



THE TRUTH ABOUT  
ANGELS

TONY EVANS

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## WHERE DO ANGELS COME FROM?

**J**ohn McGraw, a tough character who managed the New York Giants baseball team back in the 1910s to 1930s, ran his ball club like a dictatorship. His nickname, in fact, was “Little Napoleon.” He didn’t tolerate back talk, and woe to the player who made a mistake like missing a sign. McGraw inspired fear and respect in his players.

During one game, John McGraw’s wife was sitting in the stands and wanted to relay a message to her husband. She started gesturing toward one of the players, waving at him to come over to her, but he didn’t see her and walked away. Mrs. McGraw waved some more, but to no avail.

After the game, Mrs. McGraw saw the player and said to him in mild exasperation, “Didn’t you see me waving at you? I was trying to get your attention!”

“Good grief, Mrs. Mac,” the player said as he turned pale. “Don’t tell me you’re giving signs too!”

That player’s reaction is similar to what happens to many believers when it comes to the subject of angels and demons. We are so busy looking in one direction that we’re oblivious to a second sphere of existence that is very active and needs our attention. In this case, however, there are real consequences to ignoring this second world and its principal characters and activities.

God’s Word has so much to say about angels—both good angels and demons (which are evil angels)—that all I can do in this booklet is give you the basic framework and major points of emphasis the Bible makes about them. But this study will give you enough information to help you be aware of the critical role that these supernatural, spirit beings play in God’s plan both in history and eternity.

Angels have been popular in Hollywood movies and in our culture for some time. At the same time the demonic world has become a popular theme in television and films. Just go to any theater in October, and you will see movie after movie displayed about these



evil beings. Halloween movies may seem like silly, even childish story-telling intended to simply scare, but good angels and bad angels (demons) are real, and they have a lot more significance than we actually give them. And much of what we read and watch about angels is really fluff compared to what the Bible teaches.

What I want to do is discuss in greater detail the role of angels in our lives as we consider their origin, activities, and future. While all angels had the same origin in eternity past as God's creation, good and bad angels today work in opposition to each other in the world. So let's look at how angels impact us, how to understand them better, and how to even utilize the gifts and services they provide on God's behalf.

It's also important to say that we can't talk about angels—good and rebellious—without getting into the issue of spiritual warfare, which will be part of our focus. This answers the question, "Why do I need to know about angels?" They are fighting against each other, and you are the prize they're fighting for!

## RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Let's begin by looking at the origin of the angelic world. In Colossians 1:16, Paul wrote: "For by Him [Christ] all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him." This verse makes it clear that the angelic realm was not created as an end in itself. The myriads of angels that God created were made to fulfill His divine purposes.

When were angels created? We don't know exactly when, but it was before the creation of the earth and mankind. During His answer to the patriarch Job, God asked this question: "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? ... When the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" (Job 38:4, 7).

The sons of God were the angels, who formed a choir and sang in celebration at creation. We know these are the angels because back in Job 1:6, the “sons of God” came to report to God on His throne, and Satan was among them. As we’ll see, Satan was the greatest of the angels before his rebellion and judgment.

As created beings, angels are not to be worshiped, glorified, or adored in and of themselves. When the apostle John fell down to worship the angel who had shown him great things, the angel said, “Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book. Worship God” (Revelation 22:9). The angels were created to worship, glorify, adore, and serve God. That’s where Satan got into trouble, because he wanted to be worshiped rather than serve God (Isaiah 14:12–14).

Many verses in the Bible reveal the motivation and purpose of the angels. According to Psalm 148:2, the angels find their delight in praising God. The writer of Hebrews said of angels, “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?” (1:14).

Even though angels take on human appearance and become visible on occasion, they are spirit beings who do not have flesh and blood. Hebrews 13:2 says, “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.” When necessary, God will direct one of His invisible angels to become visible in the life of a believer in order to accomplish a divinely ordained purpose.

This happened to Abraham and Sarah when “three men” (Genesis 18:2) showed up at the door of their tent one day to announce that Sarah would have a son at the age of ninety. The custom of the day was to be hospitable to strangers, and Abraham went all out for them. He may have done this because he was a kind and godly person, or because he sensed that these were special visitors. He probably did it for both reasons.

One of the men was God Himself, most likely Jesus in a preincarnate appearance, because His promise to Abraham was personal: “I will surely return to you at this time next year; and behold, Sarah your wife will have a son” (18:10). The other two

“men” were actually angels whom God had sent to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah (18:20–22; 19:1).

Abraham entertained these strangers without knowing that they came bearing the provision of God for the miracle that Sarah and he needed—the ability to conceive well past the age of childbearing (Romans 4:18–21).

Angels are also spirit beings, and the same is true of demons—who are fallen angels. In Ephesians 6:12, Paul describes these fallen angels as “spiritual forces of wickedness”: “Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.”

## ANGELS ARE PERSONAL BEINGS

Angels are pure spirit, but that doesn’t mean they are just floating apparitions. Angels are personal beings, and, likewise, the evil angels did not lose their personhood when they became demons. Angels have the three primary attributes of personhood, which are *intellect*, *emotions*, and *will*.

Angels have intellect. According to 1 Peter 1:12, they long to understand more about our salvation. In other words, they can think, and they talk with people. And they have emotions, for we read in Job 38:7 that they were filled with joy at creation. Jesus said in Luke 15:10 that the angels rejoice when a sinner gets saved.

Angels also have a will, because each angel had the choice to follow Satan in his rebellion or remain true to God. Satan exercised his will when he tried to usurp God’s throne.

We see all three of these attributes demonstrated when Jesus confronted a demon-possessed man who lived naked among the tombs (Luke 8:26–31). The multitude of demons who were tormenting this man exercised their intellect first of all by recognizing Jesus: “What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?” Then they made a request

through the man: “I beg You, do not torment me” (v. 28). So Jesus gave them permission to enter a herd of pigs nearby (v. 32).

The demons also displayed their emotions and wills by expressing fear of torment and begging Jesus not to send them away where they could no longer be active. Many Bible teachers believe that the demons calling Jesus by name was not just a recognition of Him, but it was an attempt to gain control over Him. That could be why Jesus often told demons to be quiet when they spoke to Him (Mark 1:25).

## ANGELS CANNOT BE COUNTED

Here’s another fact about the origin and existence of angels: they are a host of beings so numerous they can’t be counted. We see an awesome picture of this in Daniel’s description of God on the throne as Judge: “A river of fire was flowing and coming out from before Him; thousands upon thousands were attending Him, and myriads upon myriads were standing before Him” (Daniel 7:10).

“Myriads upon myriads” is another way of saying “ten thousand times ten thousand,” which is one hundred million angels. And those were just the ones Daniel saw.

Demons must also exist in vast numbers. Revelation 12:4 indicates that one-third of the angelic host followed Satan in his rebellion. Satan and his followers are all angels who chose to reject God’s authority and were cast from heaven (Isaiah 14:12–15; Ezekiel 28:14–15).

This vast evil host on earth is a key reason you and I need divine help to wage successful spiritual warfare. And Satan is so clever and intelligent that we are no match whatsoever for him in our own strength. But in God’s power we can overcome an army!

The number of angels was fixed by God and will not change, both because they do not procreate (Matthew 22:30) and because, like our spirits that will live on forever in either heaven or hell, they are eternal beings.

## ANGELS SHOW UP IN DIFFERENT WAYS

The good angels are glorious beings. Daniel saw this stunning vision of one angel: “I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, there was a certain man dressed in linen, whose waist was girded with a belt of pure gold of Uphaz. His body also was like beryl, his face had the appearance of lightning, his eyes were like flaming torches, his arms and feet like the gleam of polished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a tumult” (Daniel 10:5–6).

The reaction was very interesting. Daniel said the men with him didn’t even see the angel, yet they apparently sensed the presence of an awesome being and ran away in terror. Daniel himself turned pale and all of his strength left him (10:7–8).

The appearance of angels in Scripture is not only associated with an awe-inspiring presence, but also with the appearance of light. When an angel came to Peter’s cell to release him, the Bible says “a light shone in the cell” (Acts 12:7).

In contrast, the Bible doesn’t refer to demons—the evil, fallen angels—as glorious beings, and they cannot make themselves visible as the angels of heaven can. That’s why the demons in Luke 8 inhabited the man and begged Jesus to let them inhabit the pigs. In contrast to the angels, demons need another entity to work through when they want to manifest their presence.

The most glorious angel of all was also heaven’s chief rebel. Before he rebelled against God, Satan was Lucifer, or “light bearer,” the most glorious and beautiful creature God ever made.

When he was in his prime, boxer Muhammad Ali used to say he was “too pretty” to ever be marked up in the ring. Well, the Devil got in trouble because he was too pretty. One day he looked in the mirror and said, “Mirror, mirror on the wall, who’s the fairest of them all?”

The mirror said, “You are, bad boy,” and Satan couldn’t have agreed more. He let his beauty go to his head, and he tried to overthrow God. Lucifer wasn’t happy leading the worship of God.

He wanted to be worshiped as God. When he failed and was kicked out of heaven, Satan's beauty was marred but not destroyed.

## ANGELS ARE FUNCTIONAL BEINGS

Angels are not merely heaven's window dressings. They are functional beings, created to fulfill at least three responsibilities.

We've referred to the angels' most important job, which is to worship God. Isaiah saw the cherubim in the temple who cried out, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory" (Isaiah 6:3). Revelation 4:8 says the four living creatures, who are angelic beings, "do not cease" to offer God praise and worship.

The fact that Satan sought to rob God of the worship due His name shows that the Devil's basic goal is to distort and corrupt God's plan and replace it with his own system if possible. It makes sense that Satan would attack God's worship first, because the one we worship is usually the one we serve.

That's why Paul warned Timothy about "deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons" that will come against the church in the last days (1 Timothy 4:1). Satan's deepest desire is that *he* be worshiped as God, and to do that he has to distort true doctrine and get people to believe his lies.

The second job of angels is to execute the program of God. To put it another way, angels are God's staff to carry out His will. God manages His universe not as a lone entrepreneur, but as the head of a corporation. God could do it all Himself, but He has chosen to work through His creatures, including both angels and humans. So it's not surprising that we find demons seeking to counter God's program—and we'll be discussing that further in an upcoming chapter.

The third basic job of angels is the one you are probably most interested in because it affects Christians most directly. Recall that angels are "ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the

sake of those who will inherit salvation” (Hebrews 1:14). There is no evidence that unbelievers benefit from the ministry of angels.

Therefore, the popular view of angels is less than accurate. These beings don't just show up randomly to pluck people from cliffs or perform other feats. God is using the angels for His kingdom purposes, and if it's not related to the kingdom, then He doesn't send the angels.

Angels minister to the saints (those who are part of Jesus' church) in cooperation with the will of God. One of the most dramatic examples of their ministry on behalf of God is the angel that rescued Peter from prison.

What's interesting is that after Peter got out and went to the home of Mary where people were praying for his release, the believers refused to believe God had answered their prayer. “It is his angel,” they told the servant girl Rhoda when she kept insisting that Peter was at the door (Acts 12:7–8; 15). In other words, there was a belief in the early church that believers had angels assigned to them. It's obvious that Peter did, because his angel showed up and got him out of jail.

God uses His angels for kingdom purposes for children as well, even before they know the Lord. One very familiar verse in this regard is Matthew 18:10, where Jesus said of children: “See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven continually see the face of My Father who is in heaven.”

This is the source of the concept of guardian angels. Why are the angels of these children looking into the face of God? In the context of Jesus' warning, the angels are waiting for God to tell them what He wants them to do with the person who is messing over His kids. Clearly, children have protective angels.

## ANGELS ARE POWERFUL BEINGS

Let me give you one more attribute of angels as we close this overview and get down to specifics. In case you haven't gotten the

idea yet, angels and demons are very powerful beings.

