



Is that
your Soul
Phone
ringing?

If you have bought your Bible with you this morning, I want to ask you to do something a little out of the ordinary.

I want you to join with me in a statement of faith – taken from one of my mentors Joel Osteen – from Lakewood Church Texas - that declares the truth of God in our midst today:

Raise you Bible in the air, and declare with me!

Slide # 2 – Declaration below:

This is my Bible.

I am what it says I am.

I have what it says I have.

I can do what it says I can do.

Today I will be taught the Word of God.

I boldly confess my mind is alert.

My heart is receptive.

I will never be the same!

In Jesus Name!

Please turn in your Bible to Psalm 103.

In a profound statement of faith, David the Psalmist literally speaks to his own soul, and proclaims:

Slide # 3- Scripture below:

“Bless the Lord – O my Soul – and
everything within me, bless His
holy Name!”

You know, sometimes we just need to give our souls a ‘good talking to’!

Sometimes we just need to *remind* our soul –

- which is the *foundation* of our motivations, emotions, drives, doubts and fears of our lives

- that it just needs to sit down, do what it’s told, and listen to some good old fashioned – home grown truths!

Because we are to be led *by the Spirit* – the Spirit of God - communicating to our spirit!

But too often, Christians settle for second best, and live their lives by listening to the cravings and impulses of their soul – thereby forfeiting the Abundant Life promised by Jesus!

Slide # 4:Statement below:

We really need to learn, *that although our emotions might be real – they are NOT always true!*

Like the patriarch of old, we need to say to our selves, “Bless the Lord – O my Soul – and everything within me, bless His holy Name!”

You know, the reality of this verse, is that God *inhabits* the praises of His people!

Slide # 5 – Scripture below:

Psalm 16 says – that In His presence is
fullness of joy!

And if you need more joy in your life today, then you need to release yourself into the presence of the Lord – and allow Him to impart supernatural joy into your soul and life this morning!

You might need to stop listening to the *logic* of your soul that would try to convince you that expressive worship is ‘all emotion and people getting *carried away!*’

Because even more than inhabiting the praises of his people, God inhabits the *people* - through whom His praises are brought and presented.

God has us in the palm of His hand this morning!

We are *victors* and not *victims* in this life!!!

He is guiding and directing our lives.

He has a future and a plan for our lives, to bless us and prosper us!

For good and not for evil!

We are blessed and cannot be cursed.

Did you hear what I said!

We CANNOT be cursed!

We need to throw out the popular superstitious teaching that has swept through the church - that has Christians hiding in fear in case they pick up a curse as they walk down the street!

My Bible tells me in Galatians 3:13 - that Jesus Christ became my curse as He hung on the cross of Calvary!

Slide # 6 – Animated Gif of flying bird. – with Scripture.



My Bible tells me
in Proverbs 26:2
that an
UNDERSERVED
curse has no affect
upon its intended

victim, they will no more be
harmed from it as a sparrow or a
swallow fluttering through the sky!

Harmless!

The answer is not to go around *breaking* curses in Jesus name – but to simply and faithfully stop believing the lie of the Devil that they can have an affect upon our lives in the first place!

That's because Psalm 5:12 tells us that: God's favour surrounds us like a shield.

So - don't get depressed, don't get discouraged!

Don't let the enemy steal your joy!

Even in the midst of the storm, we can have peace!

You know why?

Because we know God is in *control* of our lives

We know that God *is* directing each and every one of our steps.

Slide # 7 Scripture below

The Bible says in Psalm 37 that,
'The steps of a good person are
guided by the Lord!'

It always helps me to know, that I'm right where God wants me to be *right now*.

As I wrote this encouragement earlier in the week, I was flat on my back from a horrible bout of food poisoning that I picked up from eating rotten shellfish at a family BBQ last Sunday night.

Even when it's a tough time – it always helps to know, that I'm right where God wants me to be – right now!

That as Psalm 30 says, He has turned our curses into blessing, our mourning into joy!

That as Genesis 50:20 says, what others meant for evil – God *has* turned to good!

That even lying flat on my back in bed with a horrible bout of food poisoning – according to 2nd Corinthians 1:4

- I am able to receive the strength of the Lord, and in turn, I am able to then encourage and strengthen *you* with the same strength and encouragement I myself have received from the Lord!

