

**AN ALIVE CITY CHURCH
DEVOTIONAL**



**LEVEL
UP**

TABLETS OF CONTENTS



01

Wisdom Wins

02

You're Hired!

03

Relationship Matters

04

In Authority and Under Authority

05

Know Like David Knew

06

With God on Your Side

07

Dare To Be Different

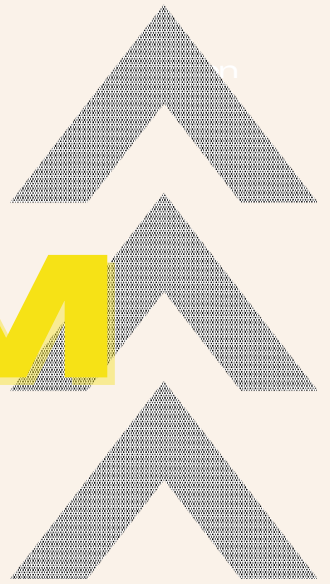
08

Humble Yourself

09

Guard Your Heart

WISDOM WINS



**“Wisdom is the most valuable commodity—so buy it!
Revelation-knowledge is what you need—so invest in it!”
Proverbs 4:7 (TPT)**

When Solomon became king, God told him to ask for whatever he wanted. Solomon’s response was “give your servant an understanding mind and a hearing heart [with which] to judge Your people” What an opportunity! Imagine God asked you this question, how would you answer it?

Solomon was a young man in his prime, newly married and newly appointed king. He had a lifetime of leading ahead of him, not only his family but also a nation. Yet he knew he was an amateur. He had followed the instructions of his father David but he needed to stretch beyond this in order for his reign to be successful. Solomon made the greatest decision of his life, when he chose wisdom. The Bible says in James 1:5 that if we lack wisdom we should pray to our Father in heaven who will give it to us freely. He knows we need it to succeed in life

The sole source of God’s wisdom is His word. The Bible says that the beginning of wisdom is the fear of God. We need to come to maturity in our walk with God so that our desire for the Word supersedes our desire for what is in God’s hands.

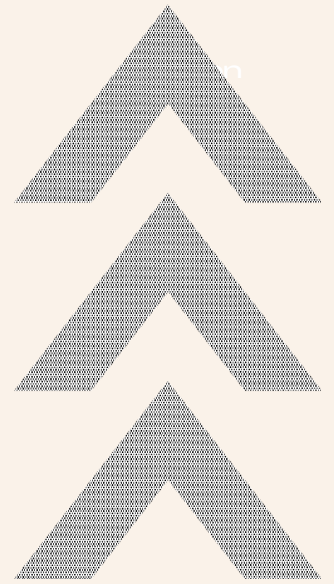
Solomon realised this early on and God said to him “I will do what you have asked. I will give you more wisdom and understanding than anyone has ever had before or will ever have again. I will also give you what you have not asked for: all your life you will have wealth and honour, more than that of any other king.”

Our God is so generous; He gave us His only son, He gave us His everlasting love, He gave us the Holy spirit, He gave us righteousness and the list goes on. As freely as he gave us all these things, he freely gives us His wisdom. He is the ancient of days, the creator of all things - nothing is new or a surprise to God so asking Him for wisdom as Solomon did is an investment with huge returns. The wisdom of God can transform your life. It elevated Joseph from a slave to a the Prime Minister of Egypt. Wherever you are in your walk, wherever you are in life, what could you achieve if you stretched yourself beyond asking God for material things and asked Him for wisdom today?

Further Study: 1 Kings 3, Proverbs 2, James 1:5, Proverbs 1:7, 1 Corinthians 1:30, James 3:17, Proverbs 8:11, Proverbs 4:7

WEEK 1

YOU'RE HIRED!



“Just as each one of you has received a special gift [a spiritual talent, an ability graciously given by God], employ it in serving one another as [is appropriate for] good stewards of God’s multi-faceted grace [faithfully using the diverse, varied gifts and abilities granted to Christians by God’s unmerited favour].” 1 Peter 4:10 AMP

Biblical stewardship can be defined as using and managing all resources God provides for us for His glory and the betterment of His creation. We know that God is the provider and creator of all things. God expects us to look after the things He has freely given us and leave them better off than when we received them. It may seem like a heavy responsibility, but God has given us access to all the wisdom we need to be faithful stewards.

