

Taking Heed to God's words.

**“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word”.
Psalm 119:9**

One of the first things you may notice as a person who studies the bible regularly, is there are so many questions in the bible. These questions are quite important as they lead us into more knowledge about the mind of God and his expectations for us. One of such is the question headlining this note.

David: A unique person

It is not certain if David was a young man when he wrote this Psalm, or if he was reflecting over his life as an older man many years after a very dynamic life. But, to be honest, the time and season of his life that led to the composition of this Psalm is not as important, as the many life changing messages that are codified in this passage and many others in the Psalm.

David is a unique person, a character of immense value for God's purposes and plans - then and for our edification today. He was a shepherd of immense skill and dedication evidenced by his protection of his flock. Conversely, he was not regarded as a very sophisticated person evidenced by the unwillingness of the father not to present him as one of the sons, when a simple occasion to do so presented itself – although there may have been other reasons for this omission per bible scholars.

With the benefit of hindsight however, it is now quite easy to see why he became an important part of God's plan for His people. The skills of a shepherd are just the right skillset required for a future leader of the people of God: patient, alert, able to show genuine care, a willingness to sacrifice and a skilled guide – David eulogizes these attributes in Psalm 23 amongst others.

We also have evidence he accepted his traditional role with some gusto (per ancient Hebrew family structure, the youngest son in the family often becomes the shepherd), going beyond the job description as evidenced by his encounters with various predators to protect his flock. I do not think his family would have missed one or two of the flock, so really no need for risking his life in these encounters. But he did it anyway, putting himself in harm's way to protect those in his care a pointer to his character.

However, it was not just his skills as a shepherd that were relevant for his future role in God's plan, but the relationship he apparently developed with God as a result of the many hours and days spent on the trail meditating. He had come to understand the might, glory and awesomeness of the great shepherd of our souls. The depth of this relationship is reflected in the Psalms he left us and in practical terms, in his reaction to the painful boast of Goliath, and his continued reverence for Saul despite several ugly aggressive acts from Saul. His passionate determination to do what is right is quickly justified by his swift demolition of the errant giant, and the eventual establishment of his generation as Kings of Israel.

“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?”

This is an eternal question and is relevant to all sexes and all those that ponder great questions of life such as– Who is God? Who am I? Why I am here? What am I meant to do whilst here? Where do I go when my sojourn ends here?

The question is asked by the psalmist and an answer is provided to underscore the values of the Psalmist and his understanding of the issues at hand – the cleansing can only be done through obedience to the word of God.

It is well settled that there are many influences on young minds, in particular, and often decisions are taken in haste or without sufficient information/guidance, leading to a life of pain and sorrow for many young people.

At a young age, the mind begins to open to the world, its challenges, possibilities and the variety of options that are available. It is quite easy for that mind to make the choices that are immediately gratifying and less stretching, such as satisfying carnal lusts, attraction to filthy lucre and a total lack of focus on the right things.

However, for a more discerning young person, the question should be - how can I avoid making the wrong choices? Given that the road to doing the right things, is filled with many painful sacrifices? Unfortunately, without the right guidance, support from good counsellors, a devotion to the word of God, an understanding of the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus, the importance of a relationship with the Holy Spirit and the word of God - the easier options become the default position.

The benefits of taking heed.

The answer to how a young person may cleanse their ways is found in taking heed to the word of God. God's clear instruction in Joshua 1 vs 8 explains these in details – the root of good success i.e. living a life that glorifies God and ensures godly success is by meditating on the word of God day and night.

In this era of fast food, even faster broadband, information overload, catchy images/phrases and easy money; sadly, the word of God is no longer a priority for most, especially younger people. This becomes even more poignant in Africa, with its many challenges for young people especially, the glaring lack of provision, for the growth and development of the younger generation, and the obvious lack of powerful role models.

So it takes a genuine labour of love for a young person to focus on the word of God, and its many benefits including – the doctrines of justification/ pardon, the nature of Godly regeneration and sanctification. As well as to devise a practical way to live a life guided solely by the word of God and the Holy Spirit.

