friend is loyal and has the courage to be truthful with you – always with your best interests at heart. Their honesty helps to keep you on track. Such friends will also help you not to become distracted with things that have the potential to harm or sabotage your future.

Do you have these kinds of friendships? Are you sowing friendship? Are you keeping good company and nurturing the friendships you have? Perhaps there are some friendships in your life that are a negative influence... you may need to leave those behind. Pursue godly friends who will help build your life and take you forward.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: John 15:13-15

“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. ”

PRAYER: Lord God, I ask You to bring a ‘provision of fellowship’ into my life, or cause the friendships I already have to deepen. I ask for relationships that refresh, fill, encourage and inspire - and that in turn, I would learn to be the type of friend who enriches the lives of others.

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DAY 11: The Power of Partnership / Pg 58-67

Why are two are better than one? I can think of a whole lot of reasons why this is so. God Himself said, “It is not good for man to be alone” and went about solving the problem of isolation by creating a companion and “helpmeet” for him. I love that word because it describes beautifully what partnership is all about: connection, help, suitability and joining together. Partnership is working together for a common purpose.

The well-known scripture in Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 brings insight into the benefits of partnership:

Good reward for their labour – united in partnership, the impact and productivity of our efforts increases exponentially in our favour to that of our individual potential. Partnership increases our capacity.

Support – in times of difficulty and challenge, a partnership shares the load and compensates for an area of lack. In facing tough situations, it is those closest to you who will help you through and lift you up when you are down. When you stand alone you are more likely to be overpowered.

Companionship and contribution – The comfort of a loving, caring relationship is truly one of life’s great blessings. The benefits of companionship are vast as each contributes to the other...

Strength in a common cause – Every partnership has three strands: you, those you are partnering with and the common interest that holds the relationship together. Partnership and purpose go hand-in-hand.

Have you considered the kinds of partnerships and connections you have in your life? It makes good sense to examine the purposes that tie your partnerships together and determine whether they are leading you toward fulfilment or failure.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

Two *are* better than one,
Because they have a good reward for their labor.
For if they fall, one will lift up his companion.
But woe to him *who is* alone when he falls,
For *he has* no one to help him up.
Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm;
But how can one be warm *alone*?
Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him.
And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

PRAYER: *Father, show me which partnerships in my life are leading me on the path of blessing. Help me to grow in my capacity and resilience, to nurture my healthy life-connections and bring you honour in Jesus' Name.*

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DAY 12: The Power of Marriage / Pg 68-73

Marriage is a covenant relationship ordained by God created to empower and bless us - and when that covenant bond is honoured, marriage has great power.

The definition of marriage is a hot topic lately. Over recent centuries, divorce rates have escalated and generational fallout has been devastating. Many people have become disillusioned with marriage.

If you are married, do you want to strengthen your marriage? Or perhaps you haven't found the right person, yet are nervous about marriage because of the high failure rate. Successful marriage takes commitment and effort but the rewards are great and they are generational.

Building a strong marriage is a daily decision. Resolve to sort out issues of disagreement quickly, speak words of life to one another - don't tear each other down with your words. Finally, be committed to your partner's success because you will reap the benefits. Your support will build intimacy and fulfilment.

One of the main ingredients of a great marriage is unity and agreement. The three key areas are being united in love for one another, love for God and love for His House, the Church.

If you are married, stop for a moment and think about what practical things you can do to strengthen your relationship. Is there some area of disagreement between you? Make the decision to sit down and discuss it calmly together as a united team, not opponents.

If you are thinking about marriage, make a commitment to building a godly character and ask God to help you with your choice for a life partner.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Gen 2:22-24

Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: "This *is* now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

PRAYER: *Father God, thank You for marriage. Help me be the best partner I can be and give me the grace to rise above areas of disagreement to find unity, in Jesus' Name.*

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DAY 13: The Power of Family / Pg 74-79

Just like marriage, family is God's idea. God intended family as a place of nurture, guidance, protection, forgiveness and love. However, He knows that in this fallen world, many people do not grow up in families like that... perhaps you are among them.

The good news is that our Heavenly Father has made provision for everyone to experience family as He intended. When we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord, we enter into God's family – we become His children, sons and daughters of the Most High.

