

Dream Big, Pray Big, Live Big
Part Three — Live Big

- *We need to hear what God is saying—dream big*
- *We need to pray into what God is saying—pray big*
- *We need to act upon what God is saying—live big*
- *The first week we focused on how to dream big.*
- *As we walk with the Lord and daily spend time in prayer, in the Word, and fellowship with other believers, He will impart to us dreams and visions. Some will be short term and others will be lifelong dreams, but all of them will be framed in the ultimate dream—the resurrection.*
- *Last time we focused on how to pray big!*
- *We need to pray into the dreams and promises God has given us. We can co-labour with God by coming into agreement with God's purposes through prayer to see His Kingdom come and His will done on earth as it is already being done in Heaven. To pray big is not only to come into God's will in prayer, but to persevere daily in prayer until we see the fulfillment of His will.*
- *This week we are going to focus on how to live big and put our faith into action.*
- *To understand how to live big we must first define what it means to live big. What does living a fruitful and victorious life look like?*
- *In 2 Corinthians, Chapter four, Paul provides a description of what it looks like to live big.*
- *“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.” (2 Corinthians 4:7). Apostle Paul began his discourse by stating two important truths—our frailties and God's strength, power, and glory.*
- *What is this treasure which we as believers contain? It is the light of the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ. “For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 4:6).*
- *However, it is even more, it is Christ Himself in our reborn spirits. “which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” (Colossians 1:27b). The world looks at Christians as ordinary people, but within us, in our reborn spirit, is God's divine nature. If we submit to the Holy Spirit then His divine nature and character will be revealed through us for others to see. That is the hope of glory!*

- *As believers we may have Christ's divine nature in our reborn spirit but it is only through the process of sanctification, spiritual maturity, and discipleship that His character will be manifest in our souls for the whole world to see.*
- *The sharp contrast between our mortal bodies described as frail earthen vessels and the glorious treasure that God has imparted in us would seem to be a contradiction that would prevent the world from seeing the true value of the treasure. From a purely human perspective, one would expect that the more glorious a treasure the more ornate, secure, and indestructible would be the chest that contains the treasure.*
- *However, God has imparted this treasure not to angels but to frail humanity, to everyone who is willing to put their faith in Jesus Christ. Not only has God chosen frail mankind, but often those who respond are the weakest and least esteemed. "For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." (1 Corinthians 1:26).*
- *God has called the weak and the poor for the very specific reason of bringing glory to His Name and to show those who consider themselves strong and wise are in reality weak and foolish. "But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence." (1 Corinthians 1:27-29).*
- *If we could do it by ourselves we would get the glory, but because God does it through us, He alone deserves the glory.*
- *Often, Christians become discouraged and disillusioned with themselves or with God because they sense their own frailties and weaknesses. They misunderstand God's process and purpose. They are expecting that they will come to a place where they will be able to stand on "their own two feet" and will no longer face or succumb to temptations or weaknesses.*
- *Some believers may picture a victorious Christian as one who has so much faith that he speaks a word and every adverse situation he faces immediately dissolves away. Or they may picture a victorious Christian as always strong and healthy and everything they attempt to do prospers. However, our maturity and fruitfulness is not measured by our level of knowledge or faith, but by the depth of God's love we possess. "And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing." (1 Corinthians 13:2).*
- *Many times Christians living in the West consider persecution and hardship as the exception, and freedom and prosperity as the norm, but as Apostle Paul describes the Christian life he paints quite a different picture. "We are hard-pressed on every side,*

yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.” (2 Corinthians 4:8-9). *Paul doesn’t say we will always be protected from painful or difficult circumstances but God promises that He will be with us and give us the supernatural strength and grace to be victorious in the midst of them.*

