

Insights

DENNIS BURKE MINISTRIES

The Way to a New Life

JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2009

HOW TO PROSPER IN UNCERTAIN TIMES?

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HOW TO PROSPER IN UNCERTAIN TIMES?

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BY DR. DENNIS BURKE



IN RECENT WEEKS, MORE THAN ONE TRILLION DOLLARS WAS LOST ON WALL STREET IN A SINGLE DAY. THE STAGGERING LOSSES IN THE FINANCIAL MARKETS THAT DAY IN SEPTEMBER 2008 SENT SHOCK WAVES AROUND THE WORLD.

The financial meltdown was catastrophic—historically the largest loss of dollars in the market in a single day. Yet this has only been one of many crises for the year. Various military conflicts have threatened stability around the world. Reports of out-of-control pollution, an impending energy crisis, and dwindling sources of pure water have spread around the world over cable news broadcasts.

All these natural calamities seem totally unrelated, yet they do have one common thread: *They exist to influence and control you.* Let me explain how that could happen.

The world's problems, and even our personal problems, are very real and serious. There is no hiding the fact that trouble surrounds us. But there is an even bigger issue we must address: Trouble and problems exist to work their way into us. There actually is a worldwide conspiracy to use the events and crises of the day to gain control over us.

AS A RESULT OF PAUL'S FAITH
IN GOD'S WORD OF DIVINE
DIRECTION TO HIM,
NOT ONE MEMBER OF THE
ENTIRE CREW WAS LOST.

what does a preacher know about sailing the high seas?

But once the ship was at sea, the calm winds in the harbor were replaced with a huge storm that began to tear the vessel apart. As the storm raged and the crew quaked in fear for their lives, Paul began to pray.

This is not the conspiracy of a secret society hidden away from the public eye. It is the strategy of the kingdom of darkness, designed to paralyze our faith and absorb our strength.

The Body of Christ is the only true threat to Satan's kingdom. He will do anything he can do to take your attention off of God's promises and provision for you. Satan's goal is to weaken you and to keep you from gaining ground against his plans.

Your life of victory represents the only force that will stop Satan's ultimate goal in the human race. He has come to steal, kill, and destroy in every way possible (John 10:10). You are here on this earth to show that God's plan, which includes a superior quality of life and abundant provision, is available and attainable to anyone who will take Him at His Word.

Over my years in the ministry, I've observed that two primary factors are vital for experiencing this kind of successful Christian life. People who have a grasp of these two truths set themselves apart from typical believers.

I. THE POWER OF OUR FOCUS

The first factor is *the power of focus*. Ecclesiastes 11:4 says it best:

"He who observes the wind will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap."

The most effective Christians have come to understand the power of focus. They have learned that the thoughts or ideas that capture their attention will direct their thinking and determine their direction. A person will ultimately move in the direction of his or her dominant thoughts.

When contrary winds blow or it looks like the storm clouds are gathering, the established believer is not concerned. Instead, he continues to live in faith that the seed he sows will create a harvest of increase in his life.

The winds of resistance that blow against us are not God's guidance system for us. We are not to be led by the circumstances surrounding us or the opinions of people close to us. *We are to be led by the Spirit of God within.*

The Apostle Paul had many opportunities to learn the power of focusing on God's power to perform His promises. Paul found himself in a variety of turbulent storms, most of them originating with the religious people living in the cities to which God sent him. One account in Acts even describes the way Paul dealt with a literal storm while he was aboard a ship at sea (see Acts 27).

Paul was a prisoner bound for Rome when his ship sailed straight into a violent, dangerous storm. Earlier he had warned the helmsman that they shouldn't leave the harbor, but Paul's caution was ignored. *After all*, the helmsman probably reasoned,

Acts 27:22-25 tells us what Paul declared to the others on board after hearing from the Lord:

"And now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you.' Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me."

As a result of Paul's faith in God's word of divine direction to him, not one member of the entire crew was lost.

Even if you do find yourself in the midst of a terrible storm in life, you can deal with it the same way the Apostle Paul did. In the midst of the most dangerous of circumstances, Paul said, "Take heart—it will be exactly like God has shown me!" You can be confident of the same thing—that it will be just as God has said to you.

In Second Corinthians 5:7, Paul said, "For we walk by faith, not by sight." Throughout the Bible, you can find examples of God delivering people who were not moved by what they saw. In the same way, you can decide that you will not be changed or moved by a storm of circumstance or trouble.