Psalm 68:6 says, “God sets the solitary in families”, a beautiful picture of His heart for the alone and the rejected. The power of any healthy family lies in its unconditional embrace. For the lonely, the grieving or the abandoned the embrace of family brings healing and wholeness. Our churches are a family, created to accept “whosoever will may come” (Rev 22:17). Building relationships within our churches is a wonderful way to experience the benefits of family connection.

When you were born, you became a part of someone else's family but when you become a parent, you will create a family of your own. As parents, we long to provide the very best we can for our children.

You may look at your family and be discouraged or you may be at a loss to know what to do to help your children. Take heart - your Heavenly Father has provided you with a wealth of wisdom and counsel in His Word, an 'open-all-hours' access to Him through prayer and a church family offering love and support.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Psalm 68:6

God sets the solitary in families; He brings out those who are bound into prosperity;
But the rebellious dwell in a dry *land*.

PRAYER: *God, You are my Father. Thank You for the gift of family. I ask You for the wisdom and understanding to appreciate and nurture my own family and to strengthen and support other families in my world. In Jesus' Name.*

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DAY 14: Building Great Relationships / Pg 80-85

Do you remember we talked about how relationships are foundational to life? The most important of them all is your relationship with God. This has the power to impact every other relationship in your life, but if you know God and put Him first, then the potential for all your other connections to be a strength and blessing to you is greatly increased.

Whatever you prioritise in your life will be strengthened. So when you put your relationships first then they will prosper.

Psalm 84:5 reminds me that there is a link between our relationship with God and the road to a full and overcoming life. God created us for intimate relationship with Him. Once sin entered, that potential was all but lost. Yet God took personal responsibility to restore our chance for intimacy with Him by sending His precious Son – Jesus.

Acknowledging who Jesus is and what He did is the key to restoring your connection with God and to building great relationships in your life.

How is your relationship with God today? Does it take first place in your life? Perhaps the busyness of daily life has crowded it out of your thoughts and time. Set aside a few moments each day to spend time in His presence and build the most important relationship you will ever have.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Psalm 84:5

Blessed are those who find strength in you. Their hearts are on the road that leads to you. (GW)

PRAYER: *Father God, help me to put You first in my life so that all of my relationships can grow from strength to strength. Help me to sow friendship, companionship and faith across the entire spectrum of my life so that I can both experience and be a channel of Your blessing.*

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DAY 15: How to Flourish in Life / Pg 113-117

The decisions you make will determine whether your life can flourish or not. A flourishing life is a blessed life. Jeremiah likens it to a tree planted by waters - something that flourishes is alive, healthy and growing

Jeremiah 17:8 says, “For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river...”

Jeremiah 17 draws a clear contrast between a person who trusts in the Lord and one who does not. Through His Word, God has laid out an obvious distinction between the consequences of following Him and following our own way. At the foundation of both is a decision. In Deuteronomy 30:19 this decision is laid out in black and white, “life or death, blessing or cursing...therefore choose life so that you and your descendants may live.”

Are you planted?

Just like the tree, if we are to flourish and produce fruit we have to have our ‘roots’ down in order to receive regular nourishment. Are you established in a local church where you can receive guidance, encouragement and thrive in your gifts and talents?

Are you easily uprooted?

If you continually uproot and replant a tree, it won’t be long before that tree begins to wither and die. It’s important to be connected with others in your church and to invest your time and energy there – putting your roots down deep.

Can you handle the weather?

Are you resilient through good times and bad or do you have a tendency to uproot and run away from challenges? When the heat is on or storms come, stay planted.

If something is stopping you from flourishing, “choose life” and position yourself for blessing.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE:

Psalm 92: 12-13 (KJV) The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God.

PRAYER: Father God, today I choose life. I choose to follow you and obey Your Word so that my life and the life of my family can truly flourish. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

How To Maximise Your Life / Brian Houston

31 Day Devotional

DAY 16: The Profile of a Flourishing Life / Pg 95-100

It is not difficult to recognise a flourishing tree. Its roots are planted in good soil with signs of growth; healthy foliage, fruit, flowers and seeds are abundant.

Like the tree, a flourishing life is a fruitful life; it will show signs of growth and health with plenty of nourishing fruit. A flourishing life grows like a “cedar in Lebanon” (Psalm 92:12), becoming strong and resilient, rising above the storms of life to provide shelter for others.

A fruitful life is the result of sowing good seed into healthy soil. So, how can you know if you are sowing your life into something that will prove fruitful and productive on the scale of eternity? Ask yourself:

What am I sowing my life into?