- *This misunderstanding of Scripture, that persecution and trials are the exception and not the norm, sets up many Christians for great disappointment and ill prepares them for the realities of life. In the Bible trials and persecution are seen as part of the normal Christian life and Jesus told us to prepare for them. “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake.” (Matthew 24:9). New Testament believers both expected and prepared for persecution.*
- *It is actually in times of persecution and hardships that the Church is the strongest and is most effective in leading people to Christ and seeing them effectively disciplined. It is during times of persecution that our frailty and His power are perfectly manifest. Then the world observes the most amazing thing—“we have this treasure in earthen vessels.”*
- *The source of our strength, wholeness, and wholesomeness is not to be found in ourselves but in God Who strengthens us. As long as we are in these mortal bodies we will find that this treasure is “in earthen vessels.” However, the day will come when we will exchange these mortal corruptible bodies for immortal incorruptible bodies free from weakness, temptations, pain or suffering—and what a day that will be! “For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life.” (2 Corinthians 5:4).*
- *In Micah 6:8b God describes what it is like to be a victorious believer. “And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?” Isaiah reinforced the attributes of the one who moves the heart of God—“But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, And who trembles at My word.” (Isaiah 66:2b).*
- *The believer who knows how to be that earthen vessel that carries the glory of God is the one who is humble and has learned how to fully depend on God. One of the best examples of being humble is simply acknowledging our sins when we fail and turning to God for forgiveness and restoration—to simply acknowledge that we are earthen vessels. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:8-9).*
- *When we struggle to acknowledge our sins and failures and fail to ask forgiveness from those we have wronged, it is because we either do not recognize our frailties or we do not want to acknowledge that we are earthen vessels who sometimes fail.*

- *A natural minded person wants to pretend they have it all together to build up their self-esteem, while a spiritually minded Christian desires to have their life point to Jesus and His grace that sustains them independent of their own limitations.*
- *Our worth is not defined by what we have accomplished but by who we are in Christ. This will set us free to serve God with joy because we will no longer struggle with selfish ambition but be motivated by love for God and love for others. One way we can know when we are looking for value or approval in what we are doing is when we become discouraged or upset when things do not work out as we would have expected or wanted.*
- *As earthen vessels we need to fully depend upon God. Independence is the opposite of recognizing our frailties. We will always fail because on our own we can never accomplish anything of eternal value.*
- *However, when we learn to abide in Christ and learn to totally depend upon Him then we will live victorious and fruitful lives. “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” (John 15:4-5).*
- *There was a point in Apostle Paul’s life when he struggled with accepting his frailties and weaknesses and pleaded with God to deliver him from his thorn in the flesh. “And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.” (2 Corinthians 12:7-8).*
- *God’s refusal to grant Paul’s request was not a sign of God’s displeasure with him but was in fact a reflection of the great favour and the high calling that Christ had bestowed upon him. “And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.”” (2 Corinthians 12:9a).*
- *Apostle Paul learned not only to accept his frailties and limitations but to embrace them with joy and pleasure because he understood that it was through his weaknesses that God’s power and glory could be fully manifest. “Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” (2 Corinthians 12:9b-10).*
- *Because of Paul’s human frailties, everyone, including himself, would recognize and remember that the treasure being manifest through him was Christ! He was the earthen vessel that God was using to manifest His glory. His weaknesses made him totally dependent upon the grace of God.*

- *Apostle Paul described the purpose of the hardships that he along with all believers experience. The manner in which believers respond to their suffering and hardships are meant to manifest the life of Jesus Christ to all those around. “always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you.” (2 Corinthians 4:10-12).*
- *For us to live big our faith in God must be big which will result in a bold confession of God's faithfulness. “And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, “I believed and therefore I spoke,” we also believe and therefore speak, knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you.” (2 Corinthians 4:13-14). The confidence that enables us to face anything, even death, is an unshakeable confidence in the resurrection.*
- *We must be confident that the sacrifices we make now for Jesus, although we may feel weak and feeble because we are earthen vessels, will produce an overflow of abundant fruitfulness for all eternity for the glory of God. “For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.” (2 Corinthians 4:15).*
- *“Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.” (2 Corinthians 4:16). This verse can refer even to the aging process where instead of growing stronger and more energetic our physical bodies begin to grow old and frail. To the world old age is sad and depressing, but believers who are walking with Jesus are continuing to grow spiritually to become spiritual giants strong in the grace of God.*
- *As we grow closer to Jesus and become spiritually minded we begin to measure and evaluate everything, even the severest trials, in the light of eternity. “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” (2 Corinthians 4:17).*
- *It is this eternal perspective and the expectation of the resurrection that enables Christians to endure the greatest trials, the most severe persecution, and the most heartbreaking losses with an inner joy and thankfulness. “while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” (2 Corinthians 4:18).*
- *The great faith chapter of the Bible, Hebrews, chapter eleven, names many of the great men and women of faith, whom, almost without exception, experienced times of great trials, sufferings, and weaknesses concludes with these words: “looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Hebrews 12:2). It is when we divert our attention away from the*

