

Maintaining a Servant Spirit in a Service Profession

Imagine the Lord looking down on any given business, church, profession or region, or profession. He sees such indifference to spiritual things, and worse, He hears a great deal of open blasphemy concerning His name and His claims on humanity. Just think how precious it is when He finds someone who really wants to put Him first – or better still a family, firm or fellowship!

In this retreat I shall be exploring this theme under three main headings:

- Our relationship with God, because that is pivotal to everything that we are as well as all that we do;
- Our relationship with our clients, because we want to serve them better, and finally
- Our relationship with our colleagues, because that has a bearing not just on how satisfying our working life will be but also on how fruitful we are likely to be.

We could say that these relate to spiritual maturity, professional fruitfulness and emotional intelligence.

Let me encourage you to turn the points we shall be looking at in these three sections into prayer. Before we start on the first of these sections, our three-part tour, here is an overview of some of the qualities that we will be seeking to develop.

Humility and a servant spirit are the hallmark of the Lord Jesus, and are the very opposite of someone who insists on his rights and status.

Compassion Those of us who have direct relationships with our clients rather than with those who do corporate work will benefit most especially from this powerful and precious quality.

Have you noticed that it is when Jesus feels compassion that His most stirring miracles follow almost immediately afterwards? In the Greek, compassion is so strong an emotion it could virtually be translated a “gut ache.”

Authenticity and Integrity Recent cases have reminded us how important these qualities are, not only in relation to corporate work, but for all that we are and do. They are a wonderful reminder not to cut spiritual corners in our quest to fulfil the visions God has given us. Together with humility, it is a wonderful counterweight to our tendency to boast.

Prayerfulness There is so much we could say here, but we will focus especially on two things: exercising spiritual authority and perseverance.

The ability to love without being weighed down by a spirit of judgementalness

Few of us realise the extent to which we are “a people of unclean lips.” It is so important to remember that it is *God’s* task to judge; and *our* to love and serve. If we get these roles confused, it is very easy to end up judging rather than loving our neighbour. Of course, there are many situations in which we find ourselves obliged to judge, in the sense of making decisions, but there are still many things best left to God, rather as when cases come to court, and the legal professionals present the evidence but leave the judge to make the decision.¹ Since we usually do not know how God will judge in a given situation, our task is to keep our eyes on Him, and our hearts pure as we seek to love and serve God and others.

God knows all about our weaknesses and our frailty, and He is quite clear about the specific purposes He has in mind for each one of us. His Son is always interceding for us, and as a result heavenly forces are at work shaping our lives and destinies.

The ability to prioritise It is much harder to demonstrate the qualities we have just considered if we are faced with an all but unmanageable workload. But even when our workload is weighing heavily on us, there are still important choices to make. Here are the first verses I want to go deep into our hearts.

¹ Professionals usually have a good idea as to how a case will turn out (the weight of the evidence, precedent – even their gut instinct) but where there are ambiguous social circumstances or motives, and specific provisions that are capable of being interpreted in different ways, much can depend on where the persuasions of a particular judge lies.

- a) *Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. (Eph. 5:1)*
- b) *I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in My name. (John 15:15-6)*

Part A: Our Relationship with God

1. Let me start by throwing down an incredibly powerful challenge. It comes from the Soviet era, when a prisoner for the Lord managed to smuggle a slip of paper out of a concentration camp destined for Christians in the West. “Yes, our main need is for prayer – but lead such lives that God can answer your prayers!” Why not start this retreat by praying for just that?

Many organisations and institutions spend a great deal of time drawing up their company mission statements and corporate values, but what we are speaks loudest of all. We will return to this theme later on, but if I can put this in a rather strange way: I may tell people that I have got measles but if I am actually suffering from mumps, what is it that others will catch?

We are often urged to remember who we are in Jesus, but as we consider the life of Jesus it is important to remember how self-effacing He was. We know that “He did not count equality with God as something to be grasped” (Phil. 2:6) but it is interesting to watch how this worked itself out in a variety of situations. At Cana in Galilee, for instance, it was never His intention to upstage the bridegroom by drawing attention to the miraculous transforming of large quantities of water into wine. There was none of the magician’s stage art or pride about what He did, any more than there was in the miraculous catch of fish. He knew exactly who He was, but the miraculous flowed from His servant heart, and pointed others to the truths they most needed to grasp.