Your priorities reflect your values. Jesus said, “...on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.” Jesus made it clear that He is sowing into His Church and that not even Hell itself can come against it! Make God’s House a priority and you will build your life on an unshakeable foundation. When you do, it will also position you to sow your life into other things of true value – eg. family and friendship, integrity and generosity.

Is the soil of my heart healthy?

To live a flourishing life, you must also continue to confront attitudes and mindsets that pull you away from the purposes of God. For example, selfishness, unforgiveness, unbelief and fear will sap the God-life from you. God is ready to help you confront these internal challenges. Submit yourself to Him and His Word and resist the work of the enemy in your life, and your life will begin to flourish.

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 6:33 in the NLT promises this - “Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need”.

<p><i>Prayer: Father, I want my life to flourish and be a source of hope and help to others. Teach me how to put You first in everything and to confidently trust You for all I need. I ask this in Jesus Name, Amen.</i></p>
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How To Maximise Your Life / Brian Houston
31 Day Devotional

DAY 17: Building a Flourishing Church / Pg 101-105

Church should be an environment where people can grow and flourish in life. In Paul's letter to Timothy, he describes four stages in the growth and maturity of a Christian's life that contribute to building a healthy church.

"Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share." 1 Timothy 6.18

1. **Enjoyment** – A new Christian's life is marked by the joy of salvation and the excitement of sharing it with others. A flourishing church will have a healthy proportion of newly saved people and will reflect happiness and joy. I have always believed that church should be enjoyed, not endured!
2. **Servanthood** – A willing heart committed to serving in God's House will flow out of your enjoyment and sense of belonging.
3. **Giving** – Enjoyment and a servant heart lead to a desire to contribute. It's a revelation of Matthew 10:8, "Freely you have received, freely give."
4. **Sharing the Load** – An earmark of a mature Christian is that they willingly sacrifice their time, money and effort, beyond what may seem logical to an outsider. They willingly take ownership and share the load of their church and the Cause of Christ in the earth.

"Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers."

3 John 2 describes how prosperity and health are the result of a prosperous soul. Those who are planted in God's House and share the load, constitute the healthy soul of a church. Your commitment and contribution to your local church not only allows you to thrive, but it causes your church and the Church as a whole to flourish.

SCRIPTURE: Eph 4:12 (AMPLIFIED)

His intention was the perfecting *and* the full equipping of the saints (His consecrated people), [that they should do] the work of ministering toward building up Christ's body (the church)...

PRAYER:

Lord, I want to truly grow and mature in my Christian life and to be a source of strength and support to the Church You so greatly love. Grant me a prosperous soul so that I can live a full and productive life in Your House. Amen.

How To Maximise Your Life / Brian Houston
31 Day Devotional

DAY 18: A Resilient and Healthy Mind / Pg 107-112

For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. (2 Cor 10:4-5)

What you allow to occupy your thinking has a powerful impact on who you are and what you become. If you want your life to flourish and prosper, start by looking at what is going on in your thought-life.

Negativity, criticism, apathy, fearfulness, offense and so on, are like poison to your life. Likewise, yielding to temptation sets you on a deadly course. Left unchecked, such thoughts take root in your heart and sabotage your future.

James 1:14-15 in the NLT says, “Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death.”

Are you struggling with your thoughts? The Bible has answers to help you overcome in every area of life. Start by acknowledging the problem and come to God for forgiveness and help. Open your Bible and begin to fill your mind with God’s promises – meditate on them, speak them aloud and feed your mind with godly thinking, strengthening your soul.

Paul’s advice in Philippians 4:8 is so powerful: “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things *are* noble, whatever things *are* just, whatever things *are* pure, whatever things *are* lovely, whatever things *are* of good report, if *there is* any virtue and if *there is* anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.”

When opposition comes in whatever form, focus your thoughts and your heart on God and receive His grace to endure and overcome. Practise this daily and you will build a healthy mind, resilient to troubles.

SCRIPTURE: “For as he thinks in his heart, so *is* he.” Proverbs 23:7

PRAYER: *Oh Lord, forgive me for my wrong thinking and teach me through Your Word how to renew my mind and have a healthy and positive thought-life. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart to be acceptable in your sight, in Jesus’ Name. Amen.*

How To Maximise Your Life / Brian Houston
31 Day Devotional

DAY 19: Making Wise Choices / Pg 121

King Solomon wrote the book of Proverbs to instruct it's readers in the art of living. In Proverbs 1:7, he connects reverence for God with the ability to live with "knowledge" and "wisdom". Throughout Proverbs, Solomon contrasts the path of life for the wise to that of a fool - the person who doesn't believe God or value His Word.

