

Pressing for our Potential

Potential: The word has its root in “potent” or power, influence, might and means what can, but has not yet, come into being.

Pressing: To act with steady force or weight.

Putting the meanings of “Pressing” and “Potential” together, they mean an act with steady force or weight bringing into reality what can be possible and that possibility can be realized in our personal lives. That act of force, pressing, is activated by a personal decision and suggests there will be resistance, problems and setbacks. However, your resilience to continue the pressing determines your level of potentiality.

We must acquire the “overcomer” attitude and develop a bulldog spirit. When we do this, there is a risk of being called stubborn, bull headed, and over bearing, but the things that are at stake in your life are worth the risk. This “toughness” mind-set can be submitted to God and He can anoint us for the long journey.

Assuming you had the opportunity to graduate from High School, normally there would have been a class vote on who was the “most likely to succeed.” If you were not the one singled out for success, know this that your potential accomplishments in life did not die with the outcome of that vote. We all thank God that our lives were not regulated by the vote of our senior class.

There are some athletes who simply have exceptional natural talent, and many of their skills came with ease, but the record shows, that some of the greatest athletes of our time developed their skills, overcame their handicaps, and succeeded. With exceptional determination they became world superstars. Amazingly, Michael Jordan, a basketball superstar, in the beginning was cut from his High School team. Pressing with determination can enlarge your potential.

When Tena and I first arrived at the Accra airport in Ghana, West Africa in 1997, looking very much like we had been on a 30-hour-international flight, we were met by five African pastors. Unbeknown to us, they asked this question among themselves after seeing us, “What can these two old people do?” It is not the opinion of others that determine your potentiality; rather it is choices that you make. If you press into your calling, and God is working with you, all things are possible.

These questions can be asked: What can this young man do? What can this young lady do? What can this couple do? What can this senior do? What is your potential? Is it according to what you see, the obvious, and the natural talent? Or is it according to the word of God, the power of God, the call of God? “That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:10-14).

The context focuses on the total self-denial of personal ambition and pressing into the upward call of God. Paul chose to change his goals in life, rather than seek for the honor of men, he chose to seek honor that comes from God.

He pressed to know Jesus.

He pressed to know the power of His resurrection.

He pressed to know the fellowship of His suffering.

Paul's goal was the "out-resurrection" from the dead. He was not referring to his physical resurrection from the grave, but within being raised up in newness of life. Formerly, he was dead in his trespasses, but through faith he united himself with the death of Jesus so that he could unite with the resurrection of Jesus. Paul was pressing for a complete death to self in order that he might experience the complete resurrection of Jesus. Potentially you can intimately know Jesus, know the power of His resurrection and to know the fellowship of sufferings. Paul had not arrived at the writing of this letter, but he was pressing toward his potential.

Your potential is conditional on the "ifs" of your life: If you make a complete personal commitment; if you avoid the traps of the world; if you make quality decisions.

Jesus said, "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate (love less) his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters (family), yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26). "So therefore, no one of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions" (Luke 14:33). You must love less your family, life and possessions before you can reach your full potential.

The majority of the covenants and promises made by God with His people in the Old Testament were conditional and pivoted on the little word, "If"!

"Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God...that the Lord your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you... (Deut. 28:1, 2). Conversely, if the people disobeyed the voice of God, curses would follow. The potential of their future depended upon the little word, "If"!

I want to discuss three people in the scripture that had great potential but because of certain unwise choices, they came up short.

1. Saul:

In the beginning Saul was "choice and handsome", a head taller than all the people of Israel. Samuel declared, "On whom is all the desire of Israel." He was humble and considered himself the least among his people. He was anointed by the Prophet Samuel to be the commander over God's inheritance. The Spirit of the Lord came upon Saul, changed his heart and made him into a new man. Please read 1 Samuel chapter nine.

Pressure can steal your potentiality.

The Philistines had gathered in great numbers at Michmash with the purpose of punishing Israel for what Jonathan had done. When the men of Israel saw that they were in danger, they hid in caves, in thickets, in rocks, in holes and in the pits. Israel trembled! Saul had made an appointment with Samuel the Prophet to meet with him in seven days. Seven days were about over. The sun was beginning to set on the horizon and still there was no Samuel. Saul felt the pressure. He decided to substitute for

Samuel and offered sacrifices unto God. Suddenly, Samuel appeared and questioned Saul. Saul replied, "I felt compelled...." (1 Sa. 13:12). Pressure can steal your potentiality.

Desperation can steal your potentiality.

Once more Jonathan attacked the Philistines and God gave him a victory. He worked with Jonathan by causing an earthquake to occur in the camp of the Philistines. Saul sensing that something awesome was happening, and in his desperation to rally his troops to fight against the Philistines, placed them under an oath not to eat any food until the battle was over. Desperation can blind your eyes to the working of God. Jonathan recognized the foolishness of his father, and if it was not for the intervention of the people on his behalf, his life would have been taken by Saul. If desperation had not dictated the choice of King Saul, an over whelming victory could have been won. Please read 1 Samuel chapter 14.