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You can choose not to observe the winds.

This is not to say we're to pretend that nothing bad is happening. Faith in the Word is not the same as denying that a problem exists. Denial can be deadly. But when we're standing in faith, the truth of God's Word gives us the strength to face the storm.

That's the example Jesus set for us in the last days of His life. He was betrayed by Judas. Later a multitude hunted Him down to arrest and ultimately murder Him. Yet even as Jesus faced this darkness, He spoke words of faith in the midst of the storm. He said, "Be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world" (John 16:33)—even though at that moment, it didn't look as if Jesus had overcome anything.

II. LIVING BY GOD'S LAW OF SOWING AND REAPING

The second necessary factor in the lives of successful believers is that they have grasped *the law of sowing and reaping*.

God's Word describes this fundamental and inescapable law of His Kingdom. Galatians 6:7 (*Phillips*) says it so well:

"A man's harvest in life will depend entirely on what he sows."

We each hold our future in our own hands. Our future is *not* in the hands of world leaders. No matter how insignificant we feel or how lost in anonymity, each one of us is a person of destiny.

To observe the wind and the clouds is to look to the natural conditions around you to determine whether or not you are going to sow. But your future and the harvest you will receive *tomorrow* depend on what you sow *today*. Whenever you sow the Word in faith through acts of love or through the giving of your time or money to the work of God's Kingdom, you will reap a harvest.

This is the entire design of the Kingdom in which you live. Whatever seed you sow, you will receive a corresponding harvest.

One day Jesus' disciples asked Him to increase their faith (Luke 17:5). They realized they weren't at a place spiritually to believe God for the miracles they were witnessing.

In answer to His disciples' request, Jesus began to teach them that faith was like seed. Seeds are not big and impressive, yet they sustain life. They grow when they are planted. Similarly, when the seeds of God's Word are planted, they will sustain your life. Faith doesn't come by asking God for more—it comes by the Word being sown.

Faith is designed to increase, but not by our asking God for faith. Prayer can never replace the law of the Kingdom that says every seed produces fruit. The seed of God's Word must be sown in faith. When this sowing takes place, faith increases.

In these troubled and perilous times, you must continue to sow the seeds of God's Word by speaking the truths that agree with what God has said. This is how you sow to the Spirit. You sow the Word with your words. Your agreement with God begins in your heart and changes what comes forth from your life through your thoughts, words, and conduct.

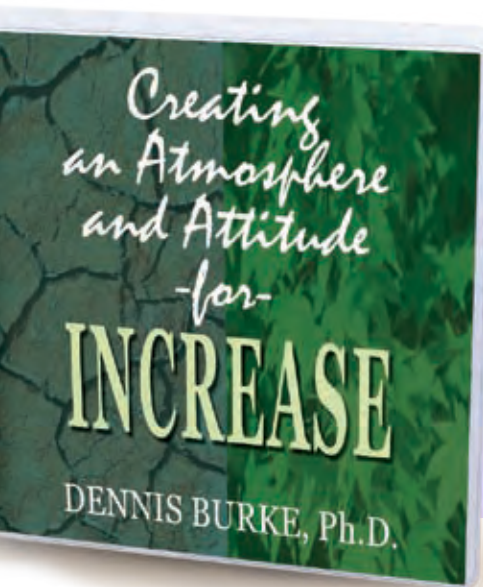
You also sow in faith when you give your offerings to the work of God's Kingdom in faith. This is not the time to pull back! This is the time to stay the course, keep your focus on God and His Word, and continue to sow in faith.

- ▶ **When trouble comes—sow the Word.**
- ▶ **When your relationships are threatened—sow the Word.**
- ▶ **When your bills are piling up—sow the Word.**

Your deliverance is in your hand and in your mouth as you sow the Word with the words of your mouth and with corresponding actions of faith. Your harvest in life depends on your sowing.

With the heart you believe. Then with your words and actions of seed-faith, you step into the delivering power of God's Word.

So don't observe the winds, and don't regard the clouds. Fix your focus on God and His Word, and continue to sow in faith. As you do, you will continue to reap a harvest of increase in your life, no matter what is going on in the world around you.



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determining your friendship quotient WITH GOD

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IT WOULD CAUSE YOUR CONFIDENCE TO SOAR AND CHANGE WHAT YOU BELIEVE ABOUT YOURSELF.