- a) At the same time, this self-effacedness did not hold Jesus back from being incredibly bold and forthright in His declarations, not least when it came to denouncing the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees.

Always bearing in mind that what we are speaks louder than what we “officially” say and stand for, may the Lord help us to know what “mode” to be in – bold and forthright or discreet and patient.² So much depends on us being in the “mode” that Jesus is in, and doing what we see the Father doing.

- b) The keener we are to do the work of the Kingdom the easier in some ways it is to become obsessed with certain aspects of it. Some, for instance, put *too* much emphasis on signs and wonders, instead of on the One to whom the signs and wonders are pointing to. Others make their opposition to signs and wonders almost their main reason for being! It is not “slogans and catchphrases” that bear fruit, but a genuine pressing in to the heart of God.³
- c) When we do that, there may be many places that we go to, experiences that we will have, and insights that He will share with us, simply because we *made* the time to seek Him. This means being proactive in spotting gaps and opportunities, either to seek Him or to reach out to others.
- d) I was at a busy conference the other evening, when two of us approached the auditorium and felt no call to go into this particular meeting (good though it was) but to spend time apart with the Lord. I suppose I was looking for confirmation that I was doing the right thing

² We know that our life is ‘hidden with Christ in God. Partly this is because there is so much that we do not yet know; at other times it can be right to rein ourselves in somewhat. Jesus always shared in “relevant” quantities and qualities with His hearers. Once again this counteracts the spirit of boasting, that is so endemic to our carnal natures.

³ Those for whom some particular manifestation of God represents the substance of what they believe are on much more shaky ground than they usually realise.

in this. Within minutes of drawing aside, the presence of the Lord came incredibly deeply on us. God was pleased that we had chosen to come aside to seek His face in this way. On another occasion, that would have been to have missed the whole point of being at such a place.

- e) Think of times when you have taken some such step and made the decision to spend time with God. Use the memory of these occasions as a springboard to be attentive next time the Spirit calls you to lay down what you are doing in order to seek His face.
- f) The whole history of the Bible is of God taking hold of everyday people who have then taken hold of God in powerful prayer and moved heaven to bring down fire into many and varied situations.

Lord, I want to make myself available, and be willing to follow Your leading whenever and wherever you call. Let my heart be sufficiently in tune with Yours that I do not miss those gentle nudges that lead to such clear leadings and to such rich rewards.

Do take the time to feast upon these publications!

2. **You've heard the sermons . . . now may the Lord release the power!**

We all know, in theory at least, that prayer is the most important means of all by which the Lord releases His power and accomplishes His purposes. I am taking it for granted that you are familiar with the wonderful promises in Scripture concerning it – in which case our real need is just to harness what we already know. I want to mention three things in this context: openness, earnestness and togetherness.

- a) Whenever we get together we share matters that are prayer worthy. All too often we keep it at the level of information sharing. It is when we go the extra mile and pray together that things happen – and others will catch the habit from us!

When Ros was a young midwife, a beautiful Christian midwife invited her to pray with a woman in her care. Inspired by her example, Ros began to do the same – and others in turn “caught” the habit from her.

- b) Gordon MacDonald shares a remarkable statistic that one draft horse can pull two tons of weight, but two horses can pull twenty tons. Wow! I liken this exponential increase in effectiveness to what happens when two or three are linked together in prayer.
- c) Sometimes when we come to pray about someone or something we think we know what it is that we want the Lord to do for them. It is often best not to pre-empt what God is going to say or do, but to leave it to Him to speak and work as He wills.
- d) Realistically, we won't always get our prayers “right,” but God answers our seeking, even when He cannot, for whatever reason, answer some specific petition.
- e) It is amazing what happens when we seek the Lord with passion. It is all the difference between a hot knife slicing its way through a pat of butter and a cold knife struggling to make any progress.

It is so often when we cry out to the Lord with all our heart rather than just praying half-heartedly about matters that breakthrough comes. In Luke 22:44 we see Jesus praying with greater earnestness. More earnestly = literally, with greater stretched-outness.

In Hebrews 5:7 we read that, “During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death.” The word for loud tears and cries in Greek is *krauge* – an onomatopoeic word that means, “a cry wrung from a man under intense duress – such as torture.”