When you love and respect someone, you will value and trust their word. Likewise, if you love and respect God then you will value and trust His Word – the Bible.

Simply put, wisdom is applying God's Word to your everyday life.

If you want to live a blessed life, the pathway is found through making wise choices every day. The most important decision you will ever make is to love and honour God and accept Jesus as your Lord. You are then in prime position to receive the wisdom to navigate your life as God's Word becomes your principal source of direction.

At times, we all 'fall short' and can make unwise choices. We know however, that God is a loving God full of grace, mercy and forgiveness. However, as we read the Word and are transformed into His image, we will obtain wisdom in every area of life.

Is there something you are facing today that you don't know how to deal with? Perhaps you need some guidance concerning your job or a relationship, or maybe your life just needs a change in direction. God has your answers and He is ready to show you. Making wise choices for your life is the daily decision to prioritise God's Word and apply it in any and every circumstance.

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him." James 1:5

Prayer: *Father, Your Word promises if I ask You for wisdom, You will give it to me. Thank you for the wisdom to carry out my responsibilities and in the decisions I must make today.*

How To Maximise Your Life / Brian Houston
31 Day Devotional

DAY 20: Finding Wisdom / Pg 122-128

A litmus test for how much you value and believe the Word of God is how much you prize and seek after obtaining godly wisdom.

According to Proverbs 8:11 wisdom is the most valuable thing anyone can acquire. “Wisdom *is* better than rubies, and all the things one may desire cannot be compared with her.”

Proverbs 4:7 tells us, “Wisdom is the principle thing; therefore **get wisdom**”! If we are told to GET WISDOM, that means it is available to us. It also means we have to do something if we want it. When a mother calls out at dinnertime, “Come and get it!” it doesn’t mean your meal will arrive in your lap without a move. She’s telling you to get up from what you are doing and go and get your meal. In the same way, if you want to find wisdom you have to be deliberate about getting it, about seeking after it.

Are you standing at a crossroad in your life wondering which way to go? How do you make your decision? Have you asked God for His wisdom in the situation?

Jesus spoke about two gates that lead to two different destinations – a narrow and a wide gate. One leads to life, the other to death. This is where wisdom is pivotal to your future.

1Cor 1:30 tells us that God made Jesus to be wisdom for us. Wisdom is available to us whenever we seek it and it is found in Jesus and His Word. In John 14:6 Jesus said, “I Am the Way, the Truth and the Life”.

Take a moment to meditate these verses about wisdom and make it a habit to seek after Godly wisdom each and every day: Eph 1:15-21, 1 Cor3:18-23, James 1:5, James 3:13-18.

Prayer:

Father God, Wisdom is found in You. Give me the spirit of wisdom and revelation so I can truly know You in ever-increasing measure and discover Your path for my life.

How To Maximise Your Life / Brian Houston

31 Day Devotional

DAY 21: Applying Wisdom to Your Life / Pg 130-142

Building something that lasts is not a process of guesswork but of careful planning. If you want to build a resilient and successful life it won't happen using a 'hit-or-miss' approach. We are all in the process of building our lives, so what plans are you following?

Previously, I spoke about why some people come through tough times and others don't depending on the foundation they have built their lives upon. When you apply the wisdom of God to your life you will not only have a blessed life but you will have what it takes to keep going through trials and set-backs.

Far too many people ignore wisdom because either they don't want to hear it or they don't recognise it when they do. Wisdom has to be sown into your life before it can produce fruit.

One of the first indicators of wisdom is your words. What is inside you will come out. If you haven't fed your soul with God's wisdom then wisdom won't come forth from your lips. Proverbs 10:21 says, "The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of wisdom."

In the same way, if you keep company with wise people, receiving their advice, you will gain wisdom. Proverbs 13:20 says, "He who walks with wise *men* will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed."

Stop and think for a moment - are you 'feeding' on wisdom? What kind of words are you speaking regularly? Are your words feeding others or are they pulling down?

Make a decision today to 'lean in' to wisdom. Receive wisdom from wise people, feed on God's wisdom every day. Positioning yourself to receive and apply positive, life-giving words is an essential key to building a blessed and productive life.

