

2021

P.R.E.S.S. ~ Press to Reset



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Ajalon Missionary Baptist Church

1/29/2021

# P.R.E.S.S

## Press to Reset

### *Ajalon Leadership Guide for the New Year*

#### INTRODUCTION

2020 has been a devastating year and the worst seems yet to come 2021. But the Lord our God provides us guidance through his holy Word. Though times and situations change, His Word (the Bible) remains the same and relevant to our needs.

The purpose of **the Ajalon Leadership Guide** (by Pastor S. Carter) is to provide biblical guidance and directions for the Ajalon Missionary Baptist Church as we follow the Lord Jesus Christ, the Chief Shephard.

As I thought and prayed as to the specific direction for the church, the word “**press**” came to me. Many times, the electronics we use every day need to be reset by pressing a button. Though we all have been pressed in some way, we must also press (*to follow through*) on what the Lord has called us to in scripture. There are many things that we could list. But to simplify it, I have used the word “press” as an acronym. “P” is for prayer; “R” is for rejoice; “E” is for encourage; “S” is for study; and “S” is for serve. Together these things are the things we are to press towards. It is the mark I am hoping we will reach in 2021.

I chose these biblical imperatives for the following reasons. First, **Prayer** is essential to our Christian walk and spiritual growth. We must press in prayer and not lose heart. Jesus is our greatest example of having a prayer life. Second, **Rejoice** (joy) is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Rejoice is the work of the Holy Spirit within us as we abide in Christ. The joy of the Lord remains in us regardless to what is happening around us. Third, **Encourage** and encouragement comes when we fellowship. However, though now it is physically limited. But we can still fellowship through other means. Calling or texting or even mailing a card to others and giving them a word of encouragement will be especially important this year.

The **Study** of God’s Word is used by the Holy Spirit to sanctify the Lord’s followers. Jesus said that we are clean by his word. His Word is the truth, and the truth sets us free. Therefore, it is an important part of the Christian’s life. But remember the Word only sanctifies us. Jesus justifies us by faith alone in his death, burial and resurrection! Finally, **Serve** the Lord by serving others. Our gifts are to be used to help others while bringing glory to God.

It is my prayer that every member of Ajalon Missionary Baptist Church will be apart of this study-series and be blessed by it. Be Encouraged, the Lord is on our side! Therefore, let us Press to Reset and press towards the mark of praying, rejoicing, encouraging, studying, and serving the Lord.



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Press Towards the Mark of Praying –

**Matthew 21:22** *And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith.*

Freedom from doubt arises from an awareness that something is truly God's will. True faith receives what it asks for; trust in God is not presumptive arrogance but submission to His will.

**Mark 11:25** *And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.*

Forgiveness with God is linked with understanding one's relationship to other human beings. Grace enters our life to the extent that we understand and employ God's grace in human relationships.

**Ephesians 6:18** *praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,*

The weapons for warfare are spiritual because they are rooted in prayer, which is the Christian's most powerful resource. Prayer is to permeate believers' lives as a universal practice, as seen by the use of "all" four times in this verse. Prayer **in the Spirit** is a form of worship enabled by the Spirit of God, who intercedes on behalf of the person who prays.

**Philippians 4:6** *do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*

Prayer is the antidote for worry. Three words express different aspects of prayer: **Prayer**, a worshipful attitude; supplication or **petition**, a need; and **requests**, the specific concern. **Thanksgiving** shapes prayers with gratitude.

**James 5:16** *Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.*

Though confession to a priest is not required by Scripture, confession to God and to one another is. Prayer is not a magical incantation or a guarantee of healing, but when offered fervently by a righteous person, God will respond in a way that best fits His good purposes. We need the power of the prayers of others. Confession and intercession are the tasks of all Christians.

## Prayer – what is prayer?

A LADY came to the great preacher of the last century G. Campbell Morgan and she said, "I only take the big things to God. I don't take the little things to God."

G. Campbell Morgan looked at her and said, "Lady, anything you take to God is little."

That is precisely the case. You can bring everything to God because anything you bring to God is little to Him, even if it is big to you.



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## Press Towards the Mark of Rejoicing in the Lord –

**Matthew 5:12** Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Jesus taught His disciples to rejoice and be glad when they were persecuted for following Him. The **joy** commanded here is not an emotion but an attitude. Jesus promised that the cost of discipleship will be offset by the enormity of the reward the disciple enjoys in heaven.

**John 15:11** These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

Just as Jesus had great joy in obeying his Father even in the midst of opposition, so Christians will have joy in obedience. Many imagine that obedience to Christ is burdensome because it requires sacrificial self-surrender and service. Jesus teaches the opposite, associating obedience with joy.