Curses into blessing!

Evil into good!

Mourning into dancing!

Even when I'm facing a challenge, and I'm tempted to say,

'What did I do wrong, what did I do to deserve this?'

You have to know, you can't figure all that out!

You just need to say to the Lord, 'Lord – I believe that I am right where I am supposed to be. That You've got a great plan for my life – that You know the end from the beginning!'

In fact, do you know where the saying about being the 'apple of someone's eye' comes from?

It comes from the Bible, in Deuteronomy and Zechariah – where God calls His loved ones, the Apple of His eye!

He already knew you were going to have that challenge before you even faced it.

I like to think about it like this:

Slide # 8 – Quote below

God had the *solution*, even before I had the *problem*!

Where you are is not a surprise to God!

He's not thinking, 'Boy – I never knew they were going to get in this problem! I never knew they were going to have *that* sickness!

That relationship, *that* redundancy, *that* tragedy or triumph has really taken me by surprise, I mean, I'm God – and I didn't see *that* one coming!

No.

God knew it all!

And He has given us strength for every battle!

And sometimes it is our triumphs in life that are just as hard to cope with as our tragedies.

In fact, the stress that can come our way by successful accomplishments, are often just as intense, if not more so, than the

stress that comes our way through tragedy and failure!

So – no matter where you are this morning, don't ever loose your joy!

When you get up in the morning, no matter what the day looks like, you need to proclaim with David, 'This is the day that the Lord has made, I WILL rejoice and be glad in it!'

I'm going to choose to rejoice and be glad in my salvation today!

When you do that, that's your faith at work.

You're saying, "God I'm trusting in You today! My circumstances are not going to determine my joy today!"

Because, it's your attitude that determines your altitude in life!
Proverbs 23:7 (KJV) says: As a person thinks in their heart, so they are!

We need to be constantly, daily – training our minds, allowing them to be transformed by the 'washing of the water of the Word!'

In fact, having come through a rather dry patch in my spiritual life and reading my Bible, I wrote down seven reasons why I need to be reading my Bible on a daily basis!

Here they are:

Slide # 9

- 1. The Bible is the number one way God teaches and trains His children!**

Even if your 'love language' towards God is NOT reading the Bible, even though it might be Acts of Service, or Solitude in Creation – you still need the Bible to be able to interpret your environment, to stop you slipping into New Age fundamentalism!

Slide # 10

2. Because by reading the Bible – my faith in God is actually increased! Romans 10:17

This reality has revolutionised my Christian life and strength! When I am feeling down or lacking in faith, simply by reading the Bible, my faith is actually increased!

And if the Bible bores or confuses you, then treat it like a buffet meal! Pick and choose what portions you want to read. Read the stuff that interests you and attracts you!

Slide # 11

3. The third reason I need to read the Bible daily, is because if I don't – then the attractions, standards and principles of this world will begin to take over my life.

Coming to church, praying and exercising my Spiritual Gifts will no longer be important to me.

You will find yourself reading and consuming the junk mail that comes through your letterbox, more than you will the Bible!

Slide # 12

4. I need to read the Bible because it washes and cleanses my mind, washing over me like cleansing water!

Slide # 13

5. I need to be reading the Bible daily, because by doing so, and obeying it, I am actually obeying Jesus!

Jesus said in John 14:15 – If you love Me, you will obey My words.

Slide # 14

6. I need to read the Bible daily because the Bible perfectly and

absolutely reveals the will and plan of God for your salvation and sanctification!

Slide # 15

7. I need to be daily reading the Bible because the Bible teaches me about Jesus, and *through* the Bible, I can find Jesus! John 5:39.

Slide # 16

8. I need to read the Bible daily, because the growth, maturity, effectiveness and health of my mind depends on it!

And we need to be reminded today, that God is on your side!

God is *for* you!

I love that Scripture that says, 'If God be for me, then who can be against me!'

Because of this truth, don't focus upon what's wrong in your life. The people or the things that are upsetting or challenging you.

Don't focus upon your weaknesses!

Focus upon what's right, for which you can give God praise!

Focus upon your strengths!

Because what we focus upon, we magnify.

So I encourage you today, to magnify our God.

The more you magnify God, the smaller your problems become – and the more faith will rise in our hearts!

