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By International Bestselling Author

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The Prodigal Son's "Five Spiritual Steps" That Led Me Home

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STEP 1: SPIRITUAL MINDSET

A fixed mental attitude or disposition that predetermines a person's responses to interpretations of situations.

Spiritual:

The difference between the natural and spiritual man is primarily that the spiritual man has founded his faith on God's revelation. He can judge both earthly and heavenly things, discern what is and what is not of the gospel and salvation, and determine whether a man truly preaches the truth of God.

*"But he that is spiritual judgeth all things,
yet he himself is judged of no man."*

(1 Corinthians 2:15)

PART ONE

Chapter One

What comes to mind when you hear the words “Spiritual Mindset”? (Please take into consideration that I provided a definition at the start of this chapter.) I would truly love to hear you verbalize your response, but allow me a moment to share with you what it means to me:

In a nutshell, a Spiritual Mindset is a mind stayed on Jesus!

I know, I know. Easier said than done, right? You might be wondering, “How can I do that? How do I keep my mind stayed on Jesus?” Both are great questions! That tells me you want to know the answers. In fact, since you have yet to put this book down, it also tells me that God is calling you... and you are answering! It is my pleasure to work for the Lord and share with the world all that He feeds my spirit man.

Now, with that being said, let's go deeper into the meaning of Spiritual Mindset.

It all started for me back when my mom and other brothers- and sisters-in-Christ shared their views and teachings of the Lord the best way they knew how. My mom demonstrated her faith by continual prayers – and I mean praying about everything. As her oldest boy, she always told me to ask God to help me through my struggles. Although she instructed me to pray (which I did a lot), I didn't realize or understand the true nature of developing a mindset toward God at the time. I now know that it requires nonstop fellowship with the Creator... a requirement I wasn't ready to

adhere to because I felt obligated just because my mom told me to do so. Little did I know that prayer is a necessity for Christian men and women. I guess you could say I was prone to participating in rebellion against my mom, but in reality, I was rebelling against God.

Think about it: When was the first time God came at you? Was it through a family member or friend? Did you see a commercial or hear a radio ad? Perhaps your grandmother took you to church every Sunday. Was it a Sunday school teacher? Whatever the case, God was calling you to a Spiritual Mindset. How? Well, if you answered any of those means of communication by listening, then that's when your healing began. I say healing because that's what it was for me. Spiritual healing comes directly from the Lord.

Remember always: God created both you and me. The Bible says God breathed His Spirit into us, so the connection has always been there! Being the gracious Father that He is, He allows His children to "wander off the porch" (so to speak).

I remember accepting my mom's advice with good intentions, and, in all honesty, I wanted nothing more than to please her. I would get down on my knees and begin to pray for things I wanted from God, including asking for forgiveness for my sins. But let me add this: The whole time I prayed, I also had one eye open, wanting to live in the culture around me. I'll be truthful here: Living a Christian life was straight-up boring with a capital 'B'!

Little did I know that God was only trying to save me from a life full of heartache for my mom and everyone else who crossed my path.

That brings me to the reason for this book. God dropped it in my spirit to write a self-help book. At first, I wanted to generalize this divine message to the prison population that I serve, but why stop there? I might as well go hard, just as I have in so many other areas my entire life!

Do you recall my earlier statement, “Easier said than done”? Well, I’ve always been good with words and my speech. In fact, I’ve been told that I have the “gift of gab,” which translates to the ability to talk readily or sound like I know what I’m talking about – an aspect of my personality that helped me pursue any woman I wanted. I remember when my younger brother once asked me, “Man, how did you pull her?!” I told him it was simple: confidence!

I mentioned wanting to live in the culture because every time I left home for school, church, or anywhere outside the teachings in-house, I ran face-first into different beliefs, customs, and opinions that intrigued me. I mean, I saw dope boys provide for their families – some as young as 12 and 13 years old! Yet there I was, trusting God like my mom ordered. There was nothing wrong with waiting on the Lord (something I came to learn), but at the end of the day, my family still had little to eat... we were still struggling. Those challenging times led me to wander outside the Spiritual Mindset that God established within me.

When I was 15, I was introduced to the dope game. The day was just like any other. I say that because each day back in 1985 was about rules – mom’s rules, in particular. I had to clean my room, eat all my vegetables, and not leave the porch. (Mom did allow us to go outside once the chores and homework were complete.) So, there I was, sitting on the porch alone (I think my brothers and sister were still tending to their chores). We lived

in the projects at the time. Anyone who has lived in those conditions understands how the average person could break down mentally, as did a lot of people I know – many who stepped outside the Spiritual Mindset the Lord was rooting into their brains. Little did I know that I was about to do the same.

I've always been a thinker, analyzing everything from statements to people to mostly God's creation. I wondered things like, "Why did the Lord stop the trees from growing past certain heights? Why are their leaves green and not blue?" Oh, yeah! How about this one: "Why is there such a wide array of colored flowers?" Some people might find those questions strange, but the way I see it, to each his own! Right?

Anyway, back to that fateful day...

That particular day, I was very observant of all that was happening around me because my mind had already started to wander beyond the porch. My mind was filled with questions, perhaps the most interesting one being, "Why were we poor?" I really couldn't blame my mom. I knew she was doing the best she could possibly do, especially in her condition. (She was a person with type-2 diabetes who struggled at times with just getting out of bed.) In fact, even with her affliction, her mind was fixed on Jesus. That alone helped determine her mindset for each and every day. Most days, she remained faithful and served God with her whole heart, and she helped me do the same.

Moving along...

That day was a hot one. As the evening approached, it began to cool down. That was around the time the dealers came out of hiding from the scorching Georgia sun. The school year was starting, and many of them needed to get their money up in order to buy new clothes – not only because their parents couldn't afford them but also because those same guys wanted to floss in front of the girls, which they did with a drip that I couldn't match. I'm talking about shoes, bracelets, necklaces, rings, and the most alluring of all: cars with expensive rims. Those guys were winning over nearly all the girls!

So, when the red VW Jetta turned onto the street I lived on (Pauldoe Circle), I sat up straight in my chair. The car had four doors, dark-tinted windows, and black 20-inch rims. The bass that thumped from the car's interior was thunderous and made me wish I was that car's owner. I guess you could say I was envious and ready to try my hand at the dope game because I felt I needed a car like the one I just described. However, remembering my mom's rules kept me seated in my chair right there on that small concrete porch, under control and in a Godly fixed mental state – which, again, is a mind stayed on Jesus!

Now, I'd be lying to you if I didn't admit that car had me entrapped, willing to compromise the mental attitude that God was instilling in me, which was to always rely on Him and never put my trust in man or material things. In fact, scripture says that anyone who puts their trust in man is cursed.

I turned my attention back to nothing in particular until I caught the Jetta backing up in my peripheral vision.

Moreover, I noticed the car's back window powered down, followed by some words that added to my decision, helping me live in sin from that point forward.

"Hey, lil man! Do you know where we can sell some dope?"

Let's pause here. At that particular time, cocaine was taking the country by storm. I was unaware that the drug was moving into our project complex, but I would find out the hard way!

"Yeah!" I responded. (If you have been following my story closely, you know I lied. I had no idea what dope even looked like!) Nonetheless, the guy's question lured me in, and I had sinned against God. The Jetta backed