

Perspectives to Run Our Race Well

By SP Daniel Foo

Hebrews 12:1-2 (NIV)

1Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. 2Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Importance of Correct Perspectives

Hebrews 12:1-2 gives us important keys on running our race in life. Correct, biblical perspectives are very important so that we run our race well. What do we focus on, pay attention to when we enter our Promised Land, the land flowing with milk and honey God has meant for us to live in? The book of Hebrews tells us that the Promised Land is a state of rest in the Lord. A place where we learn to receive the grace of God by faith, a place God wants all of us to live. By building our faith, growing our faith, we receive this rest from God.

In Egypt, the Israelites had to toil for their food, their onions and their garlic – food of the ground. But in the Promised Land grapes and pomegranates hung from trees, and all the Israelites had to do was to pluck these fruits off. The promise of the Lord is for believers to enter into the rest of the Promised Land. It is meant for Man even today who still lives under the curse, the toiling of the ground. Perspectives are so important because many of us still struggle with the issues of life, our toiling for our bread and butter. But today Christ has redeemed us from that curse; we no longer have to live under the curse. This makes all the difference in our living.

Galatians 3:13

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."

Perspectives are what we focus on. The ten spies saw the giants in Canaan, only Joshua and Caleb saw the promise of God. They were men of a different spirit. This is what we need as a church - to be men of a different spirit, men who see God's promise instead of the giants that stand physically in the land. We will miss out the potential spiritual breakthrough if we stick to our old perspectives i.e. if we see only giants. Do we keep ploughing, growing and nurturing our lives, our souls, our skills – or are we easily derailed by a comment, a

happening, something negative? What are we choosing to focus on – something that paralyzes us, a thought that immobilizes us?

We need to guard our thoughts, take captive every thought. There are 3 sources of thoughts – from men, from God, and from the Devil.

We are overcomers in Christ. God wants us to be prosperous, lacking nothing – always on top and not below. We are the Head and not the Tail. But in the world there are troubles. There are trials and troubles simply because of the Fallen-ness of Men. It is our Fallen state that has fractured the structure of the Earth that creates the chaos in this world. Nothing in this world happens by chance – and in an intentional disciple-making church, wisdom is the key to redeeming the time to live through this age and be prepared for the age to come.

The Wisdom Key

Ephesians 5:15-16

*15*Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, *16*making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.

Like the 5 virgins, we must be prepared; we must have extra reserves of oil so that we will not run out of oil should the return of the Bridegroom be delayed. Those who are wise hear the Lord's Word and obeys the Word. The 5 foolish virgins were also waiting, like those who hear the word but do not do the Word – they build their houses on the sand. They are bogged down by offences, negative comments made, issues in life – and they fall into that wilderness, that spiritual entrapment. We are living in evil days, and the only way to survive this as we wait for Christ is to be wise, to be different from the 5 foolish virgins – to do the Word, instead of running out of oil before the Groom returns.

Proverbs 9:10

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

Wisdom comes as we develop the fear of God, it is the opposite of foolishness. The person who rejects God blasphemes God, and God warns that the person who relies on himself and his horses, will be given up by God himself to a reprobate mind. He will increasingly lack wisdom, and comes to a state where he has degenerated to a perverse state, a deteriorated mind that abounds in foolishness – resulting in acts of homosexuality and lesbianism - Romans 1:18-32. We must understand and draw the principle that we must redeem the time by fearing God, by growing in the wisdom of God.

The wise man wins souls for Christ, which is why evangelism is so important.

Daniel 12:3

Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.

He who is wise turns many to righteousness. Consider those who have left the church, those out in the wilderness struggling with their spiritual lives. Bring these back to the body of Christ where they can be ministered to, so that they may experience anointed worship and meet with God through the hearing of His Word. And we need to be strong and blessed in order to be a blessing.

Proverbs 19:11

A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense.

Offences should not hinder our spiritual growth – the wise man is not easily offended. He allows a negative remark to pass by him; he perceives accurately, discerns correctly, senses perfectly – words, situations, and circumstances. This is what the Church should be. The flow is top down, from the leaders to the members, so that everyone will be blessed. Everyone who is plugged into the body life of the Church will be blessed. However many of us are too busy with our lives such that we forget the principles, the perspectives we need to live the victorious life. And that is the purpose of this message.