Paul said that when Christ returns, He will be “revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire” (2 Thessalonians 1:7). The angels who rolled the stone from Jesus’ grave after His resurrection (Luke 24:2–4) moved the two-ton rock as if it were a pebble.

The angels can also control nature and the weather. The apostle John wrote in Revelation, “After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, so that no wind would blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree” (7:1). There are many other references in Revelation to the angels’ work of intervening in nature to bring about God’s purposes or execute His judgment on earth during the tribulation.

Two of the greatest examples of angelic power are in the same book of the Bible. In Daniel 3, we have the story of the Hebrew boys Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in Nebuchadnezzar’s fiery furnace. King Nebby tried to cook them, but an angel showed up in the fire and preserved them (v. 25). Daniel himself was saved by an angel who shut the lions’ mouths when he was in their den (Daniel 6:22).

Demons are also powerful beings. The demon-possessed man in Luke 8 was so strong that he could break chains and shackles (v. 29). Nothing could hold him. According to Revelation 16:13, it will take only “three unclean spirits like frogs” to entice the armies of the entire world to come together in battle against God.

But make no mistake. The power of demons is no match for the power of God. In Psalm 18, there is an awe-inspiring picture of God moving across the face of creation in power and glory, “[riding] upon a cherub” (v. 10). Verses 7–15 describe this amazing scene, and right in the middle of it is a cherub, one of God’s angels.

My grandmother used to tell me to hush and listen during a thunderstorm, because that was the angels talking. Biblically, she was right on, because according to Scripture the activity of angels as God either sends or withholds them determines what happens in the atmosphere. That’s power!





## HOW DO ANGELS SERVE?

A lot of people in my generation who grew up attending Sunday School each week would sometimes sing a little chorus called, “We Are Climbing Jacob’s Ladder.” This song was based on the famous Bible story in which the patriarch Jacob saw a ladder in a vision. The ladder extended from heaven to earth, and Jacob saw angels going up and down on it (Genesis 28:10–17). The idea of the song was that as we moved through our Christian lives, we got further and further up the ladder as we got closer to heaven.

I’m not sure about the theology of that Sunday school chorus, but whoever wrote it was right about one thing: Jacob’s ladder is not just a story about what happened to Jacob. This account, and the truths it teaches, has great relevance for our lives today, particularly when it comes to the subject of how to enjoy the ministry of angels in our lives. It’s great that angels were active in Jacob’s life, but I want that same blessing in my life. And I believe you do too.

That’s why I don’t want to begin in Genesis 28 but with an encounter between Jesus and Nathanael, one of the men who became disciples. Jesus had just called Philip to be His disciple, and the Bible says, “Philip found Nathanael and said to him, ‘We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph’” (John 1:45).

Nathanael was skeptical, because Nazareth was a nowhere little town. So Philip said, “Come and see” (v. 46). When Nathanael came to see Jesus, the following scene unfolded:

Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!” Nathanael said to Him, “How do You know me?” Jesus answered and said to him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” Nathanael answered Him, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel.” Jesus answered and said to him, “Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will see greater things than these.” And He said to

him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man” (vv. 47–51).

Notice how Nathanael responded when Jesus called him a man with no deceit. Nathanael wondered how Jesus could know him when they had never met before. And when Jesus said He “saw” Nathanael sitting under the tree, Nathanael immediately confessed his faith in Jesus as Israel’s Messiah. What was it Jesus said that prompted such an outburst of faith?

The key is the word “deceit,” because when Jesus said that, it told Nathanael that Jesus knew about his inner character, even though the two of them had never met. And when Jesus told Nathanael that He had seen him sitting under the fig tree, Nathanael figured anyone who could know his inner self and could read his thoughts must be who He claimed to be.

As a good Israelite, Nathanael also knew the story of Jacob’s ladder. So he would have caught the allusion to it when Jesus said he would see “the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.” It probably didn’t take Nathanael long to learn that, as he followed Christ, he’d also see angelic activity in his own life.

Now back to Jacob: this guy was full of deceit. His name even meant a trickster. The very night Jacob had his vision of the ladder reaching into heaven, he was running away from Esau after deceiving their father, Isaac, and stealing Esau’s birthright from him.

That night Jacob put a stone under his head for a pillow and had a dream in which he saw “a ladder [that] was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it” (Genesis 28:12).

That must have been an awesome sight. And Jesus told Nathanael that he would see the same thing Jacob had seen. Yet the promise isn’t just for Nathanael, because the word “you” in John 1:51 is plural. In other words, this promise is for every Christian. And I have never met a true Christian who does not want to see heaven open and the angels ascending and descending on Jesus Christ. We

too want to see supernatural activity being made manifest to our natural selves as we live for Him.

## WHAT COMES WITH THE LADDER

So here we have the promise of angelic activity in relation to those who follow Jesus Christ. Let's return to Genesis 28 and look more closely at the story of Jacob's ladder, because something very important came with this vision. God never gave His people visions that were random or meaningless. There are great implications for us here too.

While Jacob was still asleep, he saw the Lord standing above the ladder and making this momentous statement:

I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants. Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth ... and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you. (vv. 13–15)

God was saying that even though Jacob had some hard times and hard lessons ahead, God would be with him. I see four things that God promised Jacob in conjunction with his ladder—four blessings that are also available to us when we commit ourselves to follow God as Jacob and Nathanael did.

*The first blessing that comes with the ladder is God's promises.* God restated His covenant promise to Jacob that He would bless his descendants and give them the land of Israel.

One of the great tragedies in the church today is that many believers don't know the promises God has given in His Word, and thus they don't know enough to claim those promises and to move heaven to act on earth. There's nothing worse than having a ladder to heaven and not even knowing it.

Satan has effectively kept many Christians ignorant of God's promises. Because of that ignorance, we're discouraged when we ought not be discouraged. We're complaining when we ought not be complaining. And we're defeated when we ought to be victorious.

You can't claim what you don't know, and that's why a thorough knowledge of the Word of God is critical for you to experience this blessing of the ladder—that is, access here on earth to truths known in heaven.

*The second blessing we receive with the ladder is God's presence.* Jacob was startled when he woke and realized he had been in God's very presence: "This is none other than the house of God" (Genesis 28:17). "House of God" is the meaning of the word "Bethel," the name Jacob gave to the place where he encountered the awesome presence of God and His angels (v. 19).

*Here's a third "ladder" blessing: God's protection.* God told Jacob, "I will keep you safe and bring you back to this land." When you are in God's will, He will keep you for whatever purpose He has for you. Because of this, you don't have to become anxious or defensive or possessive about anything, even your life.

God's protection of His chosen ones is demonstrated in a dramatic story in 2 Kings 6. The enemies of the prophet Elisha, the Arameans, had sent an army to surround the city; Elisha's servant almost had a coronary when he saw the city ringed with the soldiers.

But Elisha saw the angels sent by God to protect him, so he told his servant, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them" (v. 16). Then Elisha asked God to open the servant's eyes, and he saw that "the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha" (v. 17). When your faith activates the angels of God on your behalf, you don't have to fear any earthly power.

*The fourth blessing that comes with our ladder to heaven is God's provision.* Elijah, who was the predecessor and mentor of Elisha, was fed by an angel when he was on the run from Queen Jezebel of Israel after Elijah's great contest with the false prophets of Baal (1 Kings 19:5–7).

But the most powerful example of God's provision through angels is the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. Jesus met and defeated Satan in face-to-face confrontation. The Lord had fasted for forty days before this, so Jesus was hungry (Matthew 4:2). Notice what happened: After the temptation "the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him." (v. 11).

One of the ways our prayers are answered is through God's staff of angels. We may not see them as Elisha did, but we are encircled by the same angelic army that protected him and provided for Elijah on the run and Jesus in the wilderness.

This also reminds us that we can never afford to look only at our circumstances. We can't deny them. If you're hurting, you're hurting. In other words, there may be some truth behind your circumstances, but there may also be the Devil's lie that what you are feeling is all there is, that God has abandoned you and doesn't care. But God's presence, promises, protection, and provision make a liar out of the Devil!

## FAITH IN GOD'S WORD ACTIVATES THE ANGELS

You may be saying, "Tony, this sounds great. I want to make sure my ladder is in place and functioning. How can I activate the angels in my life?"

Well, there are conditions to be met so God will let you see His supernatural, angelically supported presence on earth. One of them is faith in God's Word. Jesus Himself gave us the example when He told the Devil, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

Most of us would readily say, "I believe God's Word." But Jesus said the true test is not what we say with our lips but with our lives. Too many Christians are quicker to believe the Devil's lies than they are to believe God.

How do I know that? Not because they say it with their lips, but their lives are saying it as they allow themselves to be ruled and dominated by their circumstances, emotions, fears—anything but the Word of God. If you're going to see heaven open and the supernatural presence of God on your behalf through His angelic host, you're going to have to take His Word seriously.

## FAITH IN GOD'S SON ACTIVATES THE ANGELS

We read earlier that Nathanael confessed his faith in Jesus Christ based on nothing more than Jesus' statement that He had seen Nathanael under the fig tree.

Now compare Nathanael's faith to that of other people who said they believed in Jesus. John wrote, "Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing. But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men" (John 2:23–24).

I'm not just talking here about saving faith, although that is the entrance point to the Christian life. The problem with these individuals is that they apparently wanted to follow Jesus from a safe distance. They didn't want to entrust themselves completely to Him, so Jesus returned the lack of trust.

What we have here is a huge contradiction. These people were probably like a lot of people who followed Jesus in that they wanted what He had to offer, but weren't interested in paying the price to follow Him.

We often get caught in the same contradiction. We want to see God's power at work openly in our lives as His angels move up and down our ladders. Yet we are often reluctant to even confess openly that we know Jesus. God has too many secret saints—spiritual CIA operatives whose goal seems to be to avoid detection.

But Jesus said, “Whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 10:33). You cannot be a secret disciple and see heaven open.

## SEEING THE UNSEEN WORLD

Although angels may occasionally make themselves manifest, that is by far the exception in their ministry that is largely unseen. This is another reason the focus of our lives as Christians has to be on the invisible world.

Speaking of the Christian life, Paul wrote, “We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:18).

Don’t expect to see heaven open and the angels moving up and down a ladder with your physical eyes. You may think you have, when instead it was the pizza you ate at midnight. The spiritual world is unseen, which raises the question, “How can I look at things that are unseen?” Answer: “If you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth” (Colossians 3:1–2). For results that are spiritual, you have to set your focus on the things of God.

Now, don’t get me wrong. If you learn to “see” the unseen, you’ll see more than you ever thought possible! While you’re thinking about that one, let me point you to Abraham, who lived by faith, which is defined in the book of Hebrews as “the conviction of things not seen” (11:1). Later in the same chapter, we are told that Abraham kept on going by faith, because “he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God” (v. 10).

Abraham functioned in the visible, temporal world with an invisible, eternal perspective. This perspective affected every move and every decision he made. The bridge connecting the seen and unseen world is the ladder we have been talking about—the effects



of which can only be seen by the eyes of faith. And when you get your spiritual vision focused, you'll know through faith that the angels are moving up and down your ladder carrying out their ministry to you on God's behalf as His "ministering spirits" (Hebrews 1:14).

## THE PROGRAM OF DEMONS

Demons also have a program they carry out on behalf of their master, Satan. Remember that one-third of the angels followed Satan in his attempt to take over the throne of God in heaven.

The Bible indicates that there is no redemption for those angels who chose to rebel against God. Peter referred to angels who sinned and were cast into hell to be "reserved for judgment" (2 Peter 2:4). Jude 6 calls them "angels who did not keep their own domain." These could be the angels who inhabited the bodies of men and produced evil offspring that provoked God to judge the human race with the flood (Genesis 6:1-4), or these could be all angels who sinned against God. Either way, the future for all demons is eternity in hell with Satan.