CERTAINLY YOU'D FEEL ACCEPTED AND **PRIVILEGED**.



ABRAHAM was affected in this way when God called him friend (Isaiah 41:8). When I first read this verse, it made me want to know what God meant. In His eyes, what makes a good friend?

A friend sticks with you through thick and thin. He loves at all times; he looks beyond your personal faults; and he allows you to be yourself. A true friend embraces your interests and at times even considers your interests above his own.

Abraham did all of this when he gave God his life, his money, his future, and his family. He even became willing to offer his son, Isaac, as a sacrifice that would ultimately open

the door to bring Jesus, God's Son, into the earth. Abraham was the kind of friend who understood how to honor his divine Friend—and, as a result, this man of faith produced divine results.

Too often people fail to relate to their friends the way Abraham related to God as a true friend. Instead, some people look at their friends only in light of what they can gain for themselves.

If you've ever had a one-sided friendship, you know exactly how unfulfilling it is to show interest in someone's life but not have that interest reciprocated. You ask about your friend's



life—his family, his business, his walk with God, etc. You pray for him, encourage him, and help him when he's in need—but through it all, your friend shows little interest in your life. That's why Paul said in Philippians 2:4: “Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too....”

The Lord surprised me once when He told me that He has one-sided friendships as well. He said, “Many of My children have a one-sided relationship with Me. I only hear from them when they have a need. They come to Me to ask for something; then they leave until another need arises.”

Then the Lord said to me, “One-sided friendships bring no more pleasure to Me than they bring to you.”

The requirements of true friendship place a demand on us to change the way we approach God. We know the Lord wants to work in our personal lives, but He also wants to accomplish His plans and purposes on this earth *through* us.

Without true friends to share His interests, and at times to consider His interests above their own, God's desires will be delayed—or worse, unfulfilled. Ezekiel 22:30 (*KJV*) says, “And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me...but I found none.” What a heartbreaking and tragic realization. Someone must take up God's cause and pray.

Maybe it hasn't occurred to you that you have an important

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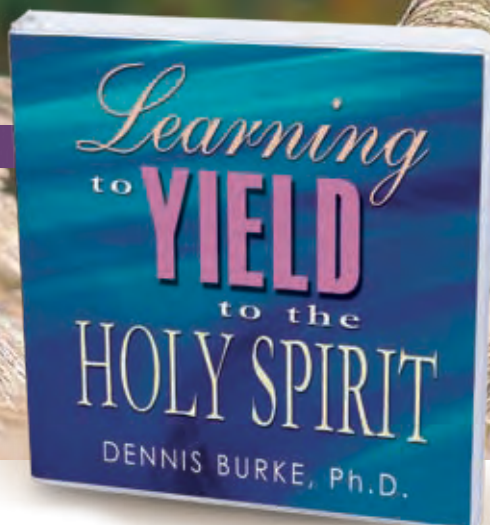
role in the fulfillment of God's desires. Or perhaps you haven't yet realized the spiritual law that dictates faith-filled words must be spoken in order for anything to happen on earth—even God's will. You see, it's the will of God that none should perish; yet people die and go to hell every day (John 3:15, 16). That means we have a vital part to play in bringing God's will to pass on this earth.

The Holy Spirit wants to let you in on the secrets of God so you can fulfill your role in God's plan. Paul said, “No one can know what anyone else is really thinking except that person alone, and no one can know God's thoughts except God's own Spirit. And God has actually given us his Spirit (not the world's spirit) so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us” (1 Corinthians 2:11, 12).

The power of a secret is in knowing something others don't know—and in this world, everyone wants to be “in the know”! No one wants to be left outside the circle that receives important information.

But to become a friend of God with whom He shares His secrets, you can't be satisfied only to experience His miracles. You must also be hungry to know His ways and to enter into a multi-dimensional friendship with Him as you learn to hear His voice personally. This was the very quality that made Moses different from the rest of Israel. And as a result of Moses' friendship with God, “He [God] revealed his character

rise to new dimensions of His power



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Dec.7(p.m.)