Principles to Live a Victorious Life

I. Firstly we need to develop a good sense of the **Purpose** of our life. Hebrews 12:1 We have to run

the race marked out individually for us. In a general sense we all run a common race. But in another sense our race is different from my race. It's in the same vein in Proverbs 22:6 when God says to train up a child in the way he should go.

Proverbs 22:6

Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.

Every child is different – each child should be trained up according to his inclinations, his strengths, his personality. Everyone is wired up differently. We cannot treat one child or person the way we treat another, each must be specially trained with the wisdom of God.

Psalms 139:16

your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

All our days in life are written in the Book of Life, ordained by the Alpha and the Omega – the God who knows the end from the beginning. Yet he has given us a choice to align our will, our decision-making according to His Will. Our ways, our minds must be aligned with the mind of God, guided and led by the Holy Spirit. We must be purposeful and intentional, deliberate and focus about our purpose. We are to develop the purpose because it is a journey and a process.

1. You must know the purpose for you as a **Person** – that you are significant, special. We must

start from knowing this – that God loves you very deeply, that you are not an accident. You may have been adopted, your mother may have attempted to abort you – but you are still deeply loved by God, He sees you as significant. God wants you to be wholesome in spirit, soul and body; he wants to save you. He wants you to walk in health, and he wants you to live a life with no baggage. The cross of Jesus Christ makes all the difference because He came to bring salvation, deliverance and healing. He wants us to be victorious, prosperous, with no lack.

Jeremiah 29:11

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

When God says "I have plans to prosper you", He is not referring solely to financial resources – it means we will lack nothing. We must know where we are going.

2. If you are married, we must know our purpose in the marriage as a **Spouse**. God wants you first to be a godly man/woman, then a godly father/mother. If we are not clear of our purpose we just fumble along in our marriage. Many spouses do not know each other after years of marriage – they simply coexist.
3. What is your purpose in your family? As a **Parent**, raise up godly offspring, develop deep, God-led relationships with your children, your teenagers. There are consequences if you fail to do so.
4. Why do you work to earn your salary? What is the purpose for **Your Job**? Is it solely a bread and butter issue? No – God has a purpose for you, he has placed you in the market place to find a sense of fulfillment, to add value into the lives of those around you. Your work matters to God, part of the creation mandate. God created men to work, and in your work you can fulfill God's calling in your life, to be salt and light for Him.

5. We must also consider your purpose for your relationship with **God**. God has called us to

be disciples, and one of the best ways to do so is to belong to a cell group. This is where our journey of discipleship is tested. By learning to love our brother, our sister – this is where the rubber hits the road. It is different from just attending church service as part of a big congregation. We are tested when we come into contact with people we do not always get along with, when we struggle in our lives.

1 John 4:20

If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.

We live in this information age. Daniel 12 has been fulfilled – technology has exponentially increased information.

Daniel 12:4

... Many will go here and there to increase knowledge.

We need to move **from information to transformation**. We may be able to hear sermons and read Christian articles on the web, but transformation only comes when we are in a community, a cell group. God is looking for lives changed – there must be life-change from inside out. There are too many hearers of the word. The foolish hear the Word as well, but they do not apply and do the Word.

6. We must also evaluate the **Relationships** in our lives. What are the purposes of these *Relationships*? Some relationships may have to be cut this year – what was permissible last year may not be permissible for you this year.
7. We must move on from certain **Activities** and **Events**, even if we have grown used to them
– they may no longer be good for us. You may have to move on to new ones.
8. We want to be **Healthy** and Strong in the Lord.
9. God wants us to live in **Financial** Freedom, He wants us all to be blessed. He provides for all our needs.

II. Once we are clear about our purpose, once we develop our purpose, we must **Plan**. If we fail to plan, we plan to fail.

Luke 14:28-32

28"Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? **29**For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, **30**saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.' **31**"Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? **32**If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace.