It's obvious from Genesis 6, and from Satan's earlier temptation of Eve in Genesis 3, that the program of demons is the agenda of Satan—and Jesus said the Devil's goal is "to steal and kill and destroy" (John 10:10). Specifically, what is Satan's program that demons promote?

## DEMONS PROMOTE SATAN'S DOCTRINE

Did you know that hell has a doctrinal statement? Satan's goal is either to deny or twist the truth about God, and the demons carry out his plan. Demons teach what their master wants taught in order that people might live according to Satan's theology, rather than in light of the doctrine of God.

In 1 Timothy 4:1, Paul referred to “deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.” In verses that follow we learn that the particular doctrine demons were pushing is that God is not good. The false teachers who were demon-motivated tried to convince God’s people that marriage and certain foods were not good and needed to be avoided, although God said those things were good (vv. 3–5).

This is the opposite of the strategy that Satan took with Eve in the garden of Eden (Genesis 3:1–7). The false teachers said God was not good for giving us things that He should have withheld, while Satan convinced Eve that God was not good for withholding the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil when He should have given it to her. But either way, the message was that God is not good.

Satanic doctrine not only wants to subvert the goodness of God but also to undermine the ministry of the Son of God. Satan knows he cannot touch Christ, but he has his demons busy trying to trip up Christians. Paul wrote, “I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:3). Later he spoke of “false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness” (vv. 13–15).

Demons also want to undermine the gospel. “If our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world [Satan] has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel” (2 Corinthians 4:3–4).

## DEMONS PROMOTE SATAN’S DESTRUCTION

Demons are often portrayed in cartoons and other media as cute little imps, kind of rascally, but not really all that bad. But the Bible paints a radically different picture. Satan and his hordes are out to destroy people any way they can—the more cruel and heartbreaking the means, the better.

We read earlier about the demon-possessed man in Luke 8 who lived like an animal and was driven into madness. Another man was blind and unable to speak until Jesus cast out his demons (Matthew 12:22). Demons can be responsible for physical abnormalities that impair people's abilities to function.

Demons can also cause physical deformity. Jesus once met a woman who had been bent double by a demon-caused illness for eighteen years. Jesus healed her, and she was immediately able to stand up straight (Luke 13:11–13).

There are many other stories in the Gospels of people whose lives were being destroyed by demons, including a boy whose demon often threw him into either fire or water to destroy him. Jesus cast out the demon and healed the boy (Matthew 17:14–18).

## DEMONS PROMOTE SATAN'S DOMINATION

Satan wanted to dominate heaven, but when he was defeated and thrown out of heaven to the earth, he turned his attention to dominating the world. And his demons are his agents in this attempted coup of the world's powers.

One example of this is the text in Daniel 10 that we referred to in the previous chapter. Not only was Michael the archangel involved in the affairs of Persia, but also there was a "prince of Persia" (vv. 13, 20) who withstood Michael and the other angel sent to help Daniel, who was delayed in bringing the answer to Daniel's prayer.

This figure was a demon, acting on the orders of Satan. The actions of leaders such as Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, and Saddam Hussein leave no doubt that demons are actively involved in manipulating the course of nations. Other nations, even today, are still in the grip of witchcraft, satanic worship, and other perversions. It's because Satan has a tight grip on the kingdoms of this world, and he won't let them go until Christ takes them from him.

## DEMONS OPPOSE GOD'S PEOPLE

Demons are also in the business of opposing God's people. Since they can't touch the salvation and eternal destiny of the children of God, they want to distract and confuse us down here so that we take our exclusive focus off Christ. The tragedy is that sometimes Christians help them. There are far too many Christian brothers and sisters dabbling in the world of evil spirits, reading their horoscopes every day and playing around with fortune-telling cards and games.

God commanded Israel, "You shall keep My sabbaths and revere My sanctuary; I am the Lord. Do not turn to mediums or spiritists; do not seek them out to be defiled by them. I am the Lord your God" (Leviticus 19:30–31). Whenever you appeal to the created order to do what is God's sole prerogative, you change gods. God's message for anyone who did this was, "As for the person who turns to mediums and to spiritists, to play the harlot after them, I will also set My face against that person and will cut him off from among his people" (Leviticus 20:6).

The reason so many people are attracted to these things is that Satan knows how to make his lies look attractive and exciting. The Bible says that the Antichrist will come "with all power and signs and false wonders" (2 Thessalonians 2:9). Just because somebody does something that is spectacular or looks miraculous, that doesn't make it godly.

Idol worship is also a demonic front. Even though they were God's people, the Israelites were constantly being seduced by idolatry. Moses said God's people "sacrificed to demons who were not God, to gods whom they have not known, new gods who came lately, whom your fathers did not dread" (Deuteronomy 32:17).

You may say, "Oh, don't worry about me. I would never fall for that stuff. Besides, that's Old Testament anyway."

Well, be careful, because the Bible says it is possible for people to enter into communion with demons. Paul told the Corinthians regarding the Lord's Supper, "I do not want you to become sharers in demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons" (1 Corinthians 10:20–21).

How do you enter into communion with demons? Whenever you let something become your idol, you share in the fellowship of Satan and his demons, who reign over this unbelieving world.

Demons also oppose God's people by tempting us to sin and then slandering us to God when we fail. Satan is the "accuser" of believers (Revelation 12:10). He slandered Job to God's face and accused Job of only serving God for the blessings he received (Job 1:6–10).

If Satan wasn't afraid to accuse Job, of whom God said, "There is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil," (see Job 1:8), then Satan won't hesitate to accuse you and me. Why would Satan and the demons continually slander us to God? Because they know that in too many cases, they have the evidence to back up their charge. We sin every day in thought, word, and deed, so there is no lack of material for Satan and his demons to use.

That's why we need to confess and be cleansed of our sins (1 John 1:9). We also have an "Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1) to act on our behalf based on the power of His blood. Jesus said on the cross, "It is finished!" (John 19:30), or "paid in full." That's what saves us and brings us back into fellowship with God. Still, regardless of our status with God, Satan will continue his slander until he is silenced for eternity.

Demons also oppose God's people by causing strife and divisions, whether in churches or in homes. "If you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic" (James 3:14–15). Selfishness is at the heart of many marital breakups, and bitter jealousy has destroyed many churches.

We must be on the alert for the attacks of demons, for we are in spiritual warfare. Satan is a "roaring lion" looking for someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8), and his demons do his bidding. But you can be victorious, because "greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).



## HOW DO ANGELS WORK?

It is said that when Alexander the Great conquered and captured a king of India named Porus, Alexander asked the defeated monarch how he would like to be treated.

“Like a king,” was the answer. Alexander then asked Porus if he had any additional requests.

Porus said he did not, “for everything is comprehended in the word *king*.” Alexander was so impressed by this answer that he restored Porus’s lands to him.

King Porus certainly understood the power and respect that a king is supposed to command, and he knew that in his day being the ruler of a land carried the ultimate respect and authority. The king was right. In the ancient world, authority rested in the hands of basically a few people who followed very narrow and clearly defined lines. It may have been less than an ideal situation, but in an ancient monarchy everyone knew his role and place, and what was expected of him. In other words, the world functioned by authority.

## THE ANGELS ARE ORGANIZED BY AUTHORITY

The angelic world functions by the principle of authority too. The various ranks of angels suggest that they are organized in a hierarchy to carry out the program of their King, Jesus Christ.

The Bible mentions several ranks of angels. Michael is called “the archangel,” but there was originally one angel who ranked even higher in authority than Michael, and that was Lucifer. This name appears in the King James Version of Isaiah 14:12, while in the New American Standard Bible it is translated as “star of the morning.” This is Satan, who was created as the leader of all the angels. The Devil’s power is still so great that even Michael backed off when

disputing with him about the body of Moses, and could only say, “The Lord rebuke you!” (Jude 9).

Besides the archangel, we read of the cherubim, an order of angels who form an “inner circle” with access to God’s throne. They are charged with keeping the unholy away from the holy. Cherubim were placed at the entrance to the garden of Eden to keep Adam and Eve from returning after they sinned (Genesis 3:24). The mercy seat, the lid on the ark of the covenant, was guarded by two golden cherubim; and the “four living beings” of Ezekiel 1:5 are later identified as cherubim in Ezekiel 10:15.

It’s interesting that Satan was called the “anointed cherub” before his rebellion and fall (Ezekiel 28:14, 16). He was the most powerful of the cherubim, which explains the great power he retained after he was expelled from heaven.

Another order of angels is the seraphim, who are engaged in nonstop worship and praise of God. We read about them in Isaiah chapter 6, worshiping God and purifying Isaiah by touching his lips with coal from God’s altar.

The demonic world is also arranged for the exercise of authority. Satan is the master of the fallen angels, who all carry out his bidding. The Bible doesn’t have a lot to say about demonic organization, but what it says is significant. Paul said in Ephesians 6:12 that our struggle in spiritual warfare is “against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.”

Whatever their rank, demons are under the unquestioning command of Satan. To the Jewish leaders who accused Him of casting out demons by the power of Satan, Jesus said, “If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand?” (Matthew 12:26). Hell’s forces are completely committed to the Devil’s agenda.

As the spiritual world is organized around a principle of hierarchy and authority, the structures and organizations of the physical world are a reflection of this pattern. An important verse relating to this is Colossians 1:16, where Paul wrote: “For by Him [Christ] all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and



invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.” Therefore, with the angels, we will continue to function under authority, both in heaven and on earth.

## ANGELS UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF AUTHORITY

As we noted above, Michael the archangel had to defer to the authority of Satan in their dispute over the body of Moses. The angels understand the importance of authority.

Jude 9 is not only a good illustration of authority in the spiritual world, but it provides a good place to discuss and dispel a misunderstanding that many people have about authority in the spiritual world. There is this common idea afloat that God and Satan are archrivals on more or less the same footing, battling to see who will be the ultimate victor.

But nothing could be further from the truth. Satan’s counterpart in the spiritual realm is the archangel Michael, not God. God has no counterpart. God is the Creator; Satan is His creation—who was created good but chose to rebel. God is all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-present. Satan has none of these attributes. That’s why he has to work through demons. There is absolutely no question about the outcome of the cosmic battle between the forces of God and the forces of evil. God has Satan on a short leash, and He will pull the Devil in once and for all whenever He is ready.

So don’t ever attribute to Satan and his demons more power or authority than they possess. Since you and I are neither God nor angels, we will only be successful in defeating the Devil to the degree that we are living under God’s authority. We will be placed in situations where it will take more than the power of positive thinking to get us out. We’re going to need divine intervention and authority, which means we have to be under authority.

The story of Jesus and the Roman centurion who sought his help (Matthew 8:5–13) is a great example of this principle operating in the human realm. Jesus was in Capernaum when a centurion came to Him, asking the teacher to heal one of his servants

We don't have room to quote the entire passage, but I want you to notice verse 9. Jesus said He would come with the centurion, but this leader of soldiers understood the importance of authority to the degree that he realized that all Jesus had to do was speak the word. How did the centurion know this? Because he said to Jesus, "For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it."

Jesus was astounded by this Gentile Roman's faith in Him as expressed in his understanding of the principle of authority. The man got his request too—Jesus healed his servant.

When you are under authority, you realize that you are not big enough or strong enough to handle things on your own. But so many times we go about doing our thing, and then when we get into trouble, we ask God to show up with His angels and bail us out.

But that's not how authority works. Our attitude toward the authority of God is often like our attitude toward authority figures like the police. We want the police to come when we're in trouble to protect us and catch the bad guys, but we don't want to see them when we're breaking the speed limit and get caught in their radar. Then it's too late to plead our innocence and promise we'll never do it again. The nature of authority is that once you step out from under it, you cannot claim its protection and help.

The centurion in Capernaum had never had a Bible study on authority, but he understood the importance of this principle by which his own life was structured.