Stewardship, when done properly results in two things: glory given to God and people's lives being made better off. Jesus shows us the perfect example of godly stewardship. He came to a broken world that was full of sin, and throughout his life stewarded His gifts to the betterment of everyone that came around Him. He also gave a timeless sacrifice through the shedding of His blood and left us with the Holy Spirit to transform lives. In the same way, we need to have a heart of stewardship wherever we find ourselves. We have to understand that the true owner of everything we have is God and one day, He will ask for an account.

He is the real owner of our lives, finances, children and whilst we enjoy them, we will also stand before our Maker to give an account of how we managed these aspects of our life.

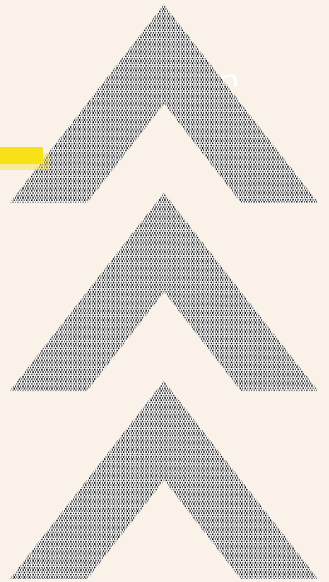
Stewardship is active and intentional. It's not passive and apathetic. In the parable of the talents, God commended the people who took a proactive attitude to managing what God had given them. On the other hand, He rebuked the one who hid what he was given.

Spend time with God and ask Him how He wants you to manage what He has gifted you. Stewardship requires wisdom to know how you are meant to add value and leave things better. The Bible calls us to work like we are working for God and not unto man. Start living with a consciousness of how God wants you to look after the blessings He has given you, so that one day you hear Him say “Well done, you good and faithful servant”.

Further Study: Colossians 3:23, Matthew 25:14-30, 1 Tim 6:17, Psalm 24:1, Revelation 4:11, 1 Peter 4:10-11

WEEK 2

RELATIONSHIP MATTERS



"Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy." Luke 19:6 (NLT)

Strong relationships can buy the right to speak into people's lives and present opportunities to be a witness of the gospel. The Bible says that Heaven rejoices when one soul gets saved. We see in scripture that Jesus would allow His entire schedule to be interrupted by encounters with individuals because he was more passionate about the "ministry of the one" than the attention of the crowd.

It's evident because these individual encounters make a beautiful collection of highly personal yet different testimonies: the woman with the issue of the blood, the madman of Gadarene, the samaritan woman, Jairus' daughter, the centurion's servant, the paralytic man and many more. Jesus often looked for the opportunity to connect with sinners on a personal level and took time to build relationships with them. It was how they felt in His presence that helped them to open up about the truth into their lives. He spent so much time with sinners that the religious leaders accused him of "eating" with sinners (Matthew 9:11; Luke 19:7).

Now the strength of relationships are not dependent on time. Relationship is defined as two or more people being connected (irrespective of time). Jesus found grounds on which he could be connected with the people he met. That connection, or relationship meant that he had the opportunity to minister to them. In the same way, we ought to build relationships or in other words, connections with people who don't know Christ.

This gives the world an opportunity to not only hear the word but witness firsthand what a surrendered life looks like and this can be a powerful witness (either the seed or part of the watering process) to bring spiritual regeneration to a sinner.

How can you build authentic relationships with people?

- 1) Ask God-inspired questions. These can cut through a stony heart and trigger a person to open up in a way that they didn't even expect.
- 2) Share your struggles and victories. This provides an opportunity for others to see how Christ makes the difference
- 3) Be present when spending time with others. This shows people that they are valued

Jesus was so good at building connections and relationships that people were willing to reveal their true selves in His presence. He often was invited to people's homes to dine with them. People don't invite just anyone into their home. You invite people you trust because, in your home people see more than just the outward exterior (the put together version of yourself). As you build relationships, people will allow you to come into their "homes" (i.e. their hearts and lives and see what they are really going through). As you go throughout the day, consider who you can connect with and how you can share with them the reason for your hope and joy.