Do we have enough resources to do what we have to? Planning is thinking through the issues of each aspect of our purpose. What are the issues involved in being a parent, in my work life. What are the outcomes and consequences? Do we know what we are working for? Are our whole lives overwhelmed by mindless implications, without a real meaningful purpose to work towards? *Planning takes into account the Season you are in and the Time-Lines for each plan and goal.* Phases in life we must devote more attention to – we need to think through these Seasons and devote the proper amount and duration of priority to each time span.

Proverbs 16:1-3

1To man belong the plans of the heart, but from the LORD comes the reply of the tongue. **2**All a man's ways seem innocent to him, but motives are weighed by the LORD. **3**Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.

The Bible talks about planning. God says use our heads in 2 Timothy 1:7.

2 Timothy 1:7

For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

God has given us a sound mind. The Bible also says seek godly counsel from those who have knowledge in the particular expertise you need help in. God wants us to use our minds all the time.

III. The Bible also says **Pray** - everything in our lives should be soaked in prayer. Why do we pray?

Because fundamentally it is a lordship issue – it means to have an attitude and posture of total dependence on God. Only when we do this can Heaven intervene on Earth. God has given ownership and responsibility of Earth to men – Genesis 1:28, Psalm 115:16.

Our lives, our family, our work are in our hands. And God cannot intervene unless we invite Him to do so in prayer. Heaven cannot come down to Earth unless we establish an altar before God. Unless we have build that ladder from Earth to Heaven through which God can dispatch his angels to descend and ascend, dispensing the grace of God.

And that is why we pray – our prayers lay the tracks on which the train of the grace of God runs. Our prayers are earthly license for heavenly intervention. Then the Holy Spirit will guide us in wisdom, prompt us what to do, so that we will succeed, find victory in all we attempt to do.

Its says in Proverbs 3:6 to acknowledge Him in *all* your ways, *then* He will direct our paths. Because God will not intervene, he has given us a will – and that is why we pray.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 (AMP)

Be unceasing in prayer.

IV. Fourthly, once we are clear on these plans there must be **Priorities**. Prioritize because there will

be clashes in our schedules and conflicts for our time. We only have so much energy; we can only be in one place at one time. Make every event purposeful, because in every event we are either blessed or we are a blessing to someone else. We need to build our spiritual, mental, emotional capacities. Some people are strong spiritually but emotionally they are dwarfs. They are easily distracted by small comments, side-tracked by offences – to the point that they are unable to fulfill what they originally meant to do.

Ecclesiastes 3:1

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven:

Some people are more important in some seasons. We must make the choices, the priorities in each season of our lives. And we can only prioritize properly with the wisdom of God. If not we may lose our purpose with misplaced priorities when we are deviated by shortsightedness. And overtime we may have completely missed our destination in life. God is always the most important person in our lives – in everything, seek God first, his kingdom and his righteousness – Matthew 6:33.

Next comes our family and closest friends who have access to our time. Some people are more important. We have limited time and energy that must be divided amongst people in our lives wisely. The same goes for the things we do. Learn to prioritize.

- V. Then simply be **Prepared** to work very hard.

Ecclesiastes 9:10

Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.

Working hard means **paying the price** – exchanging our time and energy for something worthwhile, meaningful.

Let's consider the following areas in our lives:-

1. When we fail to develop and build our **significance** and self esteem in the love of the Lord, we will **misbehave**. That is why people boast, run over other people – all in order to protect the low self esteem. As people of God we must learn to be secure in the Lord, in the Father's love.

1 John 2:15-16

15Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16For 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.

Only then will we cease to crave, like the pagans do, for the lust of the eyes, lust of flesh, and the pride of life. We may work hard to earn money, but we must note the energy/posture/attitude and the way we go about it. Do not use all your energy to hanker after wealth as it is fleeting. We need to develop and build our significance in Christ.