Slide # 17

**The Bible tells us in Isaiah 61:3 to
put on the garment of praise for the
spirit of heaviness!**

Because in the natural, you might feel overwhelmed, you might feel that you have no reason or desire to worship God this morning.

But you have to make a choice this morning.

You need to wilfully choose to stop listening to your soul phone, to take off that garment of heaviness and replace it with the garment of praise!

When you can do that – God can work supernatural things in your life.

When you do that, you will find fullness of joy today!

In fact, I'd encourage you to continually focus upon your strengths, and not your weaknesses.

You see, here's the thing.

Perhaps there is an area in your life that you really want to improve.

Out of a scale of 1 to 10, you might only be a 2 or a 3.

Now, by working really hard on that area, you might be able to improve to where you are a 4 or a 5.

But the reality is, that you'll still only be average in that area – even though you've improved by 2 or 3 points.

But imagine if you concentrated on your strengths, on the positive qualities God has invested into your life already.

You might *already* be a 6 or a 7!

And by focusing upon those strengths, you can become an 8, a 9 or even a 10!

I love what the Living Bible has to say about developing your Spiritual Gifts.

'Be sure to develop your Spiritual Gifts, and reach your full potential within them!'

You know what my number 1 spiritual gift is?

It's actually the gift of encouragement!

But I've had many well meaning people try to suppress this gifting within me!

Telling me that I need to stop being a 'spin doctor'.

That I need to teach deep and theological truths from the Scriptures instead of encouraging people.

But that's not what I'm good at!

In fact, over 20 years ago, God gave me my 'life verse' that was to guide and direct my pastoral ministry.

It comes from Acts 20:24

Slide # 18

My life is worth nothing unless I use it for the work assigned to me by the Lord Jesus Christ, that is the work of telling others the good news of God's mighty kindness and love!

Other people have been commissioned to teach deep theological truths or the coming judgement and hellfire.

God has called me to preach the *Good News* of God's mighty kindness and love!

And the wonderfully good news this morning, is that God loves you so much, *that He would rather die than live without you!*

That just God *and you* – equals a majority!

And God wants to do extraordinary things in and through your life.

That He can use you as a vessel for His glory – even though you might be feeling you are a broken, cracked and unworthy vessel.

In fact, do you know the difference between ordinary and extraordinary.

It's doing - just that little bit extra!

So, is that your soul phone ringing this morning?

And are you going to answer it?

Listening to your *soul phone* produces a Christian life marked by criticism, prejudice and the hatred of those living a life *different* to us.

It leads to a self righteous, religious and unattractive Christianity.

Listening to the voice of Jesus will result in transforming criticism into compassion, hatred into hospitality, and prejudice into prayer.

And we start becoming People Magnets for Jesus!

You see, it's all about allowing our lives to produce fruit – either fruit from our soul, or the fruit of the Spirit.

Galatians 5:19. The fruit of the soul are obvious for all to see: sexual flirting, a contaminated conscience from exposure to wicked indulgences; 20 the lust for the latest possessions money can buy, manipulating others; hatred and disgust of people below your standards, discord and arguments, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, causing division amongst others, factions and cliques, 21 envy and drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. 25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

How might that look this Christmastime?

You see, the Good News, is that YOU can make a difference, an enormous positive difference in a dark and hurting world.

And in doing so, you will make *yourself* feel so much better!

That's one promise I want you to embrace this Christmastime: As the Bible says in Acts 20: It is more *blessed* to *give*, than it is to receive!

What if often missed out from this verse, is the description of the ones to whom we are to give.

The prior verse tells us who the ones are to whom we are to give: To *support the weak*.

The original meaning of the these words are: *those in slavery and without choices*. ἀντιλαμβανομαι antilambanomai *an-tee-lam-ban'-om-ahee*

It's like those bottles of V that we have on auction on Trade Me.

100% of which the money raised will go to set slaves free in India.

Slide # 21- Photo of V/Coke

Part of my promise with these bottles of V, is that if you buy them with the intention of setting a slave free,

..is that when you look into the glass bottle, you will see the image of Jesus smiling back at you!



That's because we CAN become as Jesus to a starving child, to a woman caught in the trap of prostitution, to a father dying of treatable disease in a forgotten 3rd world country village!