Scripture Reference: Proverbs 2:1 NLT

My child, listen to what I say, and treasure my commands.

Prayer:

Lord I ask You for ears to hear and a heart to receive Your wisdom for my life. Help me to recognise Your voice in others and may my voice be one that feeds many.

How To Maximise Your Life / Brian Houston
31 Day Devotional

DAY 22: The Benefits of Wisdom / Pg 144-149

Remember in Proverbs 8:11, we are told that wisdom's worth is incomparable. Proverbs 3:14 says, "For her proceeds *are* better than the profits of silver, and her gain than fine gold."

Some 400 years before Christ, the Ancient Greek playwright Sophocles – himself a man of means - wrote, "Wisdom outweighs any wealth."

Why is wisdom so valuable?

When you apply wisdom to your life, a wealth of benefits will connect to you. Proverbs 3 and 4 describe some of the benefits wisdom will add to your life:

Happiness (3:13)
Long life (3:16)
Riches and honour (3:16)
Peace (3:17)
Safety (3:23)
A stumble-free walk (3:23)
Anxiety free (3:24)
Sweet sleep (3:24)
Protection (3:25)
Confidence (3:26)
Promotion (4:8)
Healing and health (4:22)

I don't know of anyone who wouldn't enjoy all of these benefits – me included! What about you? The great news is that we can, simply by daily and consistently applying God's freely available wisdom to our lives.

It may sound obvious, but we can never run out of room for wisdom – God makes it available in unlimited supply and ever-increasing measure if you continue to pursue it throughout your life. No matter how full of wisdom you think you are, there's *a/ways* room for more!

Benjamin Franklin once said, "The doors of wisdom are never shut." Wisdom is always crying out wherever you are and in whatever circumstance you find yourself. Perhaps you can hear wisdom's voice competing for your attention right now. Are you in the process of making a decision between what you want and what you know is best? Wisdom is crying out to you "Choose me!" If you do, the benefits are a guarantee.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Proverbs 3:14-15

For her proceeds *are* better than the profits of silver, and her gain than fine gold. She *is* more precious than rubies, and all the things you may desire cannot compare with her.

PRAYER:

Today Lord, help me to recognise the voice of Your wisdom and apply it to my life so that I can enjoy all the benefits You have planned for me. I ask You also that I will grow daily in Your wisdom and be a source of godly wisdom to others.

How To Maximise Your Life / Brian Houston
31 Day Devotional

DAY 23: Wisdom for the Long Haul. Pg 151

Wisdom is the key to the kind of life you dream about living. God is the source for everything that has to do with life and blessing and that especially includes wisdom which, as we have seen, is on constant and abundant supply for anyone who desires it. It is simply a matter of tuning your ear to it and applying it to your life.

The Bible contains a wealth of godly wisdom for every conceivable circumstance you will face in your life including matters of family and relationships, finances and career – and is the key to finding inner peace.

Wisdom is the road to a truly blessed life and wisdom is what will keep you there. No wonder Solomon urges us to “keep her [wisdom], for she is your life” (Proverbs 4:13).

I trust you can see more clearly why wisdom is beyond price and to be desired above anything else this life can offer. It is found only in God and is readily available in the Bible – His Word – our instructions for life.

I encourage you to take a moment and think about how wisdom can take your life forward. The fact is that the wisdom of God provides the answers to your impossible questions and is the key to unlock your destiny and blessing. All you have to do is ask.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Prov 4:18 (NIV)

The path of the righteous is like the morning sun, shining ever brighter till the full light of day.

PRAYER:

Father, above all else, I desire the wisdom that comes from You and Your Word. Give me ears to hear and eyes to see so that I will recognise Your wisdom when it comes, and the strength to choose her path every day – no turning back.

How To Maximise Your Life / Brian Houston
31 Day Devotional

DAY 24: Living in Health and Wholeness / Pg 201

God has provided everything we need to live a life of health and wholeness. The Bible teaches us that we are a spirit, we have a soul and we live in a body.

When we are born again, our spirit comes alive. At that point, our mind begins the process of renewal as we feed on God's Word. In relation to this, our body or 'flesh' should begin to cooperate rather than compete with God's Word. This is how we work out our salvation in Christ (Phil 2:12) - it is a process, not an event - a journey, not a destination.

When Jesus came to earth and lived as a man, Luke 2:40 tells us he "became strong in spirit" and in Hebrews 5:8 that, "though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered."

