



SECURE

Thriving in the Midst of
Economic Winter

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A Heart of Wisdom

'For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.'
Matthew 24:7-8

We are in a time where we are seeing the above scripture play out right before us. The world recently emerged from a global pandemic which caused nations to shut their doors to other nations and even restrict movement locally – impacting global supply chains and local businesses. Following closely on the heels of the pandemic, a war arose between two nations who are critical global resource providers. With all these happening, there have also been natural disasters of various forms across nations. All these have led to economic hardship across nations.

Jesus warned us about these events (and so much more) thousands of years ago and because we know He loves us, we know that there are avenues available to find security even in the midst of the economic challenges.

This series we will explore 10 of such avenues and we trust that the Holy Spirit will help us understand which are applicable to our specific situations.



Day 1 Understanding

'From the tribe of Issachar, there were 200 leaders of the tribe with their relatives. All these men understood the signs of the times and knew the best course for Israel to take.' 1 Chronicles 12:32

It's clear to everyone that the world is being shaken and this shaking includes the financial systems of economies. Because the world is global, the shakings in one seemingly unrelated part of the world affects another in ways that had not been expected. So this is not the time to be ignorant of world events. Neither is it the time to operate in fear because no matter what happens on earth, the economy of heaven stands firm.

The men of Issachar had two levels of understanding, they understood the times and they also understood what they needed to do. Both levels are required to thrive. Understanding the times helps us know not just what has happened or is happening, but also what is to come. When we know what is to come, we are better equipped to deal with the future. We are also able to reflect on the past and identify patterns that can equip us for tomorrow.

'The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.' Isaiah 11:2

'However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.' John 16:13

It is possible to look at historical data, current economic trends and still not fully understand what to do, especially when the things seem to defy prior experience. This type of understanding only comes by the Spirit as He sees the future and knows how best we need to position for it. What is the new year going to hold for your family, business, sector, nation? We don't have to react to what is happening before we start engaging the Holy Spirit and a critical question we need to start asking the Holy Spirit in this season is, "What times are we in right now and what am I to do about it?"

Prayer: Lord grant me the spirit of wisdom and understanding. Help me fully understand what is to come and what I need to do.

Day 2 History

“History merely repeats itself. It has all been done before. Nothing under the sun is truly new...” Ecclesiastes 1:9 NLT

Solomon made an interesting statement in the verse above, nothing is really totally new. What we call new oftentimes are really just variations of things that have happened in the past. Therefore we would do well to check what happened in the past and how those situations were handled. If we study the Bible we see that economic recession are not a modern day phenomenon, they've always happened though the Bible refers to those situations as “famines”. If famines are not new, what can we learn from previous famines that we can apply today?

'At that time a severe famine struck the land of Canaan, forcing Abram to go down to Egypt, where he lived as a foreigner...' Genesis 12:10

'A severe famine now struck the land, as had happened before in Abraham's time. So Isaac moved to Gerar... The Lord appeared to Isaac and said, “Do not go down to Egypt, but do as I tell you...So Isaac stayed in Gerar.’ Genesis 26:1-2,6

One of the critical things to note is that all who thrived were led by the Lord. Abraham left Egypt with multiples of what he had prior to the famine. Isaac multiplied exceedingly during famine even because he obeyed the Lord. The believers in the New Testament were preserved because they believed what the Holy Spirit showed them through Agabus, so they were able to prepare well in advance.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take. Don't be impressed with your own wisdom...” Proverbs 3:5-7 NLT

There's a tendency to do what seems to make sense or follow the crowd, but the Bible says we're to demonstrate our trust in the Lord by not relying on our own wisdom. He knows the best path to take, and just because something worked in the past doesn't mean it will work now - look at Abraham and Isaac. Isaac may have survived in Egypt, but he wouldn't have prospered as much as he did by obeying the Lord.

Prayer: Holy Spirit please show me the strategy to apply for what is to come.

Day 3

Accessing the wisdom for now

'Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take. Don't be impressed with your own wisdom. Instead, fear the Lord and turn away from evil.' Proverbs 3:5-7

We have seen from history that the wisdom for each famine situation varies, as success is dependent on hearing from God and receiving the strategy for the season. One of the strategies for thriving in the middle of a recession is becoming sought after and that can only happen if you are solving problems. One of the major shifts this will bring is a change in mindset from being a receiver to being a solution distributor. A receiver's prayer is "God give me...", while a solution distributor's prayer is, "God make me a solution to xxx problem".