Further Study: Luke 19:1-10, 1 Cor 3:6-9, 2 Cor 5:11, Isaiah 50:4, 2 Cor 3:2

WEEK 3

IN AUTHORITY AND UNDER AUTHORITY



“Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.” 1 Corinthians 11:1 (ESV)

Authority and responsibility go hand in hand. As people of God we are all leaders in various spheres - ministry, family, career and community. Each and every one of us are called to have authority over and therefore, responsibility for the areas God has entrusted into our leadership. The definition of authority is “the power or right to give orders, make decisions and enforce obedience.” That ‘power or right’ has come directly from heaven. Our authority that we exercise as children of God, is under the authority of Jesus Christ. This authority has been given to us to make us effective leaders in our personal sphere of influence.

We are to imitate Christ who led by example, demonstrating His authority wherever He went and whomever He was with. Whether in the temple, or outside, we are to recognise that the authority we are given is to enable us to lead in different capacities and spheres in and outside the church. As Jesus did, we are also called to lead the unsaved to Christ. The people who write themselves off like the woman at the well, or the people who society writes off like the woman found in the act of adultery. We have the authority to lead people out of their mess into God’s grace. This is exemplified through the authority of our words as well with signs and wonders. We have been given the keys of the kingdom and we need to use them to lead people into their destinies.

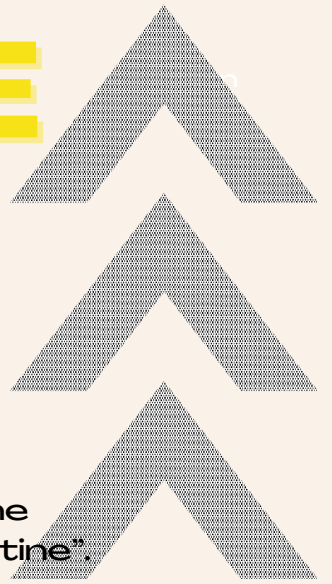
Yet, we need to always recognise where our authority comes from. We see examples of leaders that God had once elevated in the Bible who go astray and attempt to operate in their own authority, ignoring the principles of God and abandoning His ways for their own. King Saul, the first monarch of the people of Israel, is an example of such a leader who remained in power but his authority had been taken away. Leadership became a struggle for him and he eventually became consumed with his insecurities, fears and jealousy. Now under this new dispensation, God has given us the Holy Spirit to help us and to guide us into all truth. So by the Holy Spirit, we can be sensitive to ensure we are always operating under the authority of Jesus and that we are now effective leaders and also guiding others in truth.

Be bold in living out your faith, knowing that you've been called to lead those in your spheres of influence to Christ - follow Christ's example and you can't go wrong. The authority given to us gives us power over laws of science in the physical realm and principalities and powers in the spiritual realm. We have to remember that this authority has been given to us to lead others to Him, in 1 Corinthians, Paul mentions that he lives his life to benefit many, so that they may be saved. Our authority and leadership is not for our own personal gain, fame or profit; it's for God to be glorified and people to come into relationship with Him. Let's walk in authority, under God's authority and see people saved, lives transformed and destinies fulfilled.

Further Study: Matthew 16:18 -19, Mark 16:14-20, Titus 2:7-8, Psalm 23:1-3, Titus 2:15, Titus 3:1

WEEK 4

KNOW LIKE DAVID KNEW



“The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine”.
1 Samuel 17:37 NIV

You may have heard the phrase ‘dance like David danced’ but today’s encouragement is to know God like David knew God. To know Him more deeply and more intimately than you do now. To be able to trust Him so much so that you trust the gifts He placed within you and the purpose that He is calling you to fulfil, despite the challenges that come your way.

When we read 1 Samuel 17, we are told very early on in verse 4 that Goliath was a champion. He was a seasoned fighter, trained from youth, whose track record preceded him hence he is introduced as a champion. For 40 days Goliath had been calling out at the front lines, taunting Israel's army, challenging them for battle and fear gripped them all... all but David.

Because David knew his God and understood his assignment. David had been faithfully tending to his sheep and allowed God to minister to him in his field of expertise. God wants to use the situations you find yourself in now to show you what He can do through you. To show you His nature and for you to know and trust him more. Matthew 6:34 (MSG) says “Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes”.