hardships and disappointments of life and focus on Jesus that we find the strength to endure and overcome, even finding hidden value in our times of suffering.

- *Suffering, hardship, and persecution on their own are never good but when we turn to Jesus in the midst of our suffering, hardship, and persecution then God brings forth many good and beautiful things in and through us.*
- *What is Christianity without the cross? Jesus' cross but also our cross. "Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." (Luke 9:23).*
- *Jesus didn't just speak these words to a few people—He said it to them all. Some believers find the Christian life unfulfilling, lacking vitality, and even drudgery. Many times it is because they have refused to learn the spiritual discipline of daily denying themselves and taking up the cross.*

God has a way for us to live even when we go through the worst experiences.

Proverbs 30:24-28 (NKJV)

²⁴ **There are four things which are little on the earth, But they are exceedingly wise:**

²⁵ **The ants are a people not strong, Yet they prepare their food in the summer;**

²⁶ **The rock badgers are a feeble folk, Yet they make their homes in the crags;**

²⁷ **The locusts have no king, Yet they all advance in ranks;**

²⁸ **The spider skillfully grasps with its hands, And it is in kings' palaces.**

- *Proverbs speak about four things that are little or appear unimportant but in fact are exceedingly wise: the ants, the rock badgers, the locusts, and the spiders. These four creatures have attributes that believers need to learn from and emulate because like them, we are weak and frail but God has provided them with great wisdom.*
- *"The ants are a people not strong, Yet they prepare their food in the summer."*
- *Ants are wise because they prepare in time of plenty to be able to survive in times of need and hardship.*
- *We need to be like the ant which knows how to redeem the time and use every opportunity to grow and mature in good times in order to prepare for times of trials, hardship, and persecution. "Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." (Ephesians 5:17-19).*
- *Christians often fail to prepare themselves when things are easy and spend little time studying and meditating on God's Word or developing a deep prayer life, thinking that later they will apply themselves to grow in their relationship with God. However, when*

crises arise they are totally unprepared and collapse both emotionally and spiritually. Let us not be spiritually lazy but learn from the ant to prepare during good times so we can stand strong during difficult times. “Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise.” (Proverbs 6:6).

- **“The rock badgers are a feeble folk, Yet they make their homes in the crags.”**
- *The rock badger, sometimes called a rock rabbit is about 20 inches long with soft feet unable to burrow, so they live in the holes found in the rocks. Even though they do not possess any attributes that would enable them to fight off predators, the rock badger is reportedly rarely preyed upon by terrestrial predators, as their system of sentries and their reliable refuges in the rocks provide protection.*
- *We need to develop the spiritual discipline of finding that place of protection in Christ, who is our rock, when the storms of life threaten to overwhelm us. “Hear my cry, O God; Attend to my prayer. From the end of the earth I will cry to You, When my heart is overwhelmed; Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.” (Psalm 61:1-2).*
- *We need to learn the reality that we are hidden in Christ far from the enemy’s attacks. “For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” (Colossians 3:3).*
- **“The locusts have no king, Yet they all advance in ranks.”**
- *Locusts are led by an unseen leader and they advance together in unity to conquer.*
- *We are Christ’s Body and Jesus Christ is the Head. Jesus Christ is our King and Lord and we are to follow His direction and lead. “And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.” (Colossians 1:17-18).*
- *To live big we need to understand that we are part of Christ’s Body and we need to work together to lift up Christ as the Head. “but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.” (Ephesians 4:15-16).*
- *No one person is to be the focus but Jesus only. The world is not able to see our King but by His Holy Spirit He directs us. To the world we appear to be like the locusts who do not have a king but in reality the Holy Spirit is directing us. When we learn to be led by the Holy Spirit and submit to the Lordship of Christ we are living big.*
- **“The spider skillfully grasps with its hands, And it is in kings’ palaces.”**