No matter who you are, or how many years you've been a Christian, everyone will come up against challenges and trials at times. But it is in these times you discover the strength of your spirit and the health of your soul – especially when dealing with sickness or physical issues. That's not to say that we don't recognise such things take a toll, and that we look to both God and people for comfort, but the Bible tells us not to let the troubles of this world devastate you. Proverbs 18:14 in the Message says, "A healthy spirit conquers adversity, but what can you do when the spirit is crushed?"

Are you committed to going the distance in your life with God? Taking care of your earthly body is God-glorifying. Don't allow yourself to 'burn out', don't push your mind, soul and spirit to the breaking point - instead, listen to the Word of God and apply godly wisdom and good parameters that will develop your sense of well-being.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: 1 Thessalonians 5:23

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

PRAYER:

Thank You for Your Word, which is life and health to me. Help me to live in health and wholeness. I receive the prayer that John prayed that I would prosper and be in health even as my soul prospers.

How To Maximise Your Life / Brian Houston

31 Day Devotional

DAY 25: Healthy / Pg 154-159

The Bible is a comprehensive manual, filled with God's Divine wisdom for health and wholeness. Living a healthy life goes well beyond our physical body. It involves every aspect of our life including building healthy relationships and attitudes.

Do you believe good health is God's will for your life? I most definitely do! Good health has been a very real friend to God's plan for my life. It was only just a few years ago when I realised that not taking care of my own body would interfere with the purposes of God for me. How much value do you place on your health and well-being?

God's will for you is health, not sickness. However, when you are sick God is your Healer. To be honest, I don't know of anybody who hasn't had to deal with physical sickness and challenge. And despite this fact, the prevailing truth is that we have a Name which is *far* above every other name (Eph 1:21). At the Name of Jesus, the name of cancer, depression, heart disease, mental illness, diabetes, chronic conditions, addiction and any other illness must bow. If you are fighting some kind of sickness or disability, the wonderful news is that God is on *your* side! His will is for your health and wholeness and His desire is that you settle for nothing less. I encourage you today; don't allow physical or emotional deficiency to overwhelm you. God is your true source of healing and His Word is full of 'medicine' for your recovery. Take your medicine today by meditating on scriptures that will infuse life into your body as you feed on them in your soul.

Here are some to get you going: Isaiah 53:5, Psalm 100:3, 139:14, Prov 17:22, Matthew 12:15, John 10:10

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Proverbs 4:20,22

Give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings... for they *are* life to those who find them and health to all their flesh.

PRAYER:

I speak the Name of Jesus over sickness and disease. I choose life, not death - blessing not cursing. I declare by faith in Your Word and the work of the cross that I am made whole, now and forever.

How To Maximise Your Life / Brian Houston
31 Day Devotional

DAY 26: Healed / Pg 162-168

Do you believe that God is *your* healer? It saddens me that so many people – especially Christians – do not have this revelation. Many categorise sickness as God’s teaching tool or the consequence of sin, but if this were true we’d all be sick and dying!

Job is an interesting study on the question of sickness. The accusation and actions of Satan, the kindness of God, the experiences of Job and the advice of so-called ‘comforters’, play out in this Shakespearean-like story of sudden and devastating loss

Job’s friends had differing ideas about why all the ruin had come upon him. One declared that Job’s sickness was his own fault - otherwise, God would have healed him. Another attempted to persuade him that the sickness was God’s will.

Neither of these are the truth when it comes to healing and God. Among His many names is “Jehovah Rapha” - the Lord that Heals. Exodus 15:26 declares, “I *am* the Lord who heals you”- God’s will for us is healing and wholeness; nothing missing, nothing broken.

Job refused to lower his beliefs to the level of his experience, choosing instead to stand firm on who he knew God to be. The outcome for Job was total healing and the restoration of all he had lost, twice over.

Remember, John 10:10 says that Satan comes ONLY to steal, kill and destroy but Jesus gave us a better covenant – not law, but grace. Jesus provided a life of abundance to enjoy in overflowing measure. Sickness is part of the curse (Deut 28); health and wholeness belong to the blessed life.

Are you sick? Have you received a negative health report? I have great news! Your healing is at hand - the hand of *YOUR* Healer. Allow God's Word to restore your body as you lean into His everlasting arms.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Malachi 4:2

The Son of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings.