## ANGELS EXERCISE THEIR AUTHORITY THROUGH PEOPLE

One of the primary ways that angels get their job done is through people.

Now don't misunderstand here. I'm not saying that angels work through people the same way the Holy Spirit does. The Holy Spirit indwells us, while the angels are God's messengers—and His staff, who deliver His message (e.g., Gabriel with Mary [Luke 1:26–27]) and execute His will and plan.

But having said that, we see throughout Scripture that angels are very active in the lives of God's people. The book of Acts records that an angel freed the apostles, and then Peter, on two separate occasions (see 5:19 and 12:7–11).

Similarly the fallen angels, Satan and his demonic host, also work through people. This is clear from the many passages in the Gospels where we see demons afflicting people or even motivating people like the religious leaders in Matthew 12 to accuse Jesus and blaspheme God. False human teachers are not just making up lies by themselves. They are Satan's mouthpieces energized by his demons.

By the way, the existence and persuasive talk of false teachers is a good reason we need to be spiritually alert and not buy into everything we hear. The Bible says, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). In fact, the world is so deceived by Satan that John said, "the whole world lies in the power of the evil one" (1 John 5:19).

Sometimes Christians look at the activity of the demonic world and the authority Satan has and ask, "Why does God allow Satan to operate? Why didn't God just blast Satan and the demons out of existence when they rebelled against Him?"

The reason is that in His infinite wisdom, God decided that He was going to win the cosmic spiritual battle against Satan not by exercising His sovereign power and wiping Satan out with one word, but instead through the seed of a lesser creature called man.

Ultimately, Jesus Christ—the Son of God and son of Mary, both fully God and fully man—sealed the fate of Satan. We'll read more about that in the next chapter, but you and I must know that

through Christ and His power living through us, we too can defeat Satan and his demons in the day-to-day struggles of life.

We see spiritual warfare in our world because when Satan's attempted overthrow of God didn't work, he set about to corrupt the seed of mankind. But God said to Satan, "Because you thought you could win this war through My lesser creation, man, I am going to use this lesser creature to defeat you by showing you that even a lesser creature who is obedient to Me is greater than a superior being who rebels against Me."

That's a heavy concept, so maybe an example will help. A popular story line in many films, especially those in the world of sports, is the story of some brilliant coach who takes a collection of misfits and molds them into a powerful team. He then goes out and beats other teams who have better players and should be superior to his team.

That's the idea here. And since humans are the focal point of spiritual warfare on earth, it should not surprise us to see angels and demons intensely interested and involved in human affairs.

According to Daniel 12:1, the archangel Michael is the special guardian and protector of Israel, which helps to explain why Israel has been victorious time and again over vastly superior forces in the nation's struggle for existence. The reason Israel will never be wiped off the map is that it's not just about who is fighting on earth. The reason is also an archangel whom God has charged with making sure no one destroys His chosen people.

## ANGELS ARE UNDER GOD'S SOVEREIGN AUTHORITY

The reason the people of God will win the battle in spiritual warfare is that Christ has already won the war on the cross and in His resurrection. Besides that, God is in sovereign control over all of His creation and has already drawn a line that Satan cannot cross.

The best example I know of this is the life of Job. This holy and righteous man was subjected to suffering that is beyond anything we can understand. Yet the Bible says that what was happening to Job was the result of a spiritual confrontation and contest between God and Satan.

Even if you know the story, I encourage you to read Job 1:1–2:10. The contest began when God pointed to Job as a shining example of an upright man. Satan countered, “Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side?” (Job 1:9–10). In other words, “God, Job knows a good deal when he sees one. But let me take what he has and he will curse You to Your face” (v. 11, my paraphrase).

So everything Job had was taken away, and eventually he had nothing left but his very life. It’s significant, though, that twice in this amazing story God told Satan he could go so far, and no further.

First, God said to Satan, “All that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him” (Job 1:12). And then later, God said, “He is in your power, only spare his life” (2:6). Satan couldn’t move beyond the permission God gave him.

You may be saying about now, “Tony, is this supposed to be comforting? I’m glad God is in control, but it looks to me like Satan can still mess up a whole lot of stuff in my life.”

Well, first of all, I doubt if any of us ever have suffered or ever will suffer like Job. But don’t miss the point that Job understood. Even in the depths of his suffering, Job refused to take himself out from under the authority of God in his life. Even his wife told him to curse God and die (2:9), but Job understood that he was part of something bigger, and he determined that he was not going to be a casualty in the warfare raging around him. He knew that God could turn it all around, and he remained under God’s authority and was vindicated.

That’s the challenge for us in the spiritual warfare we face today. Let’s remain under God’s authority and await His vindication.



## ACCESSING THE POWER OF ANGELS IN SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Remember that old newsreel that shows President Franklin Roosevelt addressing Congress the day after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941? Calling it “a date that will live in infamy,” the president declared that, in reality, America was already at war. Roosevelt just needed a declaration of Congress to make it official.

I am not the president, but I have a declaration to make. You and I are at war! In fact, we are engaged in the mother of all battles. The war I am talking about is the spiritual warfare that you became a part of the day you trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior.

Because this warfare is first and foremost spiritual and not physical, the degree to which you and I will be successful is the degree to which we are prepared to fight this battle on a spiritual level. Spiritual warfare is that conflict being waged in the invisible, spiritual realm that is being manifest in the visible, physical realm and affects you and me. The cause of the war is something you and I can't see. But the effects are very visible in the problems and day-to-day challenges you and I face all the time.

It's hard enough to fight an enemy you can see—it's much harder to fight someone you can't see. In his classic statement on spiritual warfare, Paul wrote: “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12). This verse identifies the enemy: Satan and his demons.

We make a grand mistake if we think people are the real enemy. What we need to understand is that what happens through people, including you and me, has its roots in something much larger. This fact does not excuse the wrong things people do. They are still responsible. But it helps us focus on the real enemy.

It is a foundational principle for spiritual warfare: everything we see in the visible, physical realm is caused, provoked, or at least influenced by something in the invisible, spiritual realm. Your five senses are not the limit of reality. Daniel 4:26–32 states that heaven rules over all the affairs of earth. So until we address the spiritual causes of a problem, we will never fix the physical effects of that problem. Not only are your physical senses very limited, but they are often of little help in spiritual warfare. This means that if you are going to wage successful spiritual battle, you need a “sixth sense”—a keen awareness of the spiritual realm.

This is one of the goals of our study on angels: to open our eyes and our perspective to the power of the unseen beings around us. It also should give you greater insight into how we can access that power in your own life and decisions. But what I want to look at more deeply in this final chapter is how to defeat Satan in the spiritual realm. Understanding and working with angels in our lives is an important part of the spiritual life, but understanding and overcoming Satan’s schemes is critical.

## THE DEFEAT OF SATAN

For starters, let’s look at the end of the story. Satan has already been defeated so when you or I fight in spiritual war, we need to always fight with the end in mind. We need to always fight from victory rather than for victory.

I see at least four ways in which God the Father and God the Son have defeated Satan.

*First, when Satan rebelled he was* strategically defeated. He was defeated the moment he sinned because he was a creature rebelling against the very Creator on whom he depended for his creaturely existence. As we would say today, what in the world was Satan thinking when he thought he could overthrow God?

I used to have two dogs at my house. I fed and watered these dogs, and it was by my good graces that they were allowed to live at my house with food to eat and a place to come inside when it



rained. My dogs would have been foolish to rebel against me. The best thing they could have done is to obey the commands I gave them. Otherwise, they would rebel themselves right out of the house. (Which, truth be told, they did!)

Now you may be saying, “When I look around, it sure doesn’t seem as if Satan is defeated. In fact, evil seems to be thriving as never before. Isn’t God ready to put an end to him once and for all?”

Satan does have a kingdom, to be sure. He is “the prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2), and we must never underestimate him. But God basically said to Satan, “So you want a kingdom? I will allow you to operate in My world for a short time, and I will give My creatures the choice of following you or following Me. But never forget, you are beaten before you start!”

Satan made the dumbest move in all of history and eternity when he reared up against God and said, “I am going to unseat You.”

*Second, Satan was also* prophetically defeated. Do you know how early God announced Satan’s ultimate defeat? How about in the third chapter of the Bible! God said to Satan in judgment for deceiving Adam and Eve, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel” (Genesis 3:15).

Now Satan immediately set out to destroy this seed, which we know was Jesus Christ who crushed Satan at the cross. But give the Devil his due: he’s going to go down fighting. He led Cain to kill righteous Abel, seemingly ending the godly line.

But surprise! God gave Seth to Adam and Eve “in place of Abel” (Genesis 4:25), so the godly line was preserved. Then Satan pulled off corrupting the whole race by sending demons to inhabit men and produce a demonic race, his own seed (Genesis 6). He only missed it by one, though, because God had righteous Noah to carry on the godly seed.

We don’t know how “old” Satan and the demons are, but they have known about their doom for ages because God prophesied it at the beginning of time.

*Third, Satan has also been* spiritually defeated. This is sweet. Jesus said, “Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world

will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself” (John 12:31–32).

Jesus was speaking of His death on the cross. The cross was not only a judgment on our sin; it was also a judgment against Satan. It was a big surprise to him because when Satan led evil men to crucify Jesus, he thought he had won. You see, Satan knows from personal experience that all who sin are under a curse. He figured that if he destroyed Jesus, the curse would never be broken.

But guess what? The sacrifice on the cross removed the curse of sin from us—and it placed the curse on Christ! As soon as you finish reading this booklet, turn to Galatians 3:10–14 and spend some time praising God that you are no longer under the curse of sin if you know Jesus Christ as your Savior.

*Fourth and finally, Satan will be eternally defeated.* We have to speak of Satan’s final defeat as a future event since it hasn’t yet happened, but as far as God is concerned, it’s a done deal.

In Revelation 12:7 we read, “And there was war in heaven.” Satan and his angels were expelled from heaven to earth. This was the first part of his defeat. And then in Revelation 20:1–3, we read that Satan will be bound with a chain during the millennial reign of Christ. When that is completed, he will be loosed for a while and have the last of his rebellion (vv. 7–9), but then he and all of his hosts will be cast into the lake of fire to be tormented forever (v. 10). Defeat and eternal punishment are the Devil’s certain doom. It’s true—we really do win!

## OUR FORMULA TO DEFEAT SATAN

Now, if he is defeated, that must mean we are supposed to be victorious. How can you defeat Satan in your own life and in the lives of those people you are called to love and serve?

We have a wonderful formula for spiritual victory in Revelation 12:11. The Bible says of the tribulation saints, “They overcame him [Satan] because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word

of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.”

Notice the order here. First is the authority of Christ over Satan by virtue of His blood that was shed on the cross. You need to understand the absolute authority Jesus has over all creation. Peter says of Jesus, “Who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him” (1 Peter 3:22). Jesus said, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Matthew 28:18). Jesus is in charge!

And because this is true, you as a believer have authority too. The word of your testimony is not just your witness to lost people, but the entire statement of your life as you live victoriously by following Jesus Christ. And your authority includes victory over the demonic world. Jesus gave His disciples “authority over unclean spirits” (Matthew 10:1). We also have the “keys of the kingdom” (Matthew 16:19), which speaks of authority.

You have all the authority you need to defeat Satan day in and day out, but you also have some responsibilities to fulfill. The first is your commitment to no spiritual compromise. You can’t play with a serpent like the Devil and not expect to get a snakebite. You can’t have it both ways. You can’t love the world and love God.

I don’t mean that you don’t sin. We all sin. But I’m talking about your direction. You must realize one way or another that all sin is against God, and you need to confess and turn from it. There cannot be any compromise with evil.

To defeat Satan, you must also be committed to the Word of God and prayer. These are two of the greatest spiritual weapons in our arsenal. If your sword of God’s Word is dull or rusty, get it out and sharpen your mind and heart on it. If prayer is not a way of life for you, like breathing, start to make it a habit.

