

## **“THE SEVEN LAWS OF SPIRITUAL SUCCESS”**

### ***“Count Your Blessings”*** **Scripture Reading – Ephesians, 1:3-14**

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will – to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.*

*In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfilment – to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.*

*In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession – to the praise of his glory.*

***‘Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.’***

***Ephesians, 1:3, NIV***

**This series is based on the book ‘THE SEVEN LAWS OF SPIRITUAL SUCCESS’.**

Shortly after his seventieth birthday, Selwyn Hughes sat down to compile a list of the truths the Lord had taught him as he walked with Christ for more than half a century. This original list contained between forty to fifty issues which he felt could be passed on to the Christians of tomorrow. In asking what was absolutely essential to living an effective and successful Christian life, the author whittled them down to an irreducible minimum of seven.

Selwyn Hughes decided to call these seven key concepts ‘LAWS OF SPIRITUAL SUCCESS’. However, this is not a call to legalism but a call to engage with the spiritual laws God has built into his Kingdom, which in turn enable us to experience more of his power and his presence.

*Let the Holy Spirit unfold for you the basic laws that govern all spiritual success...*

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## **“COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS”**

*‘The second law for spiritual success is ‘COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS’. Develop the attitude of gratitude... Think first of the COMMON BLESSINGS of life, the blessings so easily overlooked – food, water, air to breathe, energy to do life’s tasks, sight, hearing, reasoning ability, the fruits of the earth... Think also of the SPECIAL BLESSINGS that come to you, but which are very often forgotten – we refer to them as coincidences, but when you look carefully at them in the light of providence they turn out to be God-incidences... Then think of all the SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS God has given you – the gift of the holy Scriptures, the Holy Spirit, the companionship of [saints] and, of course, the Lord Jesus Christ himself.’*

***Selwyn Hughes***

Every morning when Sir John Templeton, the world-famous financier and philanthropist, awakes he lies quietly in his bed and thinks of five new ways in which he has been blessed. He claims that he finds this simple procedure spiritually enriching, and believes that this is one of the chief reasons why so much peace and contentment floods his life.

*I wonder what a difference it may make in your life if you adopt this daily practice!*

Robert Jones, an old Welsh Methodist preacher was well known for his ability to always find something to be thankful for. One Sunday on his way to church, he was drenched in a sudden and tremendous downpour. He arrived at the church as the service was timed to start and walked straight into the pulpit. He invited the bedraggled congregation to bow their heads for prayer. The congregation wondered what he would thank God for on this occasion...

*“We thank thee, O Lord... that it isn’t always like this!”*

**Why do we spend much more time focussing on bad things than good things?**

On any personal management course when you spend time looking for good and bad things in your life, work, circumstances, it is far easier to come up with the bad than the good. We seem so often to be preoccupied with the bad things that can happen to us in life. The world seems to be completely flooded with bad news.

*‘There has always been something in human nature that makes you buy a newspaper that has the most horrible headlines. Because of that, to be successful in the publishing business, you have to feed the public these catastrophes or the negative viewpoint. Therefore, the public is brainwashed. There are not enough people who are independent enough to do their own analysis and studying and see that, yes, there are problems but for every problem there are at least ten blessings.’*

***John Templeton***

## **WHAT IS A BLESSING?**

***“The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face towards you and give you peace.”***

***Numbers, 6:24-26, NIV***

A blessing was one way of asking for God's divine favour to rest upon others.

The ancient blessing in these verses helps us understand what a blessing was supposed to do. Its five parts conveyed hope that God would (i) bless and protect them; (ii) smile on them (be pleased); (iii) be gracious (merciful and compassionate); (iv) show his favour toward them (give his approval); (v) give peace.'

## 1. ARE YOU RECOGNISING GOD'S BLESSINGS?

*Count your blessings, name them one by one,  
Count your blessings, see what God hath done.  
Count your blessings, name them one by one,  
And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.*

*Johnson Oatman, SASB 396: Ch*

### AM I BLESSED?

*If you woke up this morning with more health than illness... you are more blessed than the six million people in the world who will not survive this week.*

*If you have never experienced the danger of battle, the loneliness of imprisonment, the agony of torture, or the pangs of starvation... you are ahead of five hundred million people in the world.*

*If you can attend a church meeting without fear of harassment, arrest, torture or death... you are more blessed than three billion people in the world.*

*If you have food in the refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof overhead, and a place to sleep... you are richer than 75% of this world.*

*If you have money in the bank, in your purse or wallet, and spare change in a dish someplace... you are among the top 8% of the world's wealthy.*

**Today, upon a bus, I saw a lovely maid with golden hair,  
I envied her, she seemed so bright, and wished I were as fair.  
When suddenly, she rose to leave, I saw her hobble down the aisle;  
She had one foot and wore a crutch, but as she passed she smiled.  
Lord, forgive me when I whine; I have two feet and the world is mine.**

**And then I stopped to buy some sweets; the lad who sold them had such charm.  
I talked with him and he said to me, "It's nice to talk with folks like you;  
You see", he said, "I'm blind".**

**Lord, forgive me when I whine; I have two eyes and the world is mine.**

**Then walking down the street I saw a child with eyes of blue.  
He stood and watched the others play but seemed he knew not what to do.  
I stopped a moment and said: "Why don't you join the others, my dear?"  
He looked ahead without a word, and then I knew – he could not hear.  
Lord, forgive me when I whine; I have two ears and the world is mine.**

The patriarch Jacob said, "THE LORD WAS IN THIS PLACE, BUT I NEVER KNEW IT" (Genesis, 28:16).