PRAYER:

Father, You are my Healer. I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You. Just like Job, I look to You for my healing and trust that You will take care of me - spirit, soul and body.

How To Maximise Your Life / Brian Houston
31 Day Devotional

DAY 27: Whole / Pg 170-175

“Do you want to be made whole?”

Jesus asked this very question to the invalid at the Pool of Bethesda. Have you ever wondered why Jesus asked this question to a man who had suffered his affliction for thirty-eight years?

Perhaps the question was about more than just physical healing. I think what Jesus was actually asking was, “Do you want to be complete? Do you really know what wholeness will mean, and the responsibility it will bring?”

Yes, God is our Healer but His desire is for us to be whole – body, soul and spirit. Along with needing physical healing, many of us have emotional brokenness and spiritual issues that prevent us from living in the fullness of God’s blessing. As humans, we tend to focus on and react more to the things that are going on around us but pay little attention to what is going on inside us.

When something is broken, it doesn’t function properly and when you are broken on the inside, you are much more vulnerable. Wholeness comes when you are willing to take on the responsibility to change on the inside and deal with the attitudes and mindsets that can hold you back from living a blessed life.

Proverbs 18:14 in the Amplified Bible says, “The strong spirit of a man sustains him in bodily pain *or* trouble, but a weak *and* broken spirit who can raise up *or* bear?”

How is your inner man? Are you hiding brokenness that you are too ashamed or overwhelmed to deal with? Do you want to be made whole?

In my book *How To Maximise Your Life*, pages 170-175, I give you some practical steps to changing the condition of your soul and opening up the doorway to becoming whole. To begin with, take a moment to meditate on Psalm 139:14.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Psalm 139:14

I will praise You, for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, And *that* my soul knows very well.

PRAYER:

Father, there is no limit to the wholeness you bring. Help me to find the courage of faith to trust You with the areas of my inner life that need renewing so I can live a life of wholeness.

How To Maximise Your Life / Brian Houston

31 Day Devotional

DAY 28: At Peace / Pg 178-185

Peace is something everyone aspires to in some degree. Whether it's a working mum who longs for a moment of "peace and quiet" or whether two powerful allies are working through the intricacies of political negotiation, the idea of peace is living in a state of contentment and tranquillity – of security, freedom and social harmony.

You've probably heard of the expression "Is the glass half empty or half full?" This is a way you can measure a person's perspective. What do ***you*** see when you look at the glass? Do you focus on what you have or what you don't have? What you focus on in life determines whether or not you will experience peace in your heart.

The Bible gives us clear instructions about finding and living in a place of peace, as well as what takes away our peace:

What a worry worry is!

Anxiety and worry work in opposition to inner peace. When you are worried or anxious about something, you do not have peace. In fact, worrying is a genuine health-hazard! Proverbs 12:25 says "Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression". The New Living Bible says, "Worry weighs a person down; an encouraging word cheers a person up."

Worrying is about trusting in your own ability but Philippians 4:6-7 says,

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Peace cannot be earned, but it can be found. The key is to turn worry into thanksgiving.

Romans 5:1 teaches us that because we are justified by faith in Jesus, we have peace with God. The grace of God means you don't have to earn peace, it comes through faith in Jesus, relying on and believing in His Word.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Colossians 3:15

Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

PRAYER:

Father I desire to live in peace. Help me to trust You with the challenges I face and to focus on all that You have done in my life with a thankful heart.

How To Maximise Your Life / Brian Houston

31 Day Devotional

DAY 29: A Balanced Life / Pg 188-197

Have you ever considered how something that is good for you can also be bad for you? How could this be?

Proverbs 25:16 says, Have you found honey? Eat only as much as you need, lest you be filled with it and vomit.

Health and harm can come from the same source when it is out of balance. Some may think living a balanced life is to live a boring, neutral and unemotional life, but nothing could be further from the truth. Balance is what keeps our life on track, secure and moving forward; it means making wise choices concerning every area of life. Living with balance is like riding a bike - as you get your momentum up, the experience is easier and feels more natural.

As the proverbs suggests, enjoy the things that bring you pleasure, but be careful not to overdo it. Too much of something good can hurt you. It's good to exercise regularly, but if you overdo it your body will suffer. "Overtraining" is a common problem with athletes and weight training; when an individual's exercise exceeds their capacity to recover, they stop progressing and they can begin to lose strength and fitness. On the other side of the balance scale, too little exercise will also cause problems such as increase of body fat, reduction in muscle mass and other health concerns.

