

DYING TO SELF: Freedom's Wake Up Call

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I'm not sure about you, but in every season of my Christian walk, I have had to be reminded of my priorities. It usually happens gradually with just a slight shift here or there, but over time it's easy to get busy and start spending less time in prayer and Bible study. We can all but stop doing what we should be doing. I for one have been guilty of losing focus and running around thinking about myself.

Just as an alarm clock's purpose is to wake us up, sometimes God sends spiritual alarms to awaken us to His presence and purpose. These alarms, often in the form of challenges or divine messages, are calls to reevaluate our priorities and realign them with God's will.

We make a bunch of excuses as to why we don't have time to do things for God, but we can always do things for ourselves. We don't have a time problem; we have a priority problem. We are more than willing to make time for the things we care about the most.

Are You on Your Road? Or God's Road?

The prophet said, "Consider your ways," (Hag. 1:5, NKJV). This phrase is a Hebrew figure of speech that literally means, "Put your heart on your roads." Haggai asked God's people to consider what direction their lives were heading and whether they really wanted to continue that way. I encourage you to take a moment to reflect on the same question. The Israelites

needed to shift their focus from their own comfort to obeying God's Word and rebuilding His house.

In your life, what priorities do you need to reposition? Are there areas of your life where God is asking for more attention or more dedication? Remember, it's not about moving God to our priority list—it's about moving ourselves to align with His eternal plan.

Is your relationship with God, your spouse or your family out of alignment? For your life to function properly, you must prioritize the important things, which are the eternal.

Our spiritual freedom journey will be marked by moments of awakening when God calls us to reassess and reposition our lives according to His will. Let's respond to these divine alarms not with reluctance but with hearts open to transformation and renewal. In doing so, we welcome a revival to our spirit that draws us ever closer to God's heart. In the quiet moments of reflection, God whispers a wake-up call to our souls, urging us to break free from the shackles of our routines and embrace the freedom found in His purposes.

Discipline & Action

In the symphony of our lives, the call of God often arrives as a resounding alarm, urging us to awaken from complacency and step into the freedom of His divine purpose. This awakening isn't just about altering our routines or habits; it's a profound shift toward spiritual renewal and freedom. As we heed this call, we liberate ourselves from the constraints of worldly priorities and find true satisfaction and purpose in aligning with God's will. Let's embrace this journey not as a burden but as a path to spiritual freedom, where every step brings us closer to the heart of our heavenly Father.

Faith, Obedience & Trust

To have a new life, you have to do something different. This

is something we must understand if we are to live by faith. Listening to God and following His plan requires us to walk things out exactly as He says. But we often struggle with this because we have a problem. Let me explain, using the story of Noah.

God told Noah to get some gopher wood, and then He said, "This is how you are to make it: The ark will be 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high." This is what we would do if we were Noah: We'd go out and see that the gopher trees have to get cut, sanded down—you get the point. It looks like a long road ahead. So, we'd go talk to someone who has no spiritual fruit, and they'd tell us where we can find some plywood. It's 449 feet long and 89 inches wide—not quite 450 feet long. And it isn't gopher wood, but it's cut and ready, so we decide to go the easy route; we take the shortcut.

Then when we finish building, the boat sinks.

We blame everyone and everything but ourselves, yet the truth is we did things our way, not God's way, because we were in a rush and thought maybe God was in a hurry, too. First Peter 3:20 tells us that "God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built." We must keep in mind that God always takes us through a process to grow us into maturity, and we can't rush through it. Don't move out prematurely if you want freedom. Stop modifying His plan. God will not protect what is not built according to His blueprint.

There is a powerful connection between faith and obedience. Hebrews 11 reminds us that faith is not just belief in the unseen but also a commitment to act upon that belief. I want to encourage you to think about situations in your life as we reflect on the example of Noah, whose faith and obedience led to the salvation of his family and a profound intimacy with God.

Faith and obedience are deeply intertwined in our Christian

journey. True faith calls us to action, even in uncertainty. By trusting in God's promises and obeying His commands, we open ourselves to His transformative power and the fulfillment of His plans for us.

Fear Not, Trust God

I don't know about you, but the more I study the Bible and read about Jesus' interactions with the disciples, the more patience I have as a leader. I mean, these dudes walked and talked with Jesus, breathed the same air and still struggled with fear and lack of faith. I have seen memes on social media where people say Jesus showed us what to do in a storm—sleep. Well, I know firsthand that is easier said than done. Storms will try your faith.

In August 2017 the Weather Channel warned Houston over several days, "A storm is coming! A storm is coming!" The funny thing is, everyone in the Gulf area had sighed with relief when Hurricane Harvey was downgraded from a hurricane to a tropical storm. We figured, "How bad could it be?"

When Harvey actually arrived, that wishful thinking vanished. Having restrengthened to hurricane status, a slow-moving Harvey squatted over our city, dumping up to 60 inches of rain across four days and leaving Houston drowned in muddy, brown floodwaters that showed no sign of receding.

Earlier that day, I had watched through our living room window as neighbor after neighbor left with the few belongings they could gather quickly. The water in the street was thigh high. By 2 p.m. the next day, the bayou behind our apartment building was swollen with floodwater. Brackish water sloshed a foot deep onto our patio, and I knew it was time to go.

Somebody pounded on our front door, confirming my thoughts: "It's time to leave!" a voice shouted. "Grab a few things and go!" I made several calls, and a friend from the church we pastor, Get Wrapped Church, came in a rescue boat to pick us

up. Our journey across Houston took a meandering route that day. First a boat, then a van, then another boat and finally a truck took us to our church building, which would become a major relief distribution center over the next month.

As I sat in the rescue boat, my arms around my wife, Ruthy, the irony hit me: the raincoat on my back read “Noah’s Ark.” It was a gift from a radio station for a show I guest-hosted. Now the full weight of that irony and what we would face in the days ahead settled over me.

“God, I’m going to lose everything,” I murmured into the damp air. His response was a sobering one. The Lord was like, “You are?” We had one carry-on suitcase and one backpack—from what I could tell, that was everything we now owned in the world. But when we returned home three days later, we discovered that while all the apartment buildings around us were flooded, our building was untouched.

During that time, I learned a lot about storms that applies to our lives today. First, storms are unpredictable. You don’t know when they are coming. They are like a surprise party for someone who hates surprises. Next, many storms are unavoidable. Unless you have plenty of advance warning, you cannot always avoid the storm or its effects. You must tap into your faith and trust God to carry you through it, as He protected us in Houston. Third, never forget that Jesus is in the boat with you. You can scream, cry and pray, but God expects you to believe He will get you through it. There is a point where the Lord expects us to release fear and fully embrace faith in Christ. Jesus expects you to spend enough time with Him and know enough Scriptures to understand that He will never leave or forsake you. Finally, God wants you to know that He can completely calm every storm you face. Therefore, you can confidently sleep through the storm because God is with you.

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founder of Love Live Lead Ministries. He has appeared on TBN Salsa, TBN and CTN Vegas, and he is a popular conference speaker. The author of Beyond the Yellow Brick Road: Unlocking the Promises of God, he lives in Houston with his wife, Ruthy. They have six children: Johnathan, Jay, Jonathan, Valery, Janina and Josh. His new book, Prison Break: 21 Days to Spiritual Freedom, releases this month, Tuesday, Aug. 6th, and is available for purchase at now.