## 2. ARE YOU REALISING GOD'S BLESSINGS?

*'Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.'*

*Ephesians, 1:3, NIV*

*"WHO HAS BLESSED US IN THE HEAVENLY REALMS WITH EVERY SPIRITUAL BLESSING" means that in Christ we have all the benefits of knowing God – being chosen for salvation, being adopted as his children, forgiveness, insight, the gifts of the Spirit, power to do God's will, the hope of living forever with Christ. Because we have an intimate relationship with Christ, we can enjoy these blessings now. 'THE HEAVENLY REALMS' means that these blessings are eternal, not temporal. The blessings come from Christ's spiritual realm.'*

*"LIFE APPLICATION BIBLE", Study Notes*

*In Ephesians, 1:4-10, Paul summarises some of the Spiritual Blessings that are ours...*

### CHOSEN TO BE HOLY

Paul wrote that God 'CHOSE US' to emphasise that salvation depends totally on God. We are not saved because we deserve it, but because God is gracious and freely gives salvation. We did not influence God's decision to save us; he saved us according to his plan. Thus, there is no way to take credit for our salvation or to allow room for pride. The mystery of salvation originated in the timeless mind of God long before we existed. It is hard to understand how God could accept us. But because of Christ, we are holy and blameless in his sight. God chose us, and when we belong to him through Jesus Christ, God looks at us as if we had never sinned.

*Though you know your sins forgiven, greater things await you still;  
Freedom here from sin's dominion, power to do the Master's will.  
Fear no danger, he is with you, let no foe your steps arrest;  
Seek today the Father's blessing, enter now the land of rest.*

*To redeem and make you holy Jesus left his throne above;  
Now believe and take the blessing. Nothing less than perfect love.  
Walter Henry Windybank, SASB 433:3*

### PREDESTINED TO BE ADOPTED

God's 'UNCHANGING PLAN' is another way of saying that salvation is God's work and not our own doing. In his infinite love, God has adopted us as his own children. Through Jesus' sacrifice, he has brought us into his family and made us heirs along with Jesus. In Roman law, adopted children had the same rights and privileges as biological children, even if they had been slaves. This shows us how strong our relationship to God is.

*Once was an outcast, a stranger on earth.  
A sinner by choice, and an alien by birth;*

*But I've been adopted, my name's written down  
An heir to a mansion, a robe and a crown.*

*I'm the child of a King; I'm the child of a King;  
With Jesus my Saviour, I'm the child of a King!*

**Harriet Eugenia Peck Buell, SASB 354:3**



### **REDEMPTION THROUGH HIS BLOOD**

To speak of Jesus' blood was an important first-century way of speaking of Christ's death. His death points to two wonderful truths – redemption and forgiveness. Redemption was the price paid to gain freedom for a slave. Through his death, Jesus paid the price to release us from slavery to sin.

*Jesus, see me at thy feet, nothing but thy blood can save me;  
Thou alone my need canst meet, nothing but thy blood can save me.*

*No! No! Nothing do I bring, but by faith I'm clinging  
To thy cross, O Lamb of God! Nothing but thy blood can save me.*

**Richard Slater, SASB 292:1**



### **FORGIVENESS OF SINS**

Forgiveness was granted in Old Testament times on the basis of the shedding of animals' blood. We are forgiven by the shedding of Jesus' blood – he died as the perfect sacrifice.

*Saviour, breathe forgiveness o'er us; all our weakness thou dost know;  
Thou didst tread this earth before us; thou didst feel its keenest woe;  
Lone and dreary, faint and weary; through the desert thou didst go.*

**James Edmeston, SASB 607:2**



### **KNOWLEDGE OF THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL**

God was not intentionally keeping his plan a secret, but his plan for the world could not be fully understood until Christ rose from the dead. His purpose for sending Christ was to unite Jews and Gentiles into one body with Christ as the head. Many people still do not understand God's plan; but at the right time, he will bring us together to be with him forever. Then everyone will understand. On that day, all people will bow to Jesus as Lord, either because they love him or because they fear his power.

*God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform;  
He plants his footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm.*

*His purposes will ripen fast, unfolding every hour;  
The bud may have a bitter taste, but sweet will be the flower.*

**William Cowper, SASB 29:1, 5**

## **3. ARE YOU RELEASING GOD'S BLESSINGS?**

***“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this”, says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.”***

**Malachi, 3:10, NIV**

**God is very interested in your finances.**

Do not worry! He does not want your money. He does not need your money. There is not a recession occurring in heaven as we speak. If you read the Bible, you will see how interested God is interested in your giving. Of the thirty-eight recorded parables told by Jesus Christ, sixteen deal with man's use of finances – how he secures his money, how he saves his money, how he spends his money, or how he shares his money.