The lesson for us all is to avoid excess – too much of anything is not good for you and it carries over into every area of life - work and rest, career and family, sleep and activity and so on.

Remember the principle of sowing and reaping. If you sow balance by making wise choices, you will reap a long, happy, healthy and blessed life.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: 1 Peter 5:8 (AMP)

"Be well balanced (temperate, sober of mind), be vigilant *and* cautious at all times; for that enemy of yours, the devil, roams around like a lion roaring [in fierce hunger], seeking someone to seize upon *and* devour."

PRAYER:

Lord, help me to live with balance. Show me where I need to change my habits and behaviour and give me the grace to sow good seed in my life so I can reap happiness and health.

How To Maximise Your Life / Brian Houston
31 Day Devotional for email and PDF download

DAY 30: Maximising Your Life

Oscar Wilde once said, “To live is the rarest thing in the world. Most people exist, that is all.”

Life is a gift from God, given to be lived and enjoyed. Jesus did not leave His home in Heaven to endure the cross and overthrow the powers of darkness so that we could merely exist.

John 10:10 in the Amplified Bible says, “I came that they may have *and* enjoy life, and have it in abundance (to the full, till it overflows).”

Too many people spend their life in pursuit of happiness but the only source of true joy and fulfilment is found in Jesus Christ – nowhere else.

The Bible is our roadmap to a full and satisfying life – it contains the wisdom and principles to rescue us from the clutches of hopelessness and death and to put us on the pathway of an overflowing and fruitful life. Everything you and I need to maximise our life, to reach our full potential, to see our dreams become reality, to be a part of this earth’s solution rather than it’s problem, is discoverable within God’s Word and relationship with Jesus.

1 Timothy 6:17 reminds us that God gave us all things richly to enjoy – not endure. If you find yourself wondering why your life isn’t what you want it to be, your answers begin with relationship with Jesus. If you already know Christ as Saviour and yet you are unhappy with your life, run to Him – He is the source of life and the answer to every conceivable lack you may be experiencing.

God is not legalistic, He is gracious and He has given us everything needed to live life well. Through the Bible, we have the wisdom and instruction to develop a positive attitude and a productive life.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Psalm 16:11

You will show me the path of life; In Your presence *is* fullness of joy; At Your right hand *are* pleasures forevermore.

PRAYER:

Father, You sent Jesus so that I can have and enjoy my life to the full until it overflows. That's the kind of life I desire. Thank You for sending me Your Spirit to show me the path to a genuinely maximised life.

How To Maximise Your Life / Brian Houston

31 Day Devotional

DAY 31: Heaven and Home

Heaven is our home - our destination - but I think all too often, we forget this ultimate detail in the day-to-day of life, I know I do.

From time to time, I like to 'take stock' to see that the 'heading' of my life is set on eternity and that I am tracking on course. This means I have to evaluate and consider: What have I been prioritising? Have my decisions been aligning me with God's plan for the future? Am I considering the consequences of my decisions before I make them?

I believe this is an important thing for all of us to do. It's just too easy, especially in Western and affluent cultures, to focus on the here and now, the next big deal or acquisition, the promotion or achievement. Yet, far too often, these things rob us from investing into the things that truly matter.

"His love has the first and last word in everything we do." Rev 21:14 Msg

Have you ever asked yourself, "What does God value most?" The Bible makes it very clear: Above all, God highly prizes Jesus, His Church and the lost. The evidence of this is clear in the sacrifice of His Best to ensure we have a secure home with Him both on earth and eternally.

When you live with the understanding and awareness that Heaven is your home, your priorities, decisions, relationships and future will come into alignment with God's unique plan and purpose for you.

Proverbs 4:18 says, "The path of the just *is* like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day."

Live with Heaven in your sights, eternity in your heart and your focus on God and people. That is truly a blessed life. And **always** remember - the best is yet to come!

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Revelation 21:3-5 (The Message)

God has moved into the neighborhood, making his home with men and women! They're his people, he's their God. He'll wipe every tear from their eyes. Death is gone for good—tears gone, crying gone, pain gone—all the first order of things gone." The Enthroned continued, "Look! I'm making everything new."

PRAYER:

Lord, as I look to the future, I am so grateful for Jesus Who has made a pathway for me. By Your Spirit, I ask for grace for each day, to keep Heaven in my sights as I journey through my life toward Home.