- *While the other analogies seem more understandable it may seem more challenging that believers are to learn from or emulate spiders.*
- *When it says a spider skillfully grasps with its hands it raises a question because spiders do not have hands and therefore cannot grasp anything. One Jewish rabbi renders the Hebrew word “yadaim” not as hand but as handiwork. The Hebrew word that is translated as “grasp” also means “to capture.” Thus the reference is in how a spider, with its handiwork, spins a web which it uses to entrap its prey so they cannot escape.*
- *The second part of the analogy is that the spider spins a web in the king’s own palace. These two parts of the analogy provide us with God’s strategy to live big.*
- *How do we live big in terms of the example of the spider? Just as a spider entraps its prey so it cannot escape, God has called us to be fishers of men to draw people to salvation with the net of the Gospel. “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.” (1 Peter 3:15).*
- *We are to be witnesses of Christ to all of mankind—“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:8).*
- *A spider spinning its web can speak about how we are to spin a web by being compelling witnesses of Jesus Christ to the world so that many will be drawn by our testimony and the work of the Holy Spirit into the net of the Gospel. However, how does spinning a web in a king’s palace fit into this picture?*
- *From a purely naturally minded perspective we may think, “We can testify to the person on the street or our neighbors but how will we ever testify of the gospel to those who are heads of governments?” Especially, how could the first century Church which began as a small movement ever speak to governmental rulers and religious leaders? The answer is simple—persecution. God has used the enemy’s plan to destroy the Church as His tool to get His people into the very throne room of kings and rulers and to testify of the Lord Jesus Christ. “But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name’s sake. But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony.” (Luke 21:12-13).*
- *However, once believers stand before these rulers, the handiwork of the Holy Spirit begins to spin a web that provides a compelling witness of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit will give us words of wisdom that will be so persuasive that they will be unable to refute the truth even if they choose not to believe it. “Therefore settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist.” (Luke 21:14-15).*

- *The cost to be a follower of Jesus and to be His witness is sometimes very high—even at the price of our lives. But through it all Jesus is with us. “You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But not a hair of your head shall be lost. By your patience possess your souls.” (Luke 21:16-19).*
- *When Apostle Paul was imprisoned and later taken to Rome because of his faith in Christ, God assured and encouraged him that all this was allowed so that even the highest levels of the Roman government would hear the Gospel and have an opportunity to receive Christ. “But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, “Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome.”” (Acts 23:11).*
- *When Paul stood before Felix, the governor who was hearing Paul’s case, Paul did not focus on the injustice he endured but he wove the web of the Gospel. As Felix heard Paul’s words the Holy Spirit was convicting him and the web of the Gospel was beginning to tighten around him. No longer was he sitting as a judge of the Roman Empire but as a sinner who was hearing about a judgment he would have to face before the True Judge. “And after some days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, “Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you.”” (Acts 24:24-25).*
- *When Paul stood before King Agrippa, Paul did not sound like a person pleading his case before a judge but as an ambassador for the King of Kings pleading with King Agrippa to make peace with the One who would judge him. ““For the king, before whom I also speak freely, knows these things; for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, since this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe.” Then Agrippa said to Paul, “You almost persuade me to become a Christian.” And Paul said, “I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these chains.”” (Acts 26:26-29).*
- *The ants speak of preparation.*
- *The rock badgers speak of protection.*
- *The locusts speak of the preeminence of Christ.*
- *The spiders speak of persuasion.*