But, it might mean we stop indulging our children, ourselves or our loved ones – and take the commandments of Jesus more seriously this Christmastime.

World mission – world hunger/poverty and starvation.

Like the words of Brook Fraser's song *Albertine*, we are left with the stark reality, that: Now that I have seen – I am responsible!

Now that we know about world starvation and preventable disease, now that we know about climate change and carbon emission – *we* are responsible!

The responsibility to look after this world – is ours!

In the very first book of the Bible – God transferred responsibility from Himself, to us.

Slide # 22 Scripture Below:

Genesis 1:28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Now that I have seen, I
am responsible!

This means that before
we indulge ourselves in
the latest cell phone,
television or toy for
either ourselves or our
children –

Slide # 23 – Photo of starving child



- we also remember the 33,000 children who starve to death each and every day of the week, of the month, of the year –

- and we ask ourselves – how many lives could the money used to buy this toy – save!

When we think – if this was *my* child, what would *I* give to save their life?

We remember that the only Christmas present 33,000 children will receive on Christmas day 2007 –

- will be dying of preventable starvation and entering into the arms of the one who was born that first Christmas day over 2000 years ago.

Now, it doesn't mean we punish our kids for the beautiful and free land they have the privilege of being born into.

It doesn't mean that we lay a 'survivor' guilt trip on them for living in a land of such blessing and wealth.

Because let's be real, if we could, if it was in our power – we would give almost anything for those living in poverty, starvation and disease to have what we have.

(Or would we?)

But it does mean that we need to 'balance' our spending this Christmastime with the awareness of what is happening in the rest of the world.

Slide # 24 – Ashamed Photo



That maybe we need to remember the 6,000 women *street workers* in a small city within Calcutta called Agartala –

- who were forced into slavery – either sold by their parents, kidnapped or tricked into prostitution and drugs –

- who will be forced to sell their bodies this Christmas day to the highest bidder, probably for as little as 50 cents per trick.

And not so they can buy Christmas gifts for the children they have to support, but simply to provide the next meal.

For these slaves, it is either prostitution or watching their children starve to death on the streets of Calcutta.

And we think to ourselves: What if this was one of my daughters caught in this bondage of slavery.

What would I do about it then?

So.

Maybe like Debbie and me – and countless others in New Zealand and around the world - it means that instead of buying each other a Christmas present –

- we give our money to Christian aid agencies like world vision or Tranzsend NZ –

- who are actively fulfilling the task of world evangelism, feeding the poor and setting the captives free.

That we purchase fresh water or sanitation for a dying family in Ethiopia, India or Africa.

I don't want to ruin your Christmas experience.

I just want to challenge you to live as a Christian should, and stop answering your soul phone every time it rings with the next impulse or indulgence- for either you or your kids.

And I speak to myself as much as I do anyone else. Here's the thing.

Indulgence is *always* an attempt to compensate for a *positive* quality that is lacking in your life or family – usually compensating for a lack of time and emotional connection with those you love.

I want you to ask the question:

Slide # 25 – Question Below:

**What would Jesus do this
Christmas time?**

If He were to stand before you this morning, what words would He speak into our hearts and lives?

What kind of a life would He model for us to follow today in the 21st century?

I think He would *live more simply, so that others might simply live.*

He wouldn't be buying the latest indulgences in an attempt to compensate for a life out of control.

He would know what it's like to own *things*, without *things* owning Him.

He would live an Intentional Unconventional Christianity!

I want to leave you with a short memory from Schindler's List – as he leaves Germany and discovers a gold tie pin on his jacket.

Remember that Schindler discovered that he could sell his worldly possessions and use the money to instead save fellow Jews from extermination at the hands of the Nazis.

Slide # 26 –
Video segment
from Schindler's
List – Minute 42
to 45

The more he sold
– the more people
he could save.



Who can remember the cry of his heart when he found that item of such value on his body – knowing it could have saved the lives of his people?

‘This car! This ring! This gold tie pin! I could have sold it! One more person, two more people!

I could have sold it – and I didn’t!

What have I done!’

This morning:

Jesus said that ‘My Father’s house will be called a house of prayer!’

We want to pray for you today during the next song.

We want to join with you in prayer and agree for God’s blessing upon your life.

Let’s pray together.