3. Understanding the whole counsel of Heaven will mean that we are spoken against in Hell

Many church leaders speak of good and evil in abstract terms, and end up sharing much less than the whole counsel of God. It is easy to be diverted into political aims that are ultimately the wrong battles for us to be fighting. For example, inveighing against bad morality, only goes so far if we are not actively seeking the glory of the Lord's Kingdom, and quite possibly presenting the truth of God's justice. The fact is that "the wrath of God has gone out against all ungodliness." (Rom. 1:18, cf Rev. 16), and we are reaping the consequences of this in so many ways as a nation.

Because most people do not realize what it is that they are missing, we have, in John Piper's words, "suicidally exchanged the glory of God for the poisonous foolishness of idols." Having lost the glory of God, we are left trying to make our own. Many of us are insecure because we do not understand that God has done *all* that He needs to do so that He can be merciful to us. So long as we put anything else on the central platform of our lives other than the cross, however, how can we hope to share in the fulness of life that He longs for us to enter into?

- a) That is why God is bringing us, quite possibly through situations that humble us profoundly, to a place where we learn a better way. A word of warning might be in order here: The closer we come to genuine revival, the more accountable we must be and the more serious are the penalties for breaking God's commandments. The Lord's presence will not continue with us if we play fast and loose with God's clear commandments. Once again we are urged to lead such lives that God can answer our prayers – not least to provide the Lord with "reasons" to turn aside some of His entirely justified wrath towards us as a society and as a church, which has been so taken up with trivia?

Jeremiah reminds us that, *A glorious throne, exalted from the beginning, is the place of our sanctuary.* (Jer. 17:12) Many people have a rather abstract idea of what the glory of God will look like. You are hopefully familiar with what it is to feel an atmosphere or location "infused" by God's presence, but we cannot separate the glory of God from God Himself. Because this great treasure is to be found in earthen

vessels, however, God does not usually “manifest” His glory separately from what He does through us, His Body on Earth.

- b) That is why it is so important to be cultivating the minutes in order to live in the awareness of His presence. There are many who have extensive ministries and who have achieved great things but who are not noticeably living in the glory of God’s presence. They may even be being profoundly undermined by the “lust of the eyes and the boasting of life.”

For everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the **lust of his eyes** and the boasting of what he has and does--comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever. (1 John 2:16-17)

- c) That again is why it is so important for us to be seeking God with all our heart, rather than allowing our work (or anything else) to be our God. From time to time we will be tested as to what the glory is that we are really seeking. You have probably watched *Chariots of Fire*, in which the Scottish runner (later missionary) Eric Liddell declared that he felt God’s pleasure when he ran fast. He knew that he was doing what God had created him to do. But when he arrived in the Olympic Games in Paris in 1924, he discovered that the heats for the 100 metres were due to be run on a Sunday, and he was not prepared to break the convictions of a lifetime and run on the Sabbath. Everybody knows the amazing story of how a generous-hearted fellow athlete gave up his place to let Liddell take part instead in the 440 race, and how another athlete pressed a piece of paper into his hands before he won the gold medal: “*Those who honour Me I will honour, says the Lord.*” (1 Sam. 2:30)

If we knew that we only had three years to convey the whole essence of the kingdom of God, would we have spent 40 days in the wilderness, or gone climbing mountains with a handful of illiterate disciples?

If you had all the chance for fame and fortune that lay before Eric Liddell after his victory at the Olympics. Would we have been willing to go to China to serve as a missionary in 1925, and then lay down our life there in a Japanese prisoner of war camp during the Second World War, even though we had the opportunity to get out? (He sent his wife and children home in time) That is prioritization of the highest order, choosing eternal rewards over earthly ones!

- d) Many of us are carrying far more national or institutional pride than we realize. For church leaders this may take the form of thinking too much about numbers, or about the spiritual experiences we are enjoying, or not experiencing. It is not hard to see how this can happen in our businesses too. Without allowing any foothold for condemnation, ask the Lord to show you specifically how this might apply to you.
- e) At the same time, doing the will of God cannot fail at some point to bring us into conflict with the powers and principalities of this present world system. We must no more underestimate the spiritual warfare than overstate it. After all, the enemy does not have that many targets worth his while pursuing in any given region!
- f) May the Lord help us to know when to “wrestle” and when to simply “nestle” close to the Lord.
 - 1. Wrestling is the most intense form of exercise known to man. It stands to reason that the Lord won’t keep us permanently in the wrestling ring. (Eph. 6:12, cf Col. 4:12) When we become aware of what the devil is up to, we must fight and pray accordingly, using the weapons the Lord has given us.
 - 2. Sun bathing is delightful, but it doesn’t necessarily accomplish much. In the same way, times of spiritual sweetness are most enjoyable – but it can often be when our

backs are to the wall that we pray more earnestly and see most ground gained for the Kingdom.