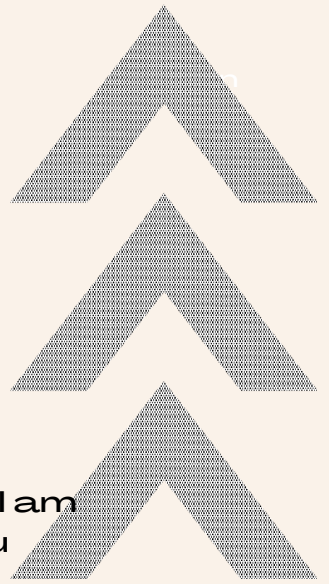
That's exactly what David did, when he was faithfully tending to the sheep despite being anointed as king, he encountered a lion and a bear. In these situations he allowed God to prove Himself as mighty because he trusted Him. Little did David know, it would be his training for the biggest fight of His life, that would change the trajectory of his life forever.

God is training you right now. Wherever you find yourself currently, be faithful and allow God to reveal himself to you through the challenges. If our first response to challenges is fear, then we are not where we need to be yet. Let's get to a place where we know God like David knew God.

Further Study: 1 Samuel 17, Luke 16:10, Jeremiah 17:7

WEEK 5

WITH GOD ON YOUR SIDE



“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

Isaiah 41:10 (NIV)

With God on your side.... you can fill in the blank. Let your imagination run wild. When God is with you, you can actually do the impossible. The magnitude of that statement is enough to change your life. Do you fully know how much His presence makes a difference? If you commit to knowing God and walking with Him, He will walk with you. God sticks by your side in every sphere of your life. He will give you the power and the ability to do things that you are not qualified for. He adds a touch like no other, He gives you wisdom and His Spirit augments your efforts.

When God is with you, be sure of these things:

1. You do not need to fear anyone or any situation
2. He will train / teach you to succeed in everything and in every place
3. Favour becomes a part of your brand - you are known for supernatural favour

David was a shepherd boy, yet the Bible says that God gave him success on the battlefield. He had never been to war, but He knew God. He won the battle that qualified soldiers were not prepared to fight. His strength was built in God's company and God trained Him. Likewise, Joseph was sold into slavery as a teenager into a foreign land, not speaking the language and with no experience in leadership. Yet when God was with Him, everything He did was successful and he was elevated to being Prime Minister of Egypt.

You are anointed because you are not alone.

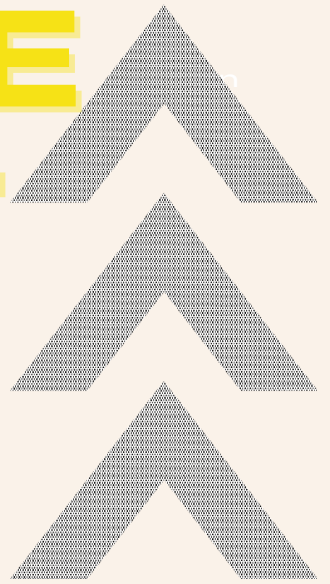
Understand that if God is with you, you will stand out from the crowd. Don't discount or discredit yourself because if you are intentional about your relationship with God, He will make you different in this life. You will be a leader and not a follower, the head and not the tail, above and not beneath. What sets you apart is His Presence before you, beside you and behind you. Moses understood this, and refused to advance on the journey to the Promise Land unless God Himself was present amongst them. Moses knew the journey and destination would not be the same, if God was not by their side.

Now reflect on this - as much as you want God to be with you, is it obvious to God that you want to be with Him? Do your preferences, your priorities and plans demonstrate your desire to be with Him? Jesus said seek God first and all other things will be added. He will send you into places that He has prepared for you - that might be taking you into the boardroom, or taking you into ministry, or expanding your business. Don't underestimate the presence of God. He is faithful and as He said it, just believe it!

Further Study: 1 Samuel 17; Exodus 33:12 -19; Psalm 118:7; Acts 7:9-10; Esther 2:8-9; Psalms 5:12

WEEK 6

DARE TO BE DIFFERENT



“And in the fourth watch of the night (3:00–6:00 a.m.) Jesus came to them, walking on the sea. When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out in fear. But immediately He spoke to them, saying, “Take courage, it is I! Do not be afraid!” Peter replied to Him, “Lord, if it is [really] You, command me to come to You on the water.” He said, “Come!” So Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus.”
Matthew 14:25-29 AMP

We did not enter this earthly realm empty. Our Heavenly Father loaded us up with gifts, purpose and destiny before sending us here on earth. In the Book of Jeremiah, we read that God sets us apart to fulfil the assignment He has given us. What does it mean to be set apart? Simply put, it means to be different from others in a noticeable way. Being different is never an easy task! It comes with its challenges such as dealing with fear, worry, doubts of your calling and assignment and most certainly other people's opinions. To be different takes courage, confidence and also a tenacious spirit. Being different is definitely not for the faint hearted but for those who are ready to stretch their faith and fulfil their potential and purpose.