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Hebbronville, TX 78361 | 361-527-3804

Jan.11-13

Antelope Valley Springs of Life Ministries
Lancaster, CA 93534 | 661-945-3822

Jan.18

Omega Church
San Antonio, TX 78214 | 210-923-2220

Jan.25

New Life Family Fellowship
Caddo Mills, TX 75135 | 903-527-3099

Feb.13-15

Joy Church International
Mount Juliet, TN 37122 | 615-773-5252

Feb.22

Festival of Life World Outreach Ministries
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Feb.27-Mar.4

Faith Family Fellowship
Kahului, Maui, HI 96732 | 808-244-4992

Mar.8-9

Kern Christian Center
Bakersfield, CA 93313 | 661-664-1000

Mar.29-31

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to Moses and his deeds to the people of Israel" (Psalm 103:7).

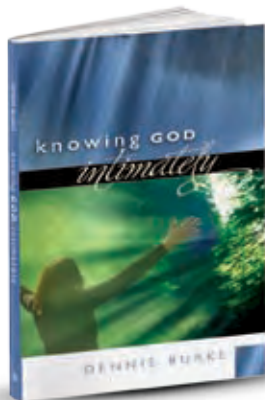
If Moses' burning desire to be an intimate friend of God also describes *you*, get ready—because God is calling you into the deep. However, to answer that divine invitation, you will have to let go of every preconceived idea that doesn't line up with God's truth. You may even discover that human tradition has made the Word of God ineffective in certain areas of your life.

For instance, traditional thinking has drained much of the power out of Jesus' words in John 14:2: "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." There is nothing in this verse to indicate that there are separate compartments in Heaven. Yet many Christians feel all warm

continued on back

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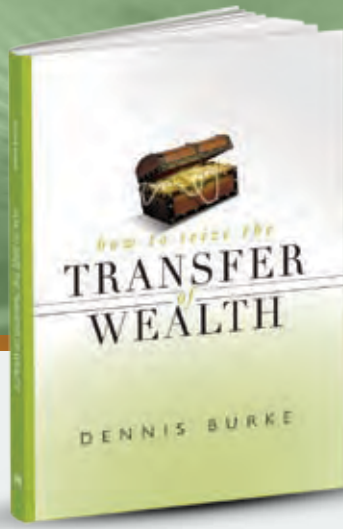
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and fuzzy inside when they think about the mansion Jesus has prepared for them.

The Greek word for “mansion” carries the meaning of *dwelling places* or a *watch house*. The power behind this verse lies in understanding these “places” that Jesus has prepared for us. This word actually refers more to a *condition* or an *opportunity* and means *to make room for something* or *to take someone’s place or position*. Further study reveals alternate meanings, such as *a seat of authority* or *a reef produced in an area where two currents meet; a place of cross currents.*”

These definitions don’t leave you with the impression of an actual mansion or house, do they? That’s because this place that Jesus is preparing for us is far more than a house in Heaven. In fact, if you’ll read all of John 14, you’ll discover that the context of this chapter deals with our living on *earth*, not in *Heaven*.

So what does this mean for us? There are many “dwelling places” or “watch houses” in the Father, and He prepares these conditions—these seats of authority, these opportunities, these “places where two currents meet”—for our benefit. Such an understanding of this verse carries a much deeper sense of purpose than the concept of a specific place to live “in the sweet bye-and-bye.” Why? Because it helps us realize that Jesus has prepared these places for us, and He expects us to step into them now—in *this* life.

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What does “cross currents” mean in light of this truth? We are told in Revelation 22:1 that there is a river of life as clear as crystal, which flows out from the Throne of God. Jesus also referred to a river that flows from within a believer: “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water” (John 7:38 *NKJV*). As believers, the river of life-giving water that flows out of our hearts can cross, intersect, and overlap with the river that flows from the Throne of God. And whenever that “cross-current” moment occurs, we will swim in deep waters!

The river that flows from the Throne of God calls out to the river that flows within us. Psalm 42:7 (*KJV*) says, “Deep calleth unto deep....” Those life-giving waters of God are calling out to the living waters that abide within us, drawing us deeper into the things of the Spirit. This same Psalm begins by saying, “As the deer longs for streams of water, so I long for you, O God. I thirst for God, the living God...” (vv. 1, 2).

Do the words of the psalmist express your own inner longing for the Lord? Rest assured that He will answer the cry of your heart as you hunger for Him. The question you must continually ask yourself is this: *Will I pay the price today to become a friend of God, putting my own interests aside long enough to answer His call to pursue the deeper things of the Spirit?*

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