4. **Am I open to the unexpected?**

It is important to have short, medium and long-term goals in our lives, and for our firms when times are hard; they often help to pull us through. But if we focus too narrowly on these goals we may miss the Lord's unexpected leadings.

- a) So much of our life consists of **interruptions**. Jesus' did too. Amazingly, these often turned out to be big time God-instances. One day He was on His way to healing Jairus's daughter, (Mark 5:22–24, 35–43) along comes a woman with a haemorrhage. He could so easily have said, "I'm sorry I don't have time to help you, I'm on an important mission."
- b) The woman had been bleeding for twelve years, the same length of time that the little girl had lived. I do not think that this was a 'coincidence': one situation called for an instant raising up, the other a major touch from the Lord after years of serious suffering. (The woman had been rendered permanently 'unclean' in Jewish society due to strict observance of the Law (The Torah). Just as Jesus adapted to these demands, so may we also do to the many unexpected episodes that come our way.
- c) When the Lord Jesus said to His disciples, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest," (Mark 6:31) even He found that the crowds had got there first. Once again He "adjusted" to the new situation and delivered the demoniac on the far side of the lake. It is certainly right to set out to *make* time to be with the Lord, rather than just hoping to *find* it, but stuff happens and we always need to remain flexible.

5. You see, we can't get the full picture best by sticking our noses up against it! just as you stand back in an art gallery to get the best perspective on a

painting, time out with the Lord is vital for gaining perspective. In the midst of a long hours / fast food culture, it is important to feed the soul. If the Lord Jesus set time aside regularly to be with the Father, then we need to do so too.

6. I love to develop “trysting places” where I meet regularly with the Lord. It may be a corner of my room, or I may go to a place that is soaked in prayer, or more commonly I seek to soak a place in prayer so that it too becomes a place where it is easy to meet with the Lord.

a) Let’s do a spiritual MOT on this theme of what we do to bring our soul to stillness? How good are we at entering the silence of God, as opposed to merely happening to say nothing? Our lives are dominated by the Outlook Calendar or equivalent – we’d have said the file-o-fax a decade or two ago. This is hard for those of us who work in an environment where we have to keep a note of every minute that we spend doing chargeable billing work – we have to work hard not to allow this mentality to hinder the flow of the Spirit through us.

b) Somebody once said, “in order to achieve anything significant, we need to be slightly under-employed.” What they meant is that it is rarely those who are always hammer and tongs in action who come up with the most creative solutions or the deepest insights. We need to consciously factor in time for reflection rather than just activity, for this can make our activities far more fruitful and productive. It is the difference between a guided missile and a “fire and hope for the best” policy!

7. Discerning what the Lord is saying in any given situation is rarely an automatic thing. It takes serious waiting on the Lord. Imagine telling a person how to drive a car – you put your left foot down and your right foot down, but only so far, your left hand on the gear stick, your eyes on the mirrors, oh and looking over your shoulder too of course, as well as looking straight ahead . . . it all sounds terribly complicated, but after a while you just . . . drive. It

should become more like second nature for us to seek God about everything that we do, and to see more with His eyes as we wait on Him.

May the Lord give us increasing ability to discern what He is doing, even when it is not at all in line with what we had expected or have experienced in the past. Perspective is particularly important when the opposite of what we had hoped for appears to come to pass. It is worth saying that most genuine visions go through mid-vision crises when everything appears to stack up against the likelihood of their ever being fulfilled. This is Moses seeking to bring the Israelites out of Egypt and being set upon by both Pharaoh and his own people, but crying out to God and being given the same command once again. (Exodus 5)

- a) Hearing from the Lord is a two-stage process: first, by whatever means the Lord chooses, we receive a word or direction from the Lord. We then need to know what to do with what we have heard.

Attention to detail is really important. Jesus was obedient to his Father's will in every detail and we must try to be so too.