My friend, there is no reason you cannot defeat Satan. How do I know that? Because “the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses” (2 Corinthians 10:4). You are fully equipped for spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:10–18).

## THE BATTLE IN THE SPIRITUAL REALM

The apostle Paul introduces us to the six pieces of armor that we are to wear while doing battle in the heavenlies in spiritual warfare. They are the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of peace, along with the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit.

Much study has been done on the pieces of the armor of God, but not as much focus has been put on the verse that follows the listing of the equipment:

Stand, therefore, with truth like a belt around your waist, righteousness like armor on your chest, and your feet sandaled with readiness for the gospel of peace. In every situation take the shield of faith, and with it you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is God's word. *Pray at all times in the Spirit with every prayer and request, and stay alert in this with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints* (Ephesians 6:14–18 HCSB, italics added).

Why is it critical that we not miss this clarion call toward prayer? Because prayer is how you and I get dressed for battle. It is how we carry out the strategies of war. It is how the armor is used most effectively.

I define prayer as relational communication with God and earthly permission for heavenly interference. The reason prayer often seems difficult to us is because Satan seeks to distract us from it or to tempt us into thinking that we can handle what is going on ourselves. He knows how critical prayer is in the life of believers so he will do anything to get us away from it. He will use every possible avenue to keep you from seriously communicating with God, because he knows what prayer does—it activates heaven's response on your behalf in accordance with God's will. Of course, prayer never forces God to do anything outside of His will, but it does release Him to do what He had intended.

The book of Daniel includes one of the best illustrations of prayer, especially with regard to the angelic realm. That's why I have saved it for last. We start by seeing Daniel studying God's Word and then responding to God in prayer based on what he has read in His Word. It says,

In the first year of [King Darius's] reign, I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was revealed as the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years. So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes. (Daniel 9:2, 3).

First, Daniel heard the truth of what God said. Then, he talked to God about it. Anytime you take God's Word and talk to Him about it, you are praying. That doesn't have to be done on your knees. It can be done while you are working, walking, or washing dishes. Prayer is always critical, no matter when or where. Next, we read,

Now while I was speaking and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God in behalf of the holy mountain of my God, while I was still speaking in prayer, then the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision previously, came to me in my extreme weariness about the time of the evening offering. He gave me instruction and talked with me and said, "O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you insight with understanding." (vv. 20–22).

Even as Daniel was praying, God was responding. He sent an angel to help him better understand his situation. Notice that God did not send the angel to give Daniel understanding until Daniel prayed in response to what God had already said. We read, "At the beginning of your supplications an answer was issued, and I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed," (v. 23). The directive to the angel Gabriel did not come until Daniel began to

pray. The next few verses give us even greater insight into what happened:

Suddenly, a hand touched me and raised me to my hands and knees. He said to me, “Daniel, you are a man treasured by God. Understand the words that I’m saying to you. Stand on your feet, for I have now been sent to you.” After he said this to me, I stood trembling.

“Don’t be afraid, Daniel,” he said to me, “for from the first day that you purposed to understand and to humble yourself before your God, your prayers were heard. I have come because of your prayers. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia opposed me for 21 days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me after I had been left there with the kings of Persia. Now I have come to help you understand what will happen to your people in the last days, for the vision refers to those days.” (Daniel 10:10–14 HCSB).

God sent a messenger to Daniel when Daniel chose to pray His Word back to Him. Twice we read in these two chapters that God sent the angel on the day that Daniel prayed to God with regard to God’s already revealed Word. Friend, the greatest way to call on angelic intervention into your life and what you do is through prayer. When you face a challenge in work, pray. When you face a challenge in your home, pray. When your health has caused you problems, pray. It is in those times when you have sought the Word of God and His truth on the matter and when you take that Word back to Him in prayer that God Himself calls on His angels to support you. Delays may occur, but they are not the decision. The delay in Daniel receiving God’s response came through spiritual warfare in the heavenly realm.

That’s why you must be patient. You must fight your battle in the spiritual realm. You must not fail to understand how critical prayer is. If you do, you will not fight for the win. As we have seen with Daniel, God not only heard Daniel’s prayer when he first offered it, but He also responded immediately to Daniel’s prayer by

dispatching Gabriel with a message of understanding. Yet because there is a battle taking place in the invisible, spiritual realm, there was a delay in God's response reaching its intended destination—the Prince of Persia, a demon, blocked Gabriel from reaching Daniel for three weeks. It took another angel, Michael, to eventually remove the demon from acting as an obstacle for Gabriel. Ultimately, the prince of Persia got double-teamed in order for God to deliver His message to Daniel.

Rarely is a battle won in a minute. So be encouraged to continue on in prayer, accessing the angelic realm on your behalf as you pray God's truth back to Him. The angels are at your disposal when what you seek aligns with God's will.

Seek. Pray. And win!

## THE URBAN ALTERNATIVE

**D**r. Tony Evans and The Urban Alternative (TUA) equips, empowers, and unites Christians to impact *individuals, families, churches, and communities* to restore hope and transform lives.

We believe the core cause of the problems we face in our personal lives, homes, churches, and societies is a spiritual one; therefore, the only way to address them is spiritually. We've tried a political, a social, an economic, and even a religious agenda. It's time for a Kingdom Agenda—God's visible and comprehensive rule over every area of life because when we function as we were designed, there is a divine power that changes everything. It renews and restores as the life of Christ is made manifest within our own. As we align ourselves under Him, there is an alignment that happens from deep within—where He brings about full restoration. It is an atmosphere that revives and makes whole.

As it impacts us, it impacts others—transforming every sphere of life in which we live. When each biblical sphere of life functions in accordance with God's Word, the outcomes are evangelism, discipleship, and community impact. As we learn how to govern ourselves under God, we then transform the institutions of family, church, and society from a biblically based kingdom perspective. Where through Him, we are touching heaven and changing earth.

To achieve our goal we use a variety of strategies, methods, and resources for reaching and equipping as many people as possible.

## BROADCAST MEDIA

Hundreds of thousands of individuals experience *The Alternative with Dr. Tony Evans* through the daily radio broadcast playing on nearly one thousand radio outlets in more than one hundred countries. The broadcast can also be seen on several television networks, and is viewable online at [TonyEvans.org](http://TonyEvans.org).



## LEADERSHIP TRAINING

*The Kingdom Agenda Pastors (KAP)* provides a *viable network* for *like-minded pastors* who embrace the Kingdom Agenda philosophy. Pastors have the opportunity to go deeper with Dr. Tony Evans as they are given greater biblical knowledge, practical applications, and resources to impact individuals, families, churches, and communities. KAP welcomes *senior and associate pastors* of all churches.

*The Kingdom Agenda Pastors' Summit* progressively develops church leaders to meet the demands of the twenty-first century while maintaining the Gospel message and the strategic position of the church. The Summit introduces *intensive seminars, workshops, and resources*, addressing issues affecting the community, family, leadership, organizational health and more.

*Pastors' Wives Ministry*, founded by Dr. Lois Evans, provides *counsel, encouragement, and spiritual resources* for pastors' wives as they serve with their husbands in the ministry. A primary focus of the ministry is the KAP Summit that offers senior pastors' wives a safe place to *reflect, renew, and relax* along with training in personal development, spiritual growth, and care for their emotional and physical well-being.

## COMMUNITY IMPACT

*National Church Adopt-A-School Initiative (NCAASI)* prepares churches across the country to impact communities by using *public schools as the primary vehicle for effecting positive social change* in urban youth and families. Leaders of churches, school districts, faith-based organizations, and other nonprofit organizations are equipped with the knowledge and tools to *forge partnerships* and build *strong social service delivery systems*. This training is based on the comprehensive church-based community impact strategy conducted by Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship. It addresses such areas as

economic development, education, housing, health revitalization, family renewal, and racial reconciliation. We also assist churches in tailoring the model to meet the specific needs of their communities while simultaneously addressing the spiritual and moral frame of reference.

## RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

We are fostering lifelong learning partnerships with the people we serve by providing a variety of published materials. We offer booklets, Bible studies, books, CDs, and DVDs to strengthen people in their walk with God and ministry to others.

\* \* \*

For more information, a catalog of Dr. Tony Evans' ministry resources, and a complimentary copy of Dr. Evans' devotional newsletter,  
call (800) 800-3222  
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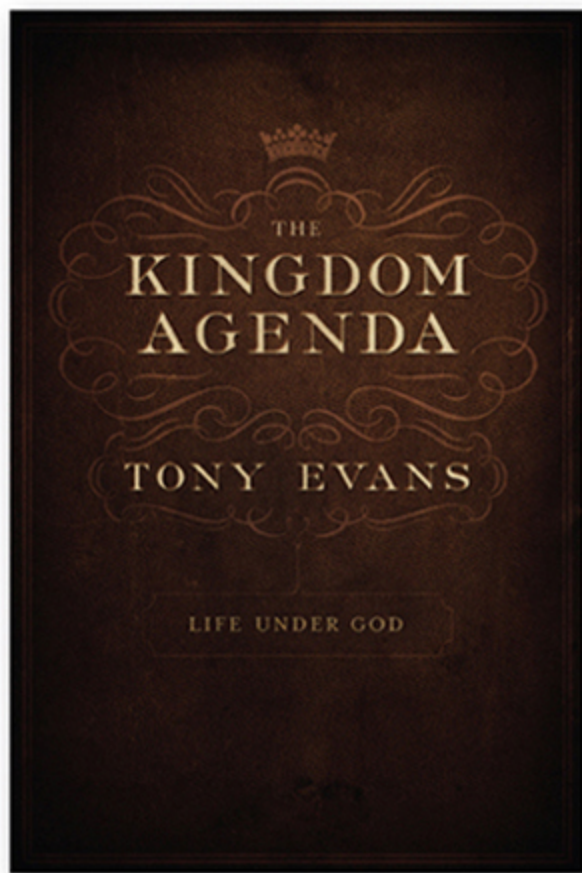
# More from Tony Evans

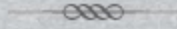
## *The Kingdom Agenda*

God's kingdom isn't just about theology and church. It isn't just a quaint religious idea or an obscure theological concept. It is about a whole new way of seeing the world and your place in it. *The Kingdom Agenda* offers a fresh and powerful vision that will help you think differently about your life, your relationships, and your walk with God. When you start with a Kingdom agenda, living in relationship with the true King, and embracing your place in His Kingdom, nothing will ever be the same.

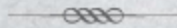
Learn more about adopting this Kingdom agenda perspective in your life from the following excerpt.