2. When we fail to intentionally nurture **our marriages**, the marriage will deteriorate, simply because we are fallen-beings and full of ourselves. Many couples married for a long time do not know each other because they coexist. That is why marriage time and enrichment courses are so important.
3. When we fail to deliberately parent **each child**, that child will be left to grow up under the influence of their peers, the internet and other people who they relate with. As a child grows up, the level of influence a parent has over the child falls drastically. Therefore as Christian fathers (heads of the household) and mothers (determining the environment of the home) we must intentionally parent every child to bring

them up in the will and knowledge of the Lord. It is never too late to start parenting; we can always go to the Lord to help us even if we have previously neglected our post.

4. *When we begin to lose our desire and passion and energy for our **work**, it is time to re-think
and review our stay in that **job**. What are we working for? Your work is just tent-making – we are spirit beings who live in this physical flesh. This physical body is going to go, and God will give us an immortal, resurrected body. Our business, our job is going to go one day. Why are we in our current occupation? Our work matters to God, He cares for you, He provides for you – so what are you channeling your time/life into? What are you living for?*
5. *When we fail to develop our **walk with God** through spiritual disciplines, we will **backslide**.
If you do not grow spiritually, you will definitely slide backwards. It is the same as eating to maintain our physical bodies. We need to feed our spirit, we need to nurture our spirit man, develop spiritual strength.*
6. *If we fail to **bond the important relationships** in the Body of Christ (e.g. in your CG sub-groups) you will not experience the love of God and the love of brethren/sisters as the Holy Spirit intends for you. Relationships take time to build – our marriages, families –the body of Christ. If they are important relationships, this is where we experience God, the Word of God, the Love of God, the Joy of the Lord. Where the life of God flows through the body life. We need to bond the important relationships.*
7. *When we are tossed to and fro from **activities** and **events** without **being blessed** or being
a **blessing to others**, we are lost. Be it mentoring, coaching, counseling – if there is meaning in what we do, this is fine. But if we are merely drifting from meeting to meeting without being a blessing or being blessed we need to re-think what we are devoting our time to. Are you addicted to a particular activity that lacks purpose? If so, you are lost.*
8. *We must look after our physical **health** and pay attention to our diet – nutrition, exercise,
rest – sleep and the state of our soul. Nourish our physical bodies, take care of our bodies, exercise, sleep. Find peace in our soul.*
9. *We must be wise stewards over the **finances** and **resources** that God has given to us and*

will continually give to us – vis-à-vis our standard of living. Determine your standard of living, how you spend your money. And over and above this learn to set aside a portion of your finances to bless others, give to others. Know how to abound, as Paul did, as well as how to abase.

Philippians 4:11-13

11 am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. *12* I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. *13* I can do everything through him who gives me strength. But you can only abound and abase when you have decided your standard of living – determined your godly contentment level. This is great gain – because there is no end to the love for money. Earn as much as possible, and give away as much as possible. That is the pattern for the man or woman of God.

VI. Lastly, **Persevere** towards the goals of your purposes. To persevere suggests that there are obstacles to overcome.

Colossians 1:11 (AMP)

*[We pray] that you may be invigorated and strengthened with all power according to the might of His glory, [to exercise] every kind of **endurance and patience** (perseverance and forbearance) with joy,*

We need to persevere and endure. Hebrews 6:12 is for people who struggling with the many aspects of life, be it at work, in the family, or with your health. As you agonize before the Lord, do not become sluggish, or lose hope. Do not be discouraged or burnt out.

Hebrews 6:12

We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.

Conclusion

Those who are weary or heavy-burdened become sluggish. But through faith, in the belief of what God has promised, cling on to the spoken word of God that impacts your heart personally. Persevere through faith and patience – it is the idea of endurance through the storms of life.

Matthew 11:28-30

28"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. **29**Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. **30**For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Even as the storms rise, Jesus is the anchor of your soul; he will hide you in the secret place of the Most High. In the end, God will come through for you. Persevere and see God do just that for you as you believe and trust Him. This is the only way we can run our race in life well, with the help of the Holy Spirit, as we dedicate and consecrate our life to Him.

The starting point of running our race in life does not begin with rushing, planning, and prioritizing. The starting point is solitude. Come to the secret place of the Most High God and find this solitude. The starting point is to be still, and know that He is God.

Psalms 91:1

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.