The benefits of such devotion are immense, including the ability to reflect positively on life and its challenges through the word of God, benefitting from the supernatural ability of the Holy Spirit in all circumstances, being able to attain a peaceful disposition whilst trusting solely on the word of God and protecting oneself from all defilement etc.

What Next?

I believe that the foundation of success is built on 3 pillars – courage, a vision and an ability to act.

Courage:

In practical terms, a genuine desire by a young person to cleanse their way, to attain peace, success and to live the lives we have been called to as Christians, a lot of courage is required. It takes courage to focus on the word of God and living a godly life in this generation, perhaps it seems more difficult for this generation, than any generation that had gone before. But challenging

circumstances are not peculiar to this generation. Young people have always had to display resolute courage in the face of astounding odds.

And many examples of such courageous young people abound in the bible including David, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, Joshua and Daniel amongst others. At a point in their lives, they faced situations that meant they had to bend or stand for God, confronting dangerous enemies and contemplate the possible disastrous outcomes to their stance. Were they worried about the outcome? Most likely they were worried. Did they doubt the stance they took? I think we can agree the answer is a resounding no.

The trio of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, particularly highlighted their resolve not to back down even if God decided not to show up for them. What an amazing comprehension of the sovereignty of God and what an example of glorious courage, blazing a path to those who are willing to follow.

Vision:

“Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.” Prov 29:18.

Whilst physical vision and a vision of the plans one has for his/her life is important, the vision referred to above is the divine communication between God and Man. Meditating on the word of God brings us into the reality of the truth and experience of God’s words and exposes us to the vision of God for our lives. His words are spirit and they are life (John 6:63) and these words come alive in our lives, when we continue to meditate in them and we are then guided to apply them in a practical way in our daily living. A person that ignores God’s words is living without a clear communication of God’s plans for their lives, and such a person will live without restraint, and is a clear candidate for perishing (i.e. spiritual death, a frustrated, lonely life and ultimately, eternal removal from the presence of God)

There are a lot of questions for consideration in this area for young people –

- 1- What is God’s vision and purpose *for me*?
- 2- What is God’s vision for my business?
- 3- What is God’s vision for your career?
- 4- What is God’s vision your family?
- 5- What is God’s vision for the choices and decisions you make?

As we consider the above, let us meditate on the words in Psalm 119:105 and allow the words of God to be a lamp to our feet and a light to our paths.

Ability to act:

There are so many brilliant ideas in the minds of people that remain buried in there, never revealed to the world. The ability to act on visions for our lives, requires a determination that sometimes eludes us. Some professionals have tagged this lack of determination as “action-paralysis”, “decision-paralysis”, or apathy. It is a real problem and requires a recognition that it exists to overcome it with clear strategies.

The same paralysis affects our walk with God. We know we ought to study the word of God more, meditate and act on it more but somehow, the action required eludes us, more and more. And we find ourselves, doing those things, that we do not wish to do and do not edify God. Apostle Paul puts it best in Romans 7:15-20. Oftentimes, people find it easy to go into the default mode that satisfies the flesh, rather than seeking the things of God that requires a lot of sacrifice.

There are a lot of ways to overcome this challenge in particular, but perhaps the most effective and practical ways includes – praying all the time, about everything, setting a specific time aside to discuss/study the bible with a friend or family, understanding that our seeming lack of desire is not a sign of our wickedness or lack of affection for God, but rather, perhaps, evidence of the battle within between the new nature and remnants of sinful flesh. This battle is a continuous one until finally, through Sanctification with the word of God, we come to know him as we are known in the resurrection of the saints.

In conclusion, our call to the kingdom is the most important call of our lives. To walk circumspectly as a good example to all, one must immerse oneself in the word of God, as the best practical step. To do this immersion, as young people, we require amongst others – Courage, Vision, the ability to act and total trust in the love of God.