There are about five hundred verses in the Bible about prayer. There are about the same number of verses about faith. Guess how many verses there are in the Bible about our personal possessions? There are four times as many, two thousand! God speaks to us about possessions so frequently because he is abundantly interested in what we do with our money.

***‘A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD.’***

**Leviticus, 27:30, NIV**

*God declares that the tithe is already his – it belongs to the Lord.*

*God puts you on honour to pay him your tithe – it is in your possession.*

*God demands that you bring the whole tithe into the storehouse.*



### **A DEFINITE PROPORTION**

*He commands you to bring a tenth.*

One tenth of all of your increase is to be set aside for God's use. God has made you a steward of the remainder, but one-tenth is to be set aside and consecrated for God's use.



### **A DESIGNATED PLACE**

*In the Old Testament the storehouse was part of the temple.*

Your tithe is not to be used for other things, not to be used to help your relatives, not be used for the work of outside ministries, or for anything else. God's tithe is to be brought into God's house on God's day so that God's work will be done in God's way.



### **A DETERMINED PURPOSE**

*We give in order to sustain God's work.*

I read once that if everyone was on a pension or a government allowance and everyone tithed, the income of the average church would more than double what it is now. God's blessing is passing by God's people because God's house does not have the resources to do God's work!

**Martin Luther said that every Christian must be converted three times.**

The first conversion for his mind; the second conversion for his heart; and the third conversion for his wallet – and of the three, the most difficult conversion is of the wallet.

#### **WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I DO NOT TITHE?**

*You will be constantly 'short'.*

You will be no better off when you rob God. The reality is that you will receive no benefit!

*God will not allow you to get away with it.*

He will collect it anyway. The problem here is that the Corps will receive no benefit!

*The Bible says that: 'YOU ARE UNDER A CURSE!'*

This is a dreadful thought. Your Christian life will be powerless, and your experience of God will be like that of the 'second generation' believers of Malachi's day. Hearing of other situations, perhaps long ago, but never experiencing the reality for yourself.

#### **WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I DO TITHE?**

*You will experience a sense of real peace.*

Obedience to the Word of God brings its own reward.

*You will find that the 90% will go much further than the 100% ever did.*

There is a 'strange economy' in the Kingdom of God, and God allows you to test him in this respect. In fact, this is the one and only way we should put the Lord to the test.

*Your needs will always be provided (see **Philippians, 4:19**).*

The windows of Heaven will be opened. God will be so real to you, so close. You will experience spiritual blessings. He will give you more than you can possibly imagine.

*Bring your tithes into the storehouse, lay your best at Jesus' feet;*

*Bring an offering to the altar, make your sacrifice complete.*

**Barbara Stoddart, SASB 920:1**

#### **"ARE YOU THANKING GOD FOR EVERY BLESSING?"**

*'Thou hast given so much to me... give me one thing more, a grateful heart.'*

**George Herbert**

In Singing Company, we used to sing the chorus: 'NEARLY FORGOT TO SAY THANK YOU...'.

Consider the ten people that Jesus healed from their leprosy...

*'Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus travelled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests". And as they went, they were cleansed. One of them, when he saw he was healed, came*

*back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him – and he was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no-one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well".'*

**Luke, 17:11-19**

**Jesus healed all 10 lepers, but only one returned to thank him.**

It is possible to receive God's great gifts with an ungrateful spirit – nine of the ten did so. Only the thankful man, however, learned that his faith had played a role in his healing; and only grateful Christians grow in understanding God's grace. God does not demand that we thank him, but he is pleased when we do so. And he uses our responsiveness to teach us more about himself.

**Why did only one cleansed leper return to thank Jesus?**

The following are nine suggested reasons why the nine did not return:

*One waited to see if the cure was real.*

*One waited to see if it would last.*

*One said he would see Jesus later.*

*One decided that he had never had leprosy.*

*One said he would have gotten well anyway.*

*One gave the glory to the priests.*

*One said, "Oh, well, Jesus didn't really do anything".*

*One said, "Any rabbi could have done it".*

*One said, "I was already much improved".*

*'A person with an ungrateful spirit has only one vice, because all of the rest of his vices are like virtues when compared to ingratitude. Every other sin is like a virtue compared to the sin of ingratitude.'*

**John Milton**

**Blessings are often only realised when they are lost.**

Therefore, it is important to seize the day and be thankful before the tragedy comes.

**Consider Job.**

He has come to represent the epitome of suffering. His children were killed in a freak accident. He was financially ruined. He was stricken with an incurable illness – and was in such constant pain that he sat on the pile of burning ashes scratching himself with a broken piece of pottery. His friends falsely accused him of some great sin that he was hiding and would not confess. Yet in the middle of all this suffering, the voice of God came to Job. From all outward appearances it seemed as though Job had nothing at all to be thankful for, yet God comes to him in the midst of it all and says, in effect, "JOB, IT'S TIME TO COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS".

*But really I want to say: "Thank you!". Again and again, and again!*

#### **"GIVE THANKS... WITH A GRATEFUL HEART"**