Let's consider the disciples in Matthew 14:22-33, who were out at sea in a boat in the middle of a storm. One of those disciples, Peter, dared to be different. All of the disciples were together in the same situation - there was chaos, fear and worry about what might become of them as they were being tossed by the vicious waves and storm. You can almost imagine the scene: cries of panic, confusion and despair. How would they make it to dry land safely? Suddenly, in the midst of the fear pandemic, Jesus comes like a ghost, walking towards them on the sea. Notice that Jesus comes walking, not running. He is walking because He is giving someone the opportunity to recognise Him in the storm, daring someone to be different.

The disciples shouted “it's a ghost” but Peter sees an opportunity. They all were looking at the same thing, but Peter saw differently.

As his perspective was different, so were his actions. He became famous for walking on water. All of the disciples had the opportunity, but only Peter stepped out of the boat.

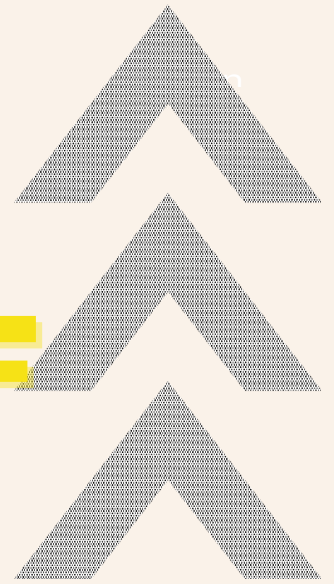
Believers have been set apart. When the world is living in fear we live in faith, when the world is full of darkness, we shine our light. We need to be the change we want to see! If you want to see change in your household, it starts with you. If you want to see change in the community, it starts with you. If you want to see change in your life, guess what - it starts with you. If we are going to be advocates for change and impact then the process must start with us. There will be people who question your experience, credibility and knowledge but remember they do not see what you see, so don't let them stop you. Saul tried to stop David fighting Goliath based on experience. The enemy tried to stop Gideon based on his credibility. The disciples in the boat probably tried to stop Peter, with all good intentions, from stepping out of the safety of the boat to walk on water (in the middle of a storm!). Nonetheless these three role models 'dared to be different' as they blocked out background noise and discouraging voices.

Likewise, God is beckoning us to do the same. We just have to step out and The Holy Spirit will guide and order our steps into greatness. Don't delay, dare to be different today!

Further study scriptures: Matthew 14:22:33, 1 Samuel 17:33, Judges 6:6-18

WEEK 7

HUMBLE YOURSELF



“But the grace that God gives is even stronger. As the scripture says, “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” James 4:6 GNT

Humility is defined as "the quality or state of being humble." It is also a "modest or low view of one's own importance." Most importantly humility is being "free from pride and arrogance." Today we are also adding to the definition of humility, 'the acknowledgement that we need God for every aspect of our lives'

Pridefulness is sneaky and can rear its head in any and every situation. It will sometimes be clear as day that you are dealing with a prideful heart, not wanting to say sorry when in the wrong, brashly bragging and boasting or being unteachable because you know it all. But we must open our eyes to the areas in our heart where pride is working behind the scenes, clouding our thoughts, dictating our speech and governing our actions - in the everyday motion of life. When we fail to acknowledge God, we fail to lean on God or we fail to submit to God. This is what pride looks like in the life of a believer. God resists the proud!

As everything becomes like clockwork, we end up living a life without Him - while saying we are living for Him. But we must get back to basics and acknowledge that there is no area of our lives, big or small, that we do not need God! To parent the fussy toddler or the tough teenager we need God, to use the 24 hours in the day efficiently we need God, to deal with the demanding client and produce the deliverables, we need God - He is everything we need and can be in everything if we humble ourselves to Him and His plan.

When was the last (or first) time you woke up and asked God to lead you today, you submitted totally to His direction even with a to-do list as long as your arm? There is a place where grace will flow towards you like water, it always flows downhill and seeks the lowest levels to strengthen, nourish and quench all that it encounters.