8. One word from the Lord makes sense of many things

What the Lord shows us may be right in line with what we would call common sense and our own desires, but it usually includes at least some elements that we would not have thought of for ourselves – and which may even feel completely at odds with what we had wanted or expected. It is so important to commit all that we do to the Lord, and through constant practice to learn to discern between true and false leadings. (Heb. 5:14)

- a) Can you identify various “call signs” by which the Lord reveals His will to you?
- b) If the matter is an important one, expect Him to confirm His leading by several different strands. It is so important to test the spirits to see if they are of God. (1 John 4:1) Almost all the mistakes we make in matters of guidance happen because we put too much emphasis on one strand only. I have written about spiritual “trigonometry” in *The Still Small Voice*.

c) In this whole matter of discerning the Lord's leading, it is very important for us to check our track record. It is entirely possible for us to genuinely hear God's leading in certain areas of our life, and yet to be completely off course in some other aspect of our walk with God. So when you sense something momentous in an area that experience has proved you may be vulnerable to deception in, don't get overly excited. Be cautious in fact! And don't write others off who have been mistaken in some areas, but who may be spot on in other areas.

9. **The matter of timing.** Much of our struggle to understand the Lord's dealings with us revolves around this matter. I often hear something correctly, but put the wrong time scale interpretation on it. Ros puts the corrective onto it. I feel we should visit someone, and Ros agrees, but whereas I suppose that the Lord must mean today, she works out that tomorrow would be better!

a) When the Lord shows us something, it comes from the heart of eternity, which intersects with our timescale perfectly when it needs to but it originates from a place that is outside of time. It is not surprising therefore that we think we have to act on it straight away, but it may need more prayer, analysis or more circumstances to work out before we should act decisively on it.

10. **Don't be pressurized**

Ros and I are great believers in the army maxim "Time spent in reconnaissance is seldom wasted." It has often kept us from impetuous purchases and premature action. Occasionally, of course, immediate action is required, but far more often than not when we rush or are pressurised into things by the urgency of the timing we make serious mistakes.

a) Unless prophets are both mature and well embedded in a team, many prophets have a tendency to want people to act on their words *now*, whilst many pastors, whose job it is to implement such insights at ground level, are instinctively cautious. This can be a source of

considerable tension, but if handled right it can be a good example of that complementariness that the Lord so often uses for His purposes – in marriages as well as businesses and churches. So long as we appreciate each other’s giftings, it can be a good thing.

Whoever watches the wind will not plant;

whoever looks at the clouds will not reap. (Ecclesiastes 11:-4)

If we wait till circumstances are perfect, the chances are that we will never start at all, just as if writers wait till they felt inspired before they begin to write the chances are that their output will be very low. Writers have to learn to write as it were to order, and we too have to learn to act by the will alone. There’s a rider to that, though, and that is that if we act prematurely, more information could have come in that would have had an important effect on the wider picture. That’s why it is so important to pray about matters of timing.

11. **A time to respond** I have often discovered that there can be a significant time delay between God first calling me to something, and actually setting out to do it. The call gives me the time to pray and prepare, but the actual commission comes later. We can get as seriously out of step with the Lord if we act on the call instead of waiting for the commission as we can if we fail to act when the commission does come.

- a) In a rather similar way we can see in Scripture that God often sounds a warning, but then allows time for repentance before the sentence is finally carried out. The important thing is to know that God means what He says, and to use the grace time we have been given to seek Him more urgently.
- b) **So many people lament** ‘I wished I’d used the good years to prepare better; I wish I’d heeded what the Lord had said.’
- c) **Pray to be a “completer finisher”**. Our primary gifting may be more as a visionary, but we still need grit and determination to get tasks

done. Jesus is the author and perfecter of our faith. Just look at how willing He is to play the long game!

- d) As surely as we do not want to spread ourselves too thinly, do not miss out on creative opportunities that would refresh your soul and bring you a better lifestyle balance. There are so many things He may choose to open up for us: art, music, dance, sport, walking, healing on the streets, street pastors, overseas mission . . . the possibilities are endless, but again we will need to be proactive to enter into them. This brings us to the issue of who we share our inmost journey with.

12. Who do you share your innermost journey with?

The role of godly relationships is central to our being able to relate deeply to the Lord. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 4:15-16, *You have many teachers in the faith, but not many fathers and mothers in Christ.* A father or mother in Christ is first of all a good example to us, and then one who shows ways of doing things we might not have thought of for ourselves, as well as one who rewards and encourages good intentions rather than just praising “results”.