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*The Kingdom Agenda*

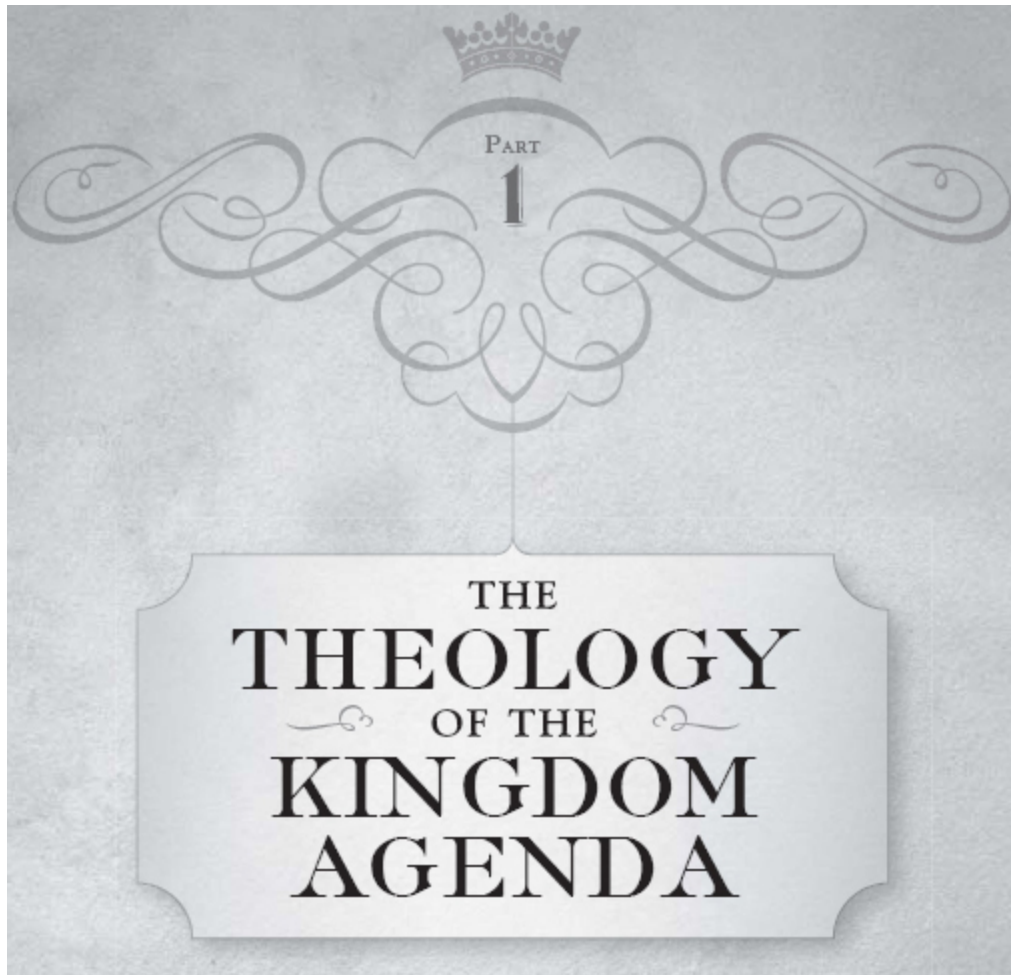




*“The Lord has  
established His  
throne in the heavens,  
and His sovereignty  
rules over all.”*



— **PSALM 103:19** —



As God's people, we are not limited by the choices this world offers us. God has an alternative plan for us—His kingdom with an all-encompassing agenda.



God's kingdom agenda may be defined as the visible demonstration of His comprehensive rule over every area of life.

<http://go.tonyevans.org/kingdomagenda/>





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## CHAPTER ONE

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### THE CONCEPT OF THE KINGDOM AGENDA

*E*verybody, it seems, has an agenda today. People have plans, programs, things they want to accomplish, and specific ways they want to accomplish them.

God has an agenda, too; something He wants to accomplish in His way. The Bible calls this agenda God's kingdom. I like to think of it as the alternative, because that word says there is another way, another idea on the table. As God's people, we are not limited by the choices this world offers us. God has an alternative plan for us—His kingdom.

If you grew up in America, you were reminded to whose kingdom you belonged each time you said the Pledge of Allegiance or participated in the singing of our national anthem in school or before sporting or civic events. It was clear that our country did not want us to forget that we are Americans. We recited the pledge day in and day out, allowing it to sink in, enabling us to fully understand that no matter what our background, gender, culture, or color, we belonged to this kingdom called the United States of America.

In the same way that our country wants us to be regularly reminded about our citizenship in this kingdom, there is another kingdom—a greater and more perfect kingdom—of which we are a part. It is the kingdom of God.

If you are an American, it is most likely because you were born here. If you are a part of the kingdom of God, it is only because you have been born again into His kingdom. The reason you need to



come to a full comprehension of the kingdom is not only because it affects you, but it also is the key to understanding the Bible. The unifying central theme, the common thread, throughout the Bible—from Genesis to Revelation—is the glory of God through the advancement of His kingdom.

Without that theme, the Bible becomes a series of disconnected stories that are great for inspiration, but seem to be unrelated in purpose and direction. The Bible exists to share God’s movement in history toward the establishment and expansion of His kingdom, highlighting the connectivity throughout which is this concept. Understanding that increases the relevancy of this several-thousand-year-old manuscript to your day-to-day living, because the kingdom is not only then, it is now.

Throughout the Bible, the kingdom of God is His rule, His plan, and His program. God’s kingdom covers everything in the universe. In fact, we can define the kingdom as God’s comprehensive rule over all creation. It is the rule of God (theocracy) and not the rule of man (homocracy) that is paramount.

Now if God’s kingdom is comprehensive, so is His kingdom agenda. The kingdom agenda, then, may be defined as *the visible demonstration of the comprehensive rule of God over every area of life.*

This definition has some serious implications for us. The reason so many of us as believers are struggling is that we want God to bless our agenda rather than our fulfilling His agenda. We want God to okay our plans rather than our fulfilling His plans. We want God to bring us glory rather than our bringing Him glory. But it doesn’t work that way. God has only one plan—His kingdom agenda. We need to find out what that is so we can make sure we’re working on God’s plan, not ours.

The Greek word the Bible uses for kingdom is *basileia*, which basically means a “rule” or “authority.” Included in this definition is the concept of power. So when we talk about a kingdom, we’re talking first about a king or a ruler, the one in charge.

Now if there is a ruler, there also have to be “rulees,” or kingdom subjects. In addition, a kingdom includes a realm; that is, a domain

over which the king rules. Finally, a kingdom also needs regulations, guidelines that govern the relationship between the ruler and the subjects. These are necessary so that the subjects will know whether they are doing what the ruler wants done.

God's kingdom includes all of these elements. He is the absolute Ruler of His domain, which encompasses all of creation. Likewise, His authority is total. Everything God rules, He runs—even when it doesn't look like He's running it. Even when life looks like it's out of control, God is running its "out-of-controlness."

God's kingdom also has its subjects. Colossians 1:13 says that everybody who has trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior has been transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, your allegiance has been changed. You no longer align yourself with Satan, but with Christ.

And just in case there's any doubt, let me say right now that there are no in-between kingdoms, no gray areas here. There are only two realms in creation: the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. We are subjects of one or the other.

## **GOD'S KINGDOM AGENDA IS UNIVERSAL**

The problem we have in the church today is that people inadequately define God's kingdom. Some people secularize and politicize the kingdom, which means they think the solutions to our problems are going to fly into town on Air Force One.

These individuals believe that political involvement or social action will by itself usher in the kingdom. While there is nothing wrong with entering the political arena as an evangelical—it ought to be encouraged—we need to bear in mind that God's kingdom is not comprised of, or limited to, a political institution of mankind. God is neither Democrat nor Republican. He does not ride the backs of donkeys or elephants.

At the other extreme are those Christians who over-spiritualize the kingdom. In contrast to their politically active brothers and sisters, these are the individuals who are so heavenly minded that they wind up being no earthly good. They live with their heads and

hearts in the upper levels of the ionosphere because the concept of the kingdom of God never moves beyond the esoteric stage within them. They lack the concrete ability to put feet to the spiritual reality of the kingdom.

God's kingdom agenda is not limited to the political and social realm. Neither is it limited to the walls of the church. When you were saved, the kingdom of God was set up within you so that it might be best positioned to reach outwardly while directing the circumference of your life.

Trusting Jesus Christ for your salvation will get you to heaven. But trusting Jesus Christ for your salvation doesn't automatically get heaven to come down to you. Getting into God's kingdom is through conversion, but experiencing God's kingdom in your daily life is through commitment. Commitment results only when the Jesus you placed your faith in is also the Jesus who rules within you in the kingdom of which you are a part. God's goal is to manifest in history the operations of heaven. Therefore, when history is not reflecting heaven ("Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" [Matthew 6:10]), God's kingdom is not visible.

## **FOUR FUNDAMENTAL TRUTHS ABOUT GOD'S KINGDOM AGENDA**

As we start our journey through the depths, clefts, and mountaintops that make up God's kingdom agenda, let's begin by examining four basic fundamental truths about this all-encompassing concept and teaching of Scripture.

### ***God's Kingdom Agenda Originates from His Realm***

Since the realm in which God operates is spiritual, His kingdom also originated in the spiritual realm. This is not to deny what was said above, that the whole created universe constitutes the domain of God's kingdom. What I am saying here is that the kingdom is from above, not from the earth.

We see this in John 18:28–40, when Jesus appears before the Roman governor Pontius Pilate. The Jews want Jesus put to death, but they don't have the authority to carry out capital punishment. Since only Rome can do that, the Jews have to bring Jesus to Pilate to get his approval.

The Jews know exactly what accusation it will take to get Jesus executed by Rome. If He claims to be a king, He will be committing treason against Caesar (see John 19:12). So they decide to make the charge against Jesus that He made Himself out to be a king.

Now if you call yourself a king, that implies you have a kingdom somewhere. So the first question Pilate asked Jesus was, "Are You the King of the Jews?" (John 18:33). Notice Jesus' answer in verse 36: "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm."

Don't misread that. Jesus was not saying His kingdom is not *in* this world. He was saying it is not *of* this world. His kingdom does not originate from earth, but rather from heaven. It is not derived from history, but from the heavenlies. Jesus' servants weren't up in military arms about His arrest because He was not trying to overthrow the Romans militarily.

Jesus explained to Pilate, in my Evans translation, "If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would be out there with their swords cutting off much more than just someone's ears. They would be going to war. If My kingdom were man-made, I would not be going to the cross without a battle."

But because Jesus represented another King from another kingdom that was not of this world, He did not resort to the methodologies of this world in order to defend or advance His kingdom. The same holds true for you and me. To live life according to the kingdom agenda will have an effect on our choices. Our decisions will not align with the world's wisdom or methods. A divine frame of reference will punctuate all that we do.

Too many believers today are trying to find fulfillment and significance through human means. They are trying to discover their destinies through man's methods. However, man's methods have never accomplished God's goals. Jesus revealed that when He answered Pilate straightforwardly. In essence, He said, "My methods reflect My source." As believers, we are called to be in the world, but not of the world. Similarly, a boat is made to be in the water but not of the water. If the boat begins to be of the water and starts taking on water inside, it will soon go down.

To be in the world and yet not of the world means that the world, or worldliness—the system that seeks to leave God out—does not define the decisions, relationships, or priorities of your life. Your kingdom controls your methodology.

### ***A Body of Truth***

In John 18:37 Jesus said something else that was very significant. "Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." By this statement, Jesus assumed the existence of a body of truth with which a kingdom agenda aligns itself. Simply defined, truth is an absolute standard by which reality is measured. It is God's viewpoint on the matter. This definition puts us as believers in conflict with our culture, because we live in a world where a commitment to truth no longer exists. People want relative truth, not an absolute standard that says what is always right and wrong, good and bad. But if you are a follower of Jesus Christ, you must believe in, accept, and align yourself with the truth of God's Word—His absolute, governing standard that transcends time, culture, ethnicity, gender, preference, and all else.

One of the major problems leading to the breakdown of society is that we have far too many opinions dictating life choices and not enough truth mandating them. Even among Christians, absolute truth isn't always the governing standard. We say things like, "Well, this is how I feel," or "This is what I think," or even "This is what my parents taught me." Although there is nothing necessarily wrong with thoughts or feelings, they ought not be the deciding factors

with regard to what is true. Truth transcends feelings. For example, you may feel like you have a headache, so you take an aspirin. But the lab report might tell the truth that you have a brain tumor and an aspirin won't do you any good. The feeling of your headache was real; it just didn't reveal the truth that you have a tumor. When you miss the truth, you miss everything. Likewise, when you miss the truth of God's Word, you miss the kingdom.

Our problem today is that we have substituted relativism, pragmatism, existentialism, pantheism, and many other -isms in the place of absolute truth. But all of these -isms will become "was-isms" one day when they are ultimately confronted with God's absolute truth.