'This man Daniel, whom the king named Beltshazzar, has exceptional ability and is filled with divine knowledge and understanding. He can interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve difficult problems. Call for Daniel, and he will tell you what the writing means.'" Daniel 5:12

'Pharaoh sent for Joseph at once, and he was quickly brought from the prison. After he shaved and changed his clothes, he went in and stood before Pharaoh.' Genesis 41:14

Both Daniel and Joseph were called on because they had a track record of providing solutions. It was this track record that led to them being sent for in crisis situations. There is no record that either of them was praying for access to the kings, but God could position them because they had demonstrated diligence and excellence in their daily lives. Neither of them lobbied the king, others who were beneficiaries of their results spoke for them. This should cause us to ask ourselves a question "what will I be called for?"

"The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising." Isaiah 60:3

As we function with a spirit of excellence in our places of responsibility, we spread light. It's this light that will draw people to us so that even in the middle of tight financial times, we (personally or through our products/services) are not just relevant but valuable and people continue to be drawn to us.

Prayer: Lord help me become a distributor of solutions. Show me the problems I am designed to solve.



Day 4 Open Eyes

'Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. And she went and filled the skin with water, and gave the lad a drink.' Genesis 21:19

Abraham had sent Ishmael and Hagar away with very little allocation of food and water. When this ran out they were literally starving and getting ready to die, but the Bible tells us that God heard Ishmael and opened Hagar's eyes to see a well of water. One may ask – where did the well come from? Was it possible that it was there but Hagar's grief and pain didn't let her see it? In many famine situations there are always wells of opportunity God has made available, but we need to have our eyes opened to see them.

'They said to me, "Things are not going well for those who returned to the province of Judah. They are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem has been torn down, and the gates have been destroyed by fire." When I heard this, I sat down and wept...' Nehemiah 1:3-4,11

Every problem has someone assigned to it to provide the solution. Many people knew that the wall of Jerusalem had been torn down, but only one person took the initiative to do something about it. What others saw as an impossible task and a reason for constant complaints and regret, Nehemiah saw as an opportunity for restoration of his homeland.

'I also devoted myself to working on the wall and refused to acquire any land. And I required all my servants to spend time working on the wall. I asked for nothing, even though I regularly fed 150 Jewish officials at my table, besides all the visitors from other lands! The provisions I paid for each day included one ox, six choice sheep or goats, and a large number of poultry. And every ten days we needed a large supply of all kinds of wine. Yet I refused to claim the governor's food allowance because the people already carried a heavy burden. Remember, O my God, all that I have done for these people, and bless me for it.' Nehemiah 5:16-19

Nehemiah didn't seek any personal benefit, rather he sought for and received the strategy to rebuild and because he acted as a solution provider, he was blessed for it. In a recession there will be many areas requiring intervention – these areas are also opportunities if your eyes are opened to see them as such. When we move from seeking to complain to seeking to solve, God will release the strategy to us so we can reveal His glory in that space.

Prayer: Lord open my eyes to see the problems I am designed to solve.



Day 5

New Wineskin Mindset

'No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse. Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.' Matthew 9:16-17

Life post-pandemic has changed dramatically for a lot of us, so we need to be open to new things and recognise that what worked well yesterday may not work as well tomorrow. The Bible speaks of the mismatch between old/new cloth and wineskins just to buttress the point that an old mindset cannot co-exist with a new one. Something has to give. For the future to be preserved, a new mindset is required to tackle the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow.

'But forget all that— it is nothing compared to what I am going to do. For I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it? I will make a pathway through the wilderness. I will create rivers in the dry wasteland.'

Isaiah 43:18-19

'Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, And deep darkness the people; But the Lord will arise over you, And His glory will be seen upon you.' Isaiah 60:1-2

When challenges occur it is easy to focus on the issues facing us rather than ask – what is God doing behind the scenes? God is always moving, and He is always doing something new whether we realise it or not. Recessions are typically periods of darkness, but it is also during such a period that the Lord shines His light on and through us. For us to shine means we do not reason like everyone else, we have a different mindset and therefore see things differently. We also understand that be positioned as light, there are things we may have to 'learn, unlearn and re-learn'. Open to learning new skills, taking new opportunities as the Holy Spirit leads us because He already knows tomorrow's growth areas. This is how we shine in the dark and how we partner with God's creativity to make new pathways in areas that seemed to be wilderness.