Popularity can steal your potentiality.

Saul was instructed by the Prophet Samuel to attack the Amalekites and utterly destroy them. The people spared the best animals and the life of Agag, the king. When questioned by Prophet Samuel, King Saul gave this answer, "Because I feared the people and obeyed their voice" (1 Sa. 15:24). King Saul desired to be popular with the people and disregarded the command of the Lord. Popularity can cause compromise, loss and failure to reach your potential.

2. Samson:

Desires of the flesh can steal your potentiality. Samson was attracted to beautiful women, and because of the weakness of his flesh, he lost his supernatural strength and was captured by the Philistines. They put out his eyes and made him a slave. Even though his last strike against the Philistines went down in the annals of Israeli history as one of their greatest feats, Samson miserably failed to reach his potentiality. The lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life will steal your potentiality!

Delilah also represents distraction! For twenty years, Samson wrestled with flesh distraction, something that caused his focus to shift from God's call to self-gratification. The devil's strategy of distraction can be illustrated by the excessive noise at a football game just as the quarterback is calling the play, or when a basketball player gets ready to shoot a free throw the crowd waves frantically behind the clear backboard. Distraction is a favorite tool of the devil to steal your potentiality!

3. King Joash:

Half-heartedness can steal your potentiality! The story is found in 2 Kings 13:14-19. "When Elisha became sick with the illness of which he was to die, Joash the king of Israel came down to him and wept over him and said, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" [15] And Elisha said to him, "Take a bow and arrows." So he took a bow and arrows. [16] Then he said to the king of Israel, "Put your hand on the bow." And he put his hand on it, and then Elisha laid his hands on the king's hands. [17] And he said, "Open the window toward the east," and he opened it. Then Elisha said, "Shoot!" And he shot. And he said, "The LORD'S arrow of victory, even the arrow of victory over Aram; for you shall defeat the Arameans at Aphek until you have destroyed them." [18] Then he said, "Take the arrows," and he took them. And he said to the king of Israel, "Strike the ground," and he struck it three times and stopped. [19] So the man of God was angry with him and said, "You should have struck five or six times, then you would have struck Aram until you would have destroyed it. But now you shall strike Aram only three times."

Keep on striking the ground if you want to reach your potential. Do not let half-heartedness steal your potentiality! "Let the weak say, I am a mighty man" (Joel 3:10). "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13). Do you want to reap 30-fold, 60-fold or a 100-fold! Press on!

Steps to reach your potentiality.

1. Relax: “Cease striving and know that I am God...” (Psa. 46:10). Relax in the grip of God and know that nothing can pluck you from His hand. Living a tensed-up life can be costly. Learn to trust in the inward workings of the Lord. Rest in God, in His presence and know that time belongs to the Lord. Stop comparing yourself with others and start submitting yourself to God.
2. Regroup: Take an inventory of your resources, assess your direction and determination, discipline yourself in your personal time, consider priorities and make quality choices.
3. Restore: Deal with your soul. What has the locust eaten or the destroyer stolen? Then by the anointing and the word of God, bring God’s provision of healing into the soul. Offences or hurts, incidents (some beyond your control), physical or sexual abuses, all of these can eat away your potential.
4. Resolve: Make a definite commitment to the will of God.

Four questions to consider:

1. What is the potential of the Spirit of God within you?
2. What is the potential of: The Holy Spirit? The gifts of the Holy Spirit? The love of God manifested through you? The grace of God? The unity with the people of God? The self-sacrifice in your life? The truth with all people? The forgiveness toward all people?
3. What is the potential of the local church?
4. What is your strategy to reach full potentiality?

The exhortation to Archippus was, “Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it” (Col. 4:17). It takes diligence to reach your potentiality!

Family potentiality: Fathers, please don’t call your sons “dummies!” Mothers, please don’t call your daughters “idiots!” In some cases your children might believe you, and then you must face this fact: did I rob my children of their potentiality.

Husbands, please draw forth the potentiality of your wife. “Running down” your spouse, even in fun, can have a damaging effect on her self-image. Please be more sensitive toward one another. Try and make a habit of building self-image and confidence in your wife. Compliments are always in order. Wives, please draw forth the potentiality of your husbands. Speak to those things that are not as though they were. This is not lying, rather this practice is faith. Men seek for and need respect from their wives. It is one of their five basic needs. King Saul, Samson, King Joash, great men but they fell short of their potentiality.

Peter, Paul, John Mark, great men that fulfilled their potentiality!

The list is long for the unsuccessful and the successful. Almost 6,000 years have passed since Adam was forced out of the Garden of Eden. It seemed that the potential of mankind was lost, but just in the niche of time, one came from heaven by the name of Jesus, who took our failures, buried them in His blood, and raised us up with new hope, new life and with a new potentiality eternal life with our creator—God!

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