Jesus was saying to Pilate in John 18:37, "If you understood My kingdom, you would know the truth." The only lasting solutions to life are biblical solutions, because only biblical solutions are derived from a heavenly source and can address the cause-and-effect relationship between choices and consequences.

### ***Cause and Effect***

Here's what I mean by cause and effect when it comes to the kingdom. Everything visible and physical is always controlled or derived from that which is invisible and spiritual. So if you want to fix the visible and physical problems, you have to address the spiritual and invisible issues first.

Why? Because if you don't address the spiritual and invisible, you will not have addressed the divine precursor from which to solve the visible and physical issue at hand. What you can see, hear, touch, taste, and smell must first be addressed from God's perspective before you can make any lasting and real difference on the human level.

Satan wants to get us to skip the divine perspective because he knows that we will never be able to solve our visible and physical problems until we address them from the invisible, spiritual realm. But heaven rules earth, so what happens up there determines what

goes on down here. If you are not in contact with heaven then you ought not be surprised if you are in a quandary down here on earth.

One of the greatest kings in history, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, learned this truth the hard way. Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that disturbed him deeply, so he asked the prophet Daniel to interpret it for him. Daniel told the king he would lose his kingdom and be driven into insanity until he learned that “it is Heaven that rules” (Daniel 4:26). What Daniel prophesied then came to pass (see v. 28).

### ***The Right Perspective***

God’s kingdom is lived from the perspective of heaven, not earth. That’s why Jesus said, “Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matthew 6:33). The pagans may run after the physical, visible things in life (see v. 32), but we are called to prioritize God’s kingdom.

But far too many Christians want to mix a little bit of God with a lot of the world. As a result, they wind up not experiencing any of God because His kingdom is not of this world. When you bring the world into the Word, you are asking the King to bless something that His kingdom is not a part of, and He won’t do it.

If you lose sight of the kingdom, God’s perspective gets lost and you start focusing on the physical and temporal things in life. When that happens, your judgment begins to be skewed and your decisions become shortsighted. Rather than fulfilling your God-ordained destiny and purpose, you end up with wasted time, effort, energy, and emotions.

Yet when God’s kingdom is prioritized, you get to see heaven both rule and overrule in your life. You get to witness God overrule circumstances and people that you thought had the last word. You get to experience God at a whole other level when you experience Him as King. Many people say that God is King but fail to experience God as King simply because they do not position themselves under His rule.

Jesus said earlier in Matthew 6 that if you are not clear on the kingdom—the things of God—then you can't see because you are spiritually blind (see vv. 22–23). And if you are spiritually blind, then your feet won't know which way to go. Spiritual blindness affects not only your eyes, but all of your life choices.

I will never forget the morning I got soap in my eye in the shower. My eye started burning, so I began to rub it with my hand. The problem was, I had soap on my hands. So not only did I not get the soap out of my eye, I managed to get more soap in both eyes. Now, instead of one eye that couldn't see, I had two.

With both eyes closed, I instinctively reached for the towel. Yet because I couldn't see it, I hit my head on the soap dish sticking out of the wall as I leaned over to try and find it. When I did that, I knocked the soap off of the dish onto the shower floor. You can probably guess what happened next. As I groped around for the towel in my blindness, I stepped on the bar of soap and went flying, hurting my back. There I was, flailing around in the shower with a headache and a backache and stinging eyes, all because something had blinded me.

Let me tell you, when you are spiritually blind you will wind up with more than just a headache and a backache, you will wind up with a “life ache,” because you cannot live successfully in the physical realm if you cannot see the spiritual realm which affects everything else in life. God's kingdom operates from the realm of heaven. The only way you will be able to see life with clear vision is when you view all of life from a kingdom perspective.

## **GOD'S KINGDOM AGENDA REFLECTS HIS SOVEREIGNTY**

Here's a second truth about God's kingdom you need to consider: When you adopt God's kingdom agenda, you come under His sovereign rule. Sovereignty refers to God's supremacy over all of His creation—visible and invisible. His rules are universal, absolute, and comprehensive. God, therefore, is accountable to no one.



Sovereignty is a word many people don't like or understand, but it is intrinsic within God's character and makeup. In Psalm 103:19, David wrote, "The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, and His sovereignty rules over all." In other words, God is not operating by anyone's permission. He sovereignly rules over each and every one of us.

Look at Psalm 115:3: "Our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases." Many people don't want to hear that truth, but embracing it is a vital part of living a successful life. As David wrote, "Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Your dominion endures throughout all generations" (Psalm 145:13).

The claim of absolute sovereignty is the claim of deity, and God alone has the right to such a claim.

### ***Living under God***

I love having visitors come to my house to spend some time talking, eating, or watching football. Our home has always had a revolving door for those close friends who want to pass the time with us. However, there are certain rules you will have to follow if you come to my house. If you smoke, for instance, you will have to put it out before you come in, because the rule is that there is no smoking in my house. If you swear, you will have to make a mental note not to do so before you come over to my house, because in my house profanity is not allowed.

Or, if you were to come over to my house and say, "Evans, I hate this furniture. The colors on the walls are all wrong. I think they're horrible," I would say, "And your point is?" This is because your opinion, while listened to, is irrelevant to the overall décor of our home because the last time I checked you didn't pay for the furniture or the paint on the walls. It is okay for you to have an opinion about my house, but that opinion doesn't carry much weight with me for one simple reason: It's my house, not yours.

So when you come to my house, you have two choices. You can stay and adjust to my rules and my furniture and my color scheme,

or you can leave. And I'm sure I would have the same two choices if I came over to your house.

This world is God's house and it operates according to His rules. That means unless you and I want to go out and create our own universe, we need to adjust to the rules of God's house or suffer the consequences of our rebellion. To acknowledge God's sovereignty is to acknowledge the validity of His jurisdiction and His legislation in and over every area of life. It is to align all of life under God.

But like stubborn teenagers, we often say to God, "I want to come to Your house, God, but I'm going to bring in my own rules. I'm going to complain about the furniture in Your house, but I'm still going to come to church and tell You to feed me, clothe me, and bless me. I want Your goodness in Your house, but without Your rules."

### ***A Discount God***

It took a recent trip to a discount department store to help me see all of this in a new light. My wife, Lois, had asked me to pick up a few things for her from this store.

Before I go any further, you need to know that shopping and standing in checkout lines are not among my favorite things to do. And as things worked out, this particular day was not a good day for me to go shopping. The weather was nice, so everyone in Dallas apparently decided to go to this store as well. There were people everywhere. The checkout lines were all the way down the aisles.

So I got my stuff and went to the express checkout line, but it ended up taking even longer than the other lines. I was stuck, yet as I stood there something dawned on me. The store I was in is marketed and known for its discount prices. People go there and stand in long lines because they can purchase items for less than what they would pay elsewhere.

It occurred to me that this is what a lot of people do on Sunday. They come to church looking for a "discount God." They want God on sale. They come saying, "God, I want You and Your kingdom, but I want it at a discount price. I want a little of this and a little of that,

but not the whole package. So give me thirty percent off the ticketed price.”

People don't want a God who is sovereign, a God who says, “This is the package. When you get Me, you get My kingdom and My rules.” There are no discounts in God's kingdom. He is sovereign. He rules over all. Psalm 24 teaches that so clearly:

The earth is the LORD'S, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it. For He has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers. Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? And who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood, and has not sworn deceitfully. He shall receive a blessing from the LORD. (vv.1–5a)

Verses 1–2 make it clear that everything on planet earth belongs to God. Then how much belongs to us? Nothing. We may use the things of earth, but we don't own them. That's good, because God's sovereignty means He is responsible if something breaks down. If you try to own your life, when something goes wrong you get to fix it. But if God owns your life, when something goes wrong He fixes it. I'd rather be under God's ownership than mine any day because that means He takes responsibility for working things out.

Living in God's kingdom brings blessings, but you don't get the blessings of the King if you're not willing to live for His kingdom and under His authority. You don't get to enjoy the blessings of the King if the King cannot enjoy the blessing of you. You don't get the King who owns everything if you keep demanding to own everything yourself.

Until you become a person who makes your decisions based on God's kingdom agenda, you will miss out on the abundant life that God has in store for you. To show up at church on Sunday when God doesn't own you Monday through Saturday is, to put it bluntly, a waste of your time. It is a false dualism to say, “Lord, You can have Sunday, but don't bother me on Monday, because I have to go back to the real world.” Oh, no. On Sunday you are in the presence of the God who made everything, as you are on Monday, Tuesday, and every other day of the week. If you attempt to leave God in the

pew by failing to acknowledge His ownership and sovereignty the rest of the week, you are willingly relinquishing His presence and blessing in your life.

### ***Sovereignty and Our Choices***

God's sovereignty also means that He either causes all things to happen, or allows all things to happen. Yet whether He causes it or allows it, when everything is finished it will come out the way He wants it to come out.

This helps to answer the question, why is there seemingly so much chaos in our world? God's sovereignty doesn't mean that there won't be any problems. It doesn't mean that Satan won't rebel, or that people won't say no to God's will. Sovereignty means that this is God's domain, and when all is said and done, He is ultimately in control and will guide, direct, and eventually use all things according to His plan.

For us, the question is not whether God is sovereign. That has already been determined. The question is, rather, how we as finite beings relate to and align ourselves under the infinite Sovereign who is God. He can carry out His kingdom agenda with or without us. God does not need any one of us to fulfill His purposes. Thus it is my desire, and I hope it is yours as well, to willingly go with God as He unfolds His plan rather than stand in His way so that He has to go through us or over us.

Yet either way, God is going to get to where He's going. God's kingdom agenda cannot be altered, negated, or thwarted. God's ultimate plan will be done. That's good news for those of us who are committed to Him and His kingdom because there is a promise included within it for us. That promise is found in a very familiar verse, Romans 8:28: "We know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

Paul is talking about committed Christians, those who are living for God's kingdom. If you are living according to God's kingdom agenda, your life may seem like a wreck, but according to this

powerful truth you can know that your life is working out according to God's plan. The Greek word for "know" is *oida*, which can be translated into "intuitive knowledge." It means that we can "know" even when we don't know. We can "know" even when we don't feel like we know. We can "know" when everything says the opposite of what we know.

From this verse, what is it that we know? We know that God causes all things to work together for good. You say, "But Tony, things are falling apart. People are putting me down. I got laid off from my job. The doctors say they don't know if I'm going to make it." You can say all of that and more, and yet the truth remains that God can cause all of those things to work together for good because He is sovereign. Despite how circumstances may appear, God is in control. He is working things together that look out of control. In fact, when things seem out of control to you, all that means is that they are out of your control. God is in charge orchestrating everything in order that His divine purpose might be revealed.

Sometimes I walk into the kitchen to see what my wife is cooking. She may be putting together a meal that does not look to me like it's going anywhere. It's a little of this and a little of that and a little of the other. I'll say, "What are you making?"

She will answer, "Wait and see."

If I have the patience to wait while she puts the master's touch to that meal, when it comes to the table all I can say is, "Delicious!"

That's how God works. He takes a little of this and a little of that and a little of the other that might not look too tasty on their own. Yet in His sovereignty, He can mix it, stir in a little omnipresence, add some omnipotence, toss in a dash of grace, throw in a little goodness, mix in a little mercy, and stir it all together. Then, when it comes out of the oven, all you can say is, "Excellent!"

But the only ones who can say that are those who love God and are committed to His purpose. You've got to be on His agenda, not on yours. You've got to be following His path, not your own. It's not, "Lord, this is what I want," but "Lord, what do You want?" That

is the question that defines a life lived according to both the King and His kingdom.

## **GOD'S KINGDOM AGENDA OPERATES FOR HIS GLORY**

A third truth that I want you to understand about the kingdom agenda is that it operates for the purpose of God's glory. Romans 11:36 says, "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen." As you may already know, *amen* means "so be it." There it is. That's it. God's glory is the bottom line in His kingdom.