Prayer: Let this mind be in me which is in Christ Jesus so I can embrace God's new.

Day 6 Preparing for Lean

'Take a lesson from the ants, you lazybones. Learn from their ways and become wise! Though they have no prince or governor or ruler to make them work, they labor hard all summer, gathering food for the winter.' Proverbs 6:6-8

Whenever a season of famine is on the way, it helps to proactively look at one's spending habits and make the necessary adjustments in advance. The Bible talks about the ants, specifically about their understanding of how to gather for the winter while there is still food available. This can be understood within the context of setting funds aside where they are available, so that in tight situations one isn't left in want. We don't need for prices to skyrocket before adjusting our spending patterns.

'Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world... Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea.' Acts 11:28-29

When the Holy Spirit alerted the believers through Agabus that a famine was coming, they didn't wait for it to start before preparing to send relief to their brethren. Likewise, when we have advance information, we should also start preparing according to our ability. What are the excesses we currently indulge in that we can do without? Where can we set funds aside as a buffer for the future? The believers planned and prepared ahead and so should we.

'She is clothed with strength and dignity, and she laughs without fear of the future...She carefully watches everything in her household and suffers nothing from laziness.' Proverbs 31:25,27

The Lord knows how to preserve His own and one of the ways is through advance warning so we can prepare. It's in the process of preparation that we see where we can prune our excesses and put in structures that will help us develop more discipline around our lifestyle expenditure. As we do this, we are better able to identify where we need help especially if we were stretching our money already to begin with. Where there is nothing to set aside then we require grace for multiplication which we will look at next.

Prayer: Lord give me the wisdom needed to put structures in place to prepare for the future.

Day 7

Insight for Multiplication – What’s in your hand?

'When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Now go out where it is deeper, and let down your nets to catch some fish." "Master," Simon replied, "we worked hard all last night and didn't catch a thing. But if you say so, I'll let the nets down again." And this time their nets were so full of fish they began to tear!' Luke 5:4-6

Something to note about those who walked with and obeyed God in tough times is that their obedience brought multiplication. A quick run through Old to New testaments shows that the lives of those who obeyed God actually got better and they came out of the famine stronger than when it started.

"Go and live in the village of Zarephath, near the city of Sidon. I have instructed a widow there to feed you.".. For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: There will always be flour and olive oil left in your containers until the time when the Lord sends rain and the crops grow again!" So she did as Elijah said... There was always enough flour and olive oil left in the containers, just as the Lord had promised through Elijah.' 1 Kings 17:9,14-16

When Elijah was instructed to leave the brook of Cherith, the Lord gave him advance knowledge of where his future supply would come from and Elijah proceeded in obedience. Even though the supplier didn't look the part, Elijah knew that God was the source, so he wasn't moved by what he saw. The important thing to note for today is that the Lord used what the widow already had in her hand to bring multiplication.

"What can I do to help you?" Elisha asked. "Tell me, what do you have in the house?" "Nothing at all, except a flask of olive oil," she replied. And Elisha said, "Borrow as many empty jars as you can from your friends and neighbors. Then go into your house with your sons and shut the door behind you. Pour olive oil from your flask into the jars, setting each one aside when it is filled." So she did as she was told. Her sons kept bringing jars to her, and she filled one after another. Soon every container was full to the brim! "Bring me another jar," she said to one of her sons. "There aren't any more!" he told her. And then the olive oil stopped flowing.' 2 Kings 4:2-6

When Elisha encountered a widow needing help, the first thing he asked was what she had at home. She actually didn't think it was anything worthwhile until she followed Elisha's instructions. Eventually what she thought was nothing became the tool God used to bring wealth to her family. **What God will use to lift and preserve you during the famine is already in your hands.** It could be an idea you haven't paid much attention to or some resources you have in your possession that you haven't maximized but it's already there. Both widows didn't think much of what they had, but God is the one who brings increase and this increase will only come as a result of obedience to His instructions. Ask the Lord to show you today what you have in your hands that you're not paying attention to.

Prayer: Lord open my eyes to see what You have put in my hands. I ask for forgiveness for where You have already given me instructions that I didn't follow. I ask for Your mercy to go back to the instructions as I commit to obeying You.