**Luke 10:20** Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

Jesus warns against rejoicing too much in what God has done through them, for an even greater blessing is their **eternal salvation**. One's salvation is more important than power to overcome the evil one or escape his harm. God's people are to rejoice more that they had received His **mercy** and **forgiveness** than in anything else.

**Romans 5:3** Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,

The people of God rejoice not only in future glory but in present trials and **sufferings**, not because trials are pleasant but because they produce a **step-by-step** transformation that makes believers more like Christ.

**Philippians 4:4** Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.

The joy that Paul calls for is not a happiness that depends on circumstances but a deep contentment that is **in the Lord**, based on trust in the sovereign, living God, and that therefore is available **always**, even in difficult times.



## Rejoice – how can joy become characteristic of our life?

1. Joy grows out of real worship.
2. Joy comes from being in God's presence.
3. Joy comes from having the Holy Spirit.
4. We can be joyful in spite of our circumstances.

## Rejoice – what are the reasons to rejoice?

1. Because your *"names are written in Heaven"* (Luke 10:20).
2. Because the Gospel is preached—Phil. 1:18.
3. Because others are walking in the truth—2 John 4.
4. Because we are *"counted worthy"* to suffer shame for the sake of Christ (Acts 5:41).
5. Because we are told to *"rejoice always"* (1 Thess. 5:16).

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THANKFULNESS

### Rejoice in the Lord Always 586

*Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice. Philippians 4:4 (KJV)*

① Unison

Re - joice in the Lord al - ways: a - gain I say, Re - joice!

②

Re - joice, re - joice, and a - gain I say, Re - joice!

③

Re - joice in the Lord al - ways: a - gain I say, Re - joice!

WORDS: Philippians 4:4  
MUSIC: Unknown

REJOICE  
Irregular meter

God is more earnest for me to be saved than I am to be saved! "He so loved the world that He gave His Son". He loved not saints, not penitents, not the religious, not those who love Him; but "the world," secular men, profane men, hardened rebels, hopeless wanderers and sinners! He gave not a mere promise, not an angel to teach us, not a world to ransom us, but His Son—His only begotten! So much did God love the world, sinners, me! I believe this. I must believe it; I believe on Him who says it. How can I, then, do otherwise than rejoice?

—Martin Luther



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### Press Towards the Mark of Encouraging Others –

**Acts 4:36-37** Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

As "**son of encouragement**", Barnabas presented a good example of a Christian who gave to the needs of others (contrasted with the selfish example of Ananias and Sapphira).

**1 Corinthians 14:3** On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.

Christians are given gifts so they can serve each other. Gifts are for building up, **encouraging**, and comforting the entire church, not for making one person feel proud and another feel left out.

**Romans 15:4** For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

Scripture **encourages** us to **hope in Christ** in spite of life's circumstances. Use scripture to encourage yourself and others.

**Colossians 2:1-2** For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ,

Paul's struggle in the gospel ministry came from his purpose and desire to encourage and join believers' **hearts** together in **love**. Likewise, it will be a struggle to encourage others.

**1 Thessalonians 5:11** Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

The verb **“build”** basically applies to building houses, but Paul frequently used it for Christians being edified. Encouragement is the primary material used in building up others.



ENCOURAGEMENT is like peanut butter on bread. If you spread it around, it just helps things stick together better.



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## Press Towards the Mark of Studying God's Word –

**Ezra 7:10** For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.

Ezra was a man **wholeheartedly** devoted to the LORD and the LORD's Word. Likewise, we must also be committed to studying, obeying, and sharing the Word of God.

**Nehemiah 8:13** On the second day the heads of fathers' houses of all the people, with the priests and the Levites, came together to Ezra the scribe in order to study the words of the Law.

As head of their families, they wanted to be the kind of **fathers** they should be, giving guidance and discipline when needed. They simply wanted to apply the teachings of God's Holy Word to their daily lives, learning how to build a loving and righteous family, living productive and fruitful lives in the midst of a corrupt world.

**2 Timothy 2:15 (KJV)** Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

The Word of God can be abused as well as used. It is always in danger of being distorted by teachers who handle it casually. The only effective way to prevent distortion of the Word of truth is **diligent preparation** at the study desk.

**James 1:22-25** But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.

But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

God's Word requires listeners to be doers. True understanding of God's Word produces new behavior and attitudes. Without such commitment we have no personal identity. To know the Word and fail to do it is to deceive oneself about **personal security** and **relationship to God**. God's people find direction by studying God's inspired Word, learning it, and putting it into continual daily practice. Only such a life-style brings happiness.