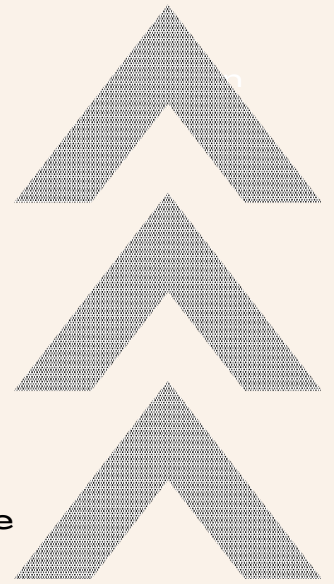
Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane was in agony as He said to the disciples “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow”. He cried to His Father and pleaded for the cup of suffering to be taken from Him but Jesus humbled himself and said “Yet not as I will, but as you will”. I believe Jesus received a flow of grace to complete His assignment when He humbled himself. Jesus came to this earth fully aware of God's plan for redemption of His people yet still it was hard, He had the weight of this world on His shoulders but still humbled Himself. You and I do not know what our tomorrow holds, just like Jesus we have to trust the God who knows the full plan and wants to grace us as we humble ourselves before Him.

In this life there is only one hack you need, humble yourself to the Father. We need Him. So let your week be one filled with an abundance of God's grace as you humble your heart, mind and soul to Him.

Further Study: Matthew 26:36-46, Proverbs 22:4, James 4:10, 1 Peter 5:6, Luke 14:11

WEEK 8

GUARD YOUR HEART



“Guard your heart more than anything else, because the source of your life flows from it.”

Proverbs 4:23 GW

The bible makes reference to the heart 826 times. This huge emphasis on the heart shows the level of importance God places on the heart.

What kind of heart is being referenced? It's our spiritual heart that is being referenced in the scriptures. Just as the physical heart is a vital organ because it pumps blood around your body, delivering oxygen and nutrients to your cells and removing waste products. So our spiritual heart is also vital as the source of our spiritual life flows from it. It all starts in the heart. The spiritual heart is where our emotions and desires reside which always exposes our true feelings. Jesus puts like this in Luke 6:45 “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks”.

The heart can be a great hiding place for what we can call spiritual ‘Weapons of Mass Distraction’. What are these weapons? Pride, envy, jealousy, offences, unforgiveness, bitterness and anything that produces the works of the flesh. Before any sin is committed in the open it is first committed in the heart. The heart is a reservoir! Change takes place in the heart and decisions are made in the heart. The enemy keeps special watch over this area, as that is his entry point. As the enemy keeps special watch, we must keep watch too. Similar to how we will prudently guard expensive jewellery, an expensive car, our money in the bank or our family who we dearly love; the same attention and efforts should be shown towards our heart.

There are particular heart conditions that the bible warns us to avoid having: a double heart, a hard heart, a proud heart, an unbelieving heart, a cold heart and an unclean heart.

When the heart is put under pressure, a condition from the list above can be developed if our hearts are not guarded. That's when people can see who you really are and you can also see the area you need to work on. Peter's heart was put under pressure in the garden of Gethsemane. Jesus was being arrested and Peter at that moment allowed his emotions to get the best of him by cutting the right ear of the high priest servant with a sword. Cain's heart was put under pressure when his brother Abel's offering was preferred over his. Judas' heart was put under pressure when he was convinced by the Pharisee's to betray Jesus. Have you ever found yourself acting out of character under pressure? Have you ever found yourself being led by your emotions rather than God's wisdom? We have all been there before and this happens because we have not guarded our hearts. The true content of your heart comes out when you are offended, frustrated, disappointed or simply put when life brings its challenges. How many people today spend time guarding their hearts? We rather spend time filling it with our desires that sometimes give birth to the weapons of mass distraction.

God is calling us believers to focus on this area. We all need to be conscious of our heart and consistently guard it like we would do for our loved ones. With this in mind we can live out this faith journey with love, peace and joy. Start shutting the door of your heart to the things that could breed poison and start growing in the things that produce life and speak well of your testimony as a Christian.

Further study: Luke 6:45, John 18:10, Genesis 4:2-8, Luke 22:1-6

WEEK 9