Day 8 Invest in People

'For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.' "And the King will say, 'I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!' Matthew 25:35-36,40

God works through people and when He wants to bring something new into our lives, He does it through people. The same way God will use people to bless us (through access, relationships, ideas, etc.) we should also be available to be used by God as a channel of blessing to others. We saw yesterday how the widow of Zarephath didn't lack during a famine because she was a channel for Elijah. Had she not been open to this, she and her son would have been casualties of the famine. Likewise when we are open to God using us for others, we become channels through which He can bring relief to others.

'Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.' Philippians 2:4

When we speak of caring for 'others' we don't have to go too far, because it starts with paying attention to those around us – be it friends, family, specific communities, etc. As we broaden our focus beyond our personal needs and genuinely look to assist others, the ideas, opportunities, resources, etc will start opening up to us to help make that desire a reality.

'If you help the poor, you are lending to the Lord — and he will repay you!' Proverbs 19:17

God doesn't owe any man, rather He is an extremely generous giver and rewarder. As we choose to be channels through which God can reach people, the resources will flow through us so the people God wants to touch can be reached. But if we focus only on ourselves, we may survive and maybe even thrive a bit, but we will not receive God's very best because our scope is limited.

Prayer: Lord help me to look beyond my immediate needs so I can see the needs of others. Place a burden in my heart to help so I can be a channel through which Your help will flow to others.

Day 9

Discernment, Discernment, Discernment

“When you see the Covenant-Chest of God , your God, carried by the Levitical priests, start moving. Follow it. Make sure you keep a proper distance between you and it, about half a mile—be sure now to keep your distance!—and you’ll see clearly the route to take. You’ve never been on this road before.” Joshua 3:3 MSG

The future is still unknown to us to a great extent. Global forecasts can provide some indicators of what the future holds, but we can’t say that we know 100% what tomorrow holds for us specifically. This is why we need the help of the One who knows all and has already seen the future. In the Old Testament the Ark represented the presence of God and always went ahead of them whenever they ventured into new territory. It acted as their guide showing them which route to take especially when they had not taken a particular way before.

'And the Spirit of the Lord will rest on him— the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord .' Isaiah 11:2

As believers we don’t need to have a physical ark, we have the Holy Spirit resident in us, which means we have access to all He knows. Information from friends, global experts, etc is good and it’s useful to have access to wise people. However, all humans have the same limitation – access to full knowledge of the future. We have seen that economic and environmental indices that favour a set of people may hinder others and vice versa even if they do the exact same thing. This means it’s critical we discern what we are meant to do per time, not just follow the crowd and run into trouble.

'However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.' John 16:13

It would be nice to hear the audible voice of God giving us instructions, but most of the time the Holy Spirit will lead us through an inward witness: a knowing that this is what we should do. For Him to lead us, we must engage Him consistently as this is what sharpens our discernment so we can perceive when we should make a move or not. Without engaging Him, we really won’t know what to do and will live by trial and error.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, teach me how to walk with You so I can be led by You.



Day 10 Honoring God's Agenda

'Honor the Lord with your wealth and **with the best part of everything you produce**. Then he will fill your barns with grain, and your vats will overflow with good wine.' Proverbs 3:9-10

Honoring God means putting Him first and being intentional about what matters to Him. God has an agenda and His agenda will always have heaven's backing. When we put the best of our energies, resources, skills, etc into driving His agenda, the Lord takes responsibility for our needs so we can keep focusing on His agenda. The key here is giving our best and not grudgingly or as an after-thought. As always, it's important that we recognize that giving isn't only financial but involves our very being.

'There is one who scatters, yet increases more; And there is one who withholds more than is right, But it leads to poverty. The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself.' Proverbs 11:24-25

“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.’ Matthew 6:31,33

There's an interesting principle of giving in God's kingdom such that the more we give the more we have to give, whether it's of our person or our resources. It's critical we understand that these assurances are available as we pursue God's agenda from a pure heart of wanting to see His will done and not as a transaction to get more from Him. People may see the outward activity, but God sees our heart and His response will be based on the state of our heart.

'And He said to them, “Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?”' Luke 2:49

God's economy has never and will never be based on what's going on in the world. His kingdom will continue to advance and resources will always flow in the direction of His agenda, global recession or not. So as we are about our Father's business with a liberal heart, we need not worry about the economic situations around us as preservation is assured.

Prayer: Lord give me a heart for Your agenda, help me as I commit to honouring You and prioritizing what matters to You.

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