### ***For His Pleasure***

Paul said that everything is *from* God. He is the first cause, the source. Then Paul said that through Him everything is. God is also the effective cause of everything in creation. And finally, Paul said that everything is to Him. He is the final cause. It all returns to Him to bring Him glory forever. It is crucial to understand that God created the universe for His pleasure and His glory (see Revelation 4:11), including each one of us (see Isaiah 43:7). God did not make the world first and foremost for us, but for Himself.

"Glory" is a sweet word. It comes from a Greek word that means "to be heavy" or "to have weight." When we say, "That guy is heavy," we're giving him significance. We're adding weight to his persona. That's what glory is.

To fully understand the concept of God's glory, you must understand the difference between intrinsic glory and ascribed glory. Most of us are only familiar with ascribed glory. This is the glory we assign to people because of who they are, what they do, or how much income they make.

For example, when we put a black robe on a man or woman, we call that person "Your Honor" because we ascribe glory to the role of judge. When someone pulls up in a limousine, we stop to see who it is, because we assume anyone riding in a limousine has to be significant. That's ascribed or assigned glory, meaning that if you

take away the black robe or the limo, the people involved lose their glory. Human beings can only have ascribed glory. Not so with God. People can ascribe glory to God, but even if we refuse to glorify Him He hasn't lost anything, because God has intrinsic glory.

The sun does not have to try to be hot. Even on a cloudy day, the sun is hot. The sun does not have to try to be bright. Even when it's dark outside, the other half of the world is basking in the brightness of the sun.

What heat and brightness are to the sun, glory is to God. It is part of who He is. You can go into your house and close all of your blinds, but you haven't diminished the sun one iota. No matter what you and I do, we can't diminish or reduce the glory of God. Everything in His kingdom is designed to bring Him glory, as it should since there is nothing and no one greater than God for Him to give glory to.

### ***Holding It All Together***

Now let me show you a tremendous implication of this for those of us who will adopt a kingdom agenda. In Colossians 1:15–17, Paul wrote: “And [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.”

This is deep. Don't miss it by skimming over a verse that may already be familiar to you. There are riches to be found in this passage. Let me tell you, if you abide by and live according to God's kingdom agenda, Christ will bring together the things in your life that are falling apart. He will either fix the situation or fix you in the situation. As it is written, “in Him all things hold together.” So if your world is falling apart, fix your eyes on Jesus through whom and by whom all things come together.

But in order to receive the benefit of His hand in this regard, you must live your life for His glory. You must say, “Lord, my goal today

is to reflect Your significance. I want to ascribe to You the glory that already belongs to You. I want to radiate, demonstrate, magnify, and illustrate Your glory.” That’s a life lived according to the kingdom agenda.

Most of our insurance policies call a natural disaster an “act of God.” If a storm blows your roof off, for example, that’s an act of God. We are quick to blame God in the midst of life’s trials. Yet we don’t give Him glory when He keeps the roof on. It’s an act of God if it rains and floods the crops, but we ought to give Him glory that we eat every day. Numbers of individuals run to church when something goes wrong. But people who live according to the kingdom agenda come into God’s presence to give Him glory no matter what because they understand the fullness of His power in holding all things together.

## **GOD’S KINGDOM AGENDA OPERATES ACCORDING TO HIS WILL**

The fourth and final truth to consider concerning God’s kingdom agenda is that it operates in accordance with His will.

You may have grown up reciting the Lord’s Prayer, which begins: “Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:9–10). The first principle we garner from this prayer is that God’s name is unique—we are to hallow His name. The way that God’s name is hallowed is by His kingdom coming through His will being done. So the reverse of that is true as well. If you are not seeking to do God’s will, then His kingdom in your life is not coming and His name is not being hallowed. You cannot have the full presence of the kingdom if you are not willing to submit to the King. If you are outside of His will then you are disconnected from His kingdom. And to miss the kingdom is to miss His name, to miss Him, because they are intrinsically tied together.

***God-in-the-Box***



One of the first toys I remember playing with as a young boy growing up in Baltimore was that little jack-in-the-box clown that pops up to the tune “Pop Goes the Weasel.” I loved that toy. And while that concept is great for a toy, it is not so great for God. Yet, that’s how many people try to treat God—a toy in a box who pops up whenever we want Him to appear and do our bidding. “Bless me now, Lord. I’m turning the handle. Come on, pop up.” Then we stuff Him back down in the box and close the top when we don’t want to see Him anymore. “God-in-the-box, stay there and don’t pop up yet because I haven’t played Your tune.”

But a kingdom person says, “Not my will, but Your will be done.” Jesus said in Matthew 13:11 that the kingdom is a mystery to those who aren’t willing to hear, see, and understand what God is doing. Jesus would not reveal His Father’s will to people who were not willing to obey it.

### ***God’s Kingdom Will***

Let me show you why God has you and me in His kingdom. In Daniel 7:13–14, the prophet wrote:

I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven one like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory *and a kingdom*, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed. (emphasis added)

You were brought into God’s kingdom to serve Him, to do His will, and to confiscate from Satan that which belongs to God. The prophet Isaiah also learned that the kingdom of God operates according to His will. In probably the most well-known passage in the book of Isaiah, the prophet said, “In the year of King Uzziah’s death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted” (6:1).

Isaiah had just experienced a tragedy. The king who had brought Israel a long way back toward God had just died. So what’s the point? After all, Isaiah knew the Lord before King Uzziah died. The

point is that Isaiah didn't really see the Lord until Uzziah died. He needed to learn that although a king was dead, the King was alive and well.

Sometimes it takes a tragedy in our lives, or other negative circumstances, for us to truly see God. We may know Him in terms of being our Savior. But a lot of us won't really say, "God, I want to see You, I want to experience You" until our "King Uzziah" dies. That is, until the physical and tangible thing, person, career, bank account—or whatever we are trusting in—passes from a position of prominence to obscurity. That is one reason God will allow tragic situations to come into our lives. He knows that our focus is on the created rather than on the Creator. And until we adjust our vision from the temporal to the eternal, we may miss out on seeing the eternal altogether.

God is not simply interested in getting you to heaven. He wants you to see and experience Him here while you are on earth. The book of Revelation tells us that one day there will be a new heaven and a new earth; but before you ever get to heaven you will have a job to do in this new earth, in history. You don't get to heaven until you finish a thousand years of doing work for God in history in Christ's millennial kingdom. So if all you think about is heaven, you will miss out on history. God wants you to experience and see Him now in order to best prepare you for then.

Sometimes God is most clearly seen in the midst of painful situations. When you are in a crisis, it is not enough to say, "Lord, why am I in this mess?" You need to be praying, "Lord, help me to see You the way the three Hebrew boys saw You in the midst of the fiery furnace (see Daniel 3). Help me to see you the way that Isaiah saw You."

What did Isaiah see? He saw a God who is holy to the third power. "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory" (Isaiah 6:3). The prophet saw a God who rules over all the situations of life.

What did Isaiah do when he saw God? He cried out, "Woe is me, for I am ruined!" (v. 5). The word "ruined" means "coming

unstitched.” Isaiah felt like he was falling apart, unraveling before a holy God. “I am a man of unclean lips,” Isaiah continued. Despite being a significant and prominent prophet dedicated to the service of God his entire life, in the presence of a holy God Isaiah fully felt his own inadequacy. He fully felt his own sin. And in that reality, Isaiah confessed his uncleanness.

Because of this, Isaiah experienced grace. One of the seraphim flew over to him with a hot coal he had taken from the altar with tongs, and he touched Isaiah’s lips with it. “Your sin is forgiven,” the seraphim said (vv. 6–7). The lips are the most sensitive part of the human face. The angel touched Isaiah’s lips with a burning hot coal, which meant there had to have been pain.

This is because in order for Isaiah to experience his life being cleansed, he had to experience the pain of the past that had gotten him there. But when he did, he discovered more than the purifying searing of the coal. He discovered his purpose. “Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?’ Then I said, ‘Here am I. Send me!’” (v. 8).

There it is. Isaiah came to know the revealed will of God, and he received the power to do that will when he saw God. The prophet got plugged into God’s kingdom agenda when, in a broken and painful situation, he saw God for himself.

## **BECOMING A KINGDOM PERSON**

Do you want to be a kingdom person? Do you want to discover God’s best for your life, His agenda? He’s both willing and waiting to reveal it to you. But you must make that decision. If you want to know which way to go, just ask. If you don’t know the way, come to the One who knows the way. Seek God by restructuring your thoughts, words, and actions to conform to the standards of His kingdom.

I can’t tell you what following God’s kingdom agenda will mean for you. I just know that whatever it is, you must be willing to do His will. You must be able to pray, “Yours is the kingdom and the

power and the glory forever. Amen” (Matthew 6:13). It is God’s program that you are to pursue.

If that means being single, you are ready to do that for His sake. If that means staying in a marriage even though right now you are not happy in it, you are ready to do that. If that means staying on a job you don’t like, you are ready. If that means you don’t reach all of your goals, that’s okay as long as you can say, as Paul did, “I have finished the course” (2 Timothy 4:7).

We used to have two dogs. They belonged to my son, but when he wasn’t home, I had to take care of them. Those dogs had a good life, as far as dog lives go. They would come in and find food already sitting in their bowls. They would get fresh water every day. They had a warm spot to sleep in whenever they wanted it. My son even asked that I buy their food at a special store in order to feed them the healthiest option for a dog.

One day I was trying to get one of the dogs to move while I fed it, and the dog growled at me. I looked at it and thought, *You’re a fool. I’m here feeding and watering you at no cost to you. I don’t want to do it, don’t need to do it, don’t feel like doing it. And you’re growling at me?*

That dog didn’t understand that he ate by grace. He drank by grace. He had a place to sleep by grace. The only thing that dog should have said to me when I came over to where it sat was, “Thank you, bowwow,” because everything that dog had was by grace. Needless to say, that dog didn’t stay much longer in my domain.

The first word of wisdom for living according to God’s kingdom agenda is to understand that He is the King, and you are not. He is God, and you are not. He makes the rules, and you do not. When you decide to live by a kingdom agenda, you no longer say, “This is my food, and You’d better give it to me, God. You’d better supply my drink. This is my house, and You’d better keep it covered and paid for. And You’d better keep clothes on my back.”

No, you don’t say that to God. The only thing you say when you get up in the morning is, “Thank You, God” and, “What can I do to show my gratitude?”

Our desire should be to give God the glory that is rightfully His and to live for His will, because we're included in His agenda. In the chapters that follow, I want to challenge you to live your life according to the kingdom agenda, to live your life for the King and His kingdom. He is the source. He is in charge. He is sovereign. He is Lord. When you do His will, you become His representative in a world that longs to see a better way to live. When you live for God, then and only then will you truly begin to fulfill the destiny He has planned for you. Are you ready to discover Him and His kingdom?

Every two years nations around the globe send their strongest, most elite athletes to compete against others in the Olympic Games. Individual athletes who are at the top of their game go head-to-head with the world's best. On display for the world to see are their individual prowess, individual determination, individual commitment, and individual abilities.

Yet, when the gold medalist stands on the platform, he or she is not asked, "What is your favorite song?" The winning athlete does not get to choose which song will be played as the flag is raised. Instead, the national anthem of that individual's country plays loudly. This is done because it is understood that while the individual was the one who sacrificed, practiced, and competed, he or she represents something much larger. The athlete is just one of many who make up a nation that operates underneath the covering of that same anthem.

As a Christian, you stand as a representative of a bigger kingdom. Your life is not just about you. I know you want your blessing, your crown, and your reward. It is fine to desire to stand on the podium of this life, just as long as you know that when you stand there it is for God's anthem to sound out the lyrics of His song, "Hallowed by Your Name."

Seek first the kingdom of God. It is the wisest thing you could ever do, because in doing that, all other things will be added to you.

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