Dr. Howard W. Pope tells the story of a young lady who read a book, and, having completed it, remarked that it was the dullest book she had read in many a day. Not long after this experience she met a young man and in the course of time their friendship ripened into love and they became engaged. When he was visiting at the home of his fiancée one evening, she said to him, "I have a book in my library which was written by a man whose name and even initials are precisely the same as yours. Is that not a singular coincidence?"

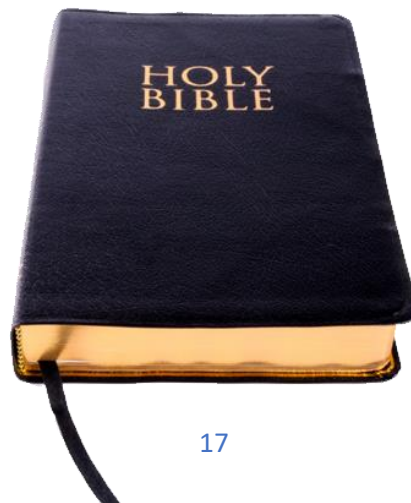
"I do not think so," he replied."

"Why not?"

"For the simple reason that I wrote the book."

Dr. Pope concludes the story by remarking that the young lady sat up until the early morning hours to read the book again, and when it was completed it seemed to her the most interesting book she had ever read. It wasn't dull at all. She found it fascinating. The secret? She knew and loved the author!

You will enjoy the greatest of all books, the Bible, God's Word, if you love the Author.



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Press Towards the Mark of Serving the Lord –

**Psalm 100:2** Serve the LORD with gladness! Come into his presence with singing!

A vital part of **worship** is presenting ourselves to the Lord for His service. The New Testament instructs us to offer ourselves as living sacrifices to Him. **“Worship leads to service, and true service is worship.”** We should not serve the Lord out of duty or obligation but out of the gladness of our hearts. Because of God’s great love and mercies, we should serve Him willingly and with joy. We should also remember what a tremendous privilege it is to be the servants of such a great King!

**Luke 16:13** No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”

Those who are Jesus’ true disciples must make an either/or choice between serving God and serving money. “Money” is personified here in parallel with “God,” indicating the way in which money can often take on an idolatrous place in one’s life. The way to **serve God** rather than money is to put one’s resources to the service of others and the work of the kingdom.

**Romans 7:6** But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.

**But now** represents the new era of redemptive history. Christians are free from the Mosaic law and now enjoy new life in the Spirit. The Spirit is not a passive observer of the lives of Christians. He is actively at work in all believers to transform us into the kinds of persons God wants us to be. This means **new service** in a new freedom with a fuller understanding. The Spirit is not given for our enjoyment but to change us so we will be of service to Christ.

**1 Peter 4:10** As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:

Each disciple receives spiritual gift(s) from God. We are to use these gifts to serve other people. Such service reflects the grace we have received from God and shows our skills in finding various ways and forms to introduce other people to this grace. Such grace is not a concrete object we give out. It is undeserved love we have received and share. Such grace takes concrete form in our acts of love for others. Such acts bring praise for Christ, not for us. Every Christian has received grace and is responsible for exercising priestly service to administer grace to others



61 year-old fisherman Jim Peterson faced a quandary when his fishing boat recently seized up, stranding him about 80 miles off the coast of Newport, Oregon. After several hours of struggling, Peterson was only able to get the boat to go into reverse. Though he could have waited for a rescue ship, Peterson decided to use what he had. Though it was incredibly slow, Peterson piloted the ship back to port in reverse. The 80-mile trip took 39 hours to complete.

Even when it is difficult, let's use whatever we have to serve the Lord and others.

# 5

## EASY WAYS YOU CAN SERVE SOMEONE TODAY

In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, it is more blessed to give than to receive. — Acts 20:35

1

VOLUNTEER. (1 PETER 4:10-11)

Give the gift of your time by volunteering. There are plenty of places that could use a volunteer or a helping hand such as your church, nursing homes, food pantries, etc



2

SHOW YOU CARE. (HEBREWS 13:16)

The gifts of hope and encouragement cost us nothing to give. Pick a family member or friend each week and send an text, email or even mail a handwritten note telling that person how much they mean to you.



3

PROVIDE A MEAL. (ACTS 20:35)

When you make dinner, double that recipe and take it to someone who may need a helping hand. A busy mother, a sick friend, or an elderly neighbor would love a night free from worrying about what's for dinner.



4

LISTEN. (JAMES 1:19)

All too often we get so busy in our daily lives that we forget to take the time to listen, actually listen to our loved ones. In this tech heavy world, there are so many people that would appreciate a face to face con-



5

ANTICIPATE. (GALATIANS 6:9)

Ask God to help you find the best ways to you to serve and then be ready to follow through wherever and whenever you feel His nudge.