- a) We know we are called to imitate God, but it is also good to spend much time in the presence of those who are being used by Him. As we saw in the example of Ros’s midwife friend, many of the best things in the spiritual life are caught as well as taught.
- b) We are to a large extent what we are because others invested in us. Who have been the people who have been the biggest impact on your life? Bless their memory. Was it not at least in part because they took a personal interest in you that they have helped to shape you?
- c) The Celtic Church used to say that a man without a spiritual director is like a chicken without a head. We are not talking about letting someone else make all the key decisions in our life, but we will benefit enormously from having someone who is praying for us, and to whom we are properly accountable.

- d) Traditional Catholics went to confession. James, the brother of Jesus, urges us to put something similar in place when he says *confess your sins to one another and pray for each other so you may be healed.* (James 5:16) Who do you turn to in order to inspire you to live more authentically? I cannot recommend prayer partnerships and accountability groups too highly.
- e) By developing strong relationships, we are much less likely to be deceived. That is why we need people who will ask searching questions, so that we are not swept away by delusions of grandeur and warped perspectives.
- f) Whilst some of us may be fortunate to have a supervisor at work who is able to help and develop us, others of us will have to look further afield for such help, quite possibly on a professional basis. If you had a serious medical condition and money was no object, would you not go to a Harley street specialist rather than your local GP.

13. The more abandoned we are to the Lord, the easier it is for Him to work.

Many want power and fruit in their lives without really being willing to pay the sacrifice. Paul said that he “died daily.” And Tom Marshall reminds us that, “The flock is not there for the sake of the shepherd, the shepherd is there to lay down his life for the flock.”

a) **The willingness to sacrifice lies at the heart of our servant calling.**

At the heart of every ministry that really bears fruit for the Lord, we will find some hidden sacrifice, where people have taken real steps of love and commitment out of love for Jesus and a burden for souls. It is not that we are to go looking for hard situations to demonstrate that sacrificial spirit; but if we have a heart of love that desires the very best for those we lead – and take real satisfaction in seeing others achieving heights that we ourselves will never climb – then it shows that we really are yielded to God, and have servant heart rather than a competitive one.

- b) John the Baptist is the perfect example. As the crowds began to leave him and flock instead to Jesus he said, “He must become greater, but I must become less’ (John 3:30) Another example which has always greatly impressed me in this respect concerns FB Meyer, who was a well-known conference speaker from a previous century. The time came when Meyer was superseded in popularity as a speaker by the young Campbell Morgan. Instead of resenting the reduction of his ministry, Meyer resolved to spend as much of his spare time as he could praying for the success of Campbell Morgan’s ministry. That is humility in action – an attitude that God can abundantly bless.
- c) The opposite would have been to give in to resentment. There is only one letter difference between the words “resent” and repent” but all the difference in the world in the outcome.
- d) Unforgiveness always spells a leak of power. Sometimes we do not realise we have not fully forgiven someone until we come right up close with the person or situation that has hurt us in the past. There are usually “layers” of forgiveness to go through before we emerge into wholeness.

It is perhaps worth saying that full restoration of trust is another matter altogether. This usually takes a great deal longer to accomplish than making the framework in the first place to forgive.

14. Without courage we will never achieve anything of any lasting value.

- a) There are many things we do not need courage for – sitting around doing what we can perfectly well do without the help of the Holy Spirit – but nothing of lasting worth is achieved for the Kingdom without courage. In one of the final messages in the Bible, the Lord warns that *outside* the Kingdom of God are to be found the murderers and the sorcerers. All the usual suspects in fact. The list actually begins, however, with the word the *cowardly*. (Revelation 21:8) This may

seem surprising at first – until we realise that cowardice is but the final state to which *The fear of man, which is such a snare, leads the soul.* (Pvbs. 29:25)

- b) Whilst most decisions are best made by carefully weighing pros and cons, there are times when the wisdom of the Lord would have us embrace a course of action that does not immediately appeal to us. What examples have you known in your life of **obedience preceding understanding?**

- c) **Boldness** is not the absence of fear, so much as the willingness to go forward in doing what is right despite our inward concerns.

May the Lord leads us on in this adventure, warning us when we should not embark on something, and strengthening us with all grace, protection and anointing when we should. He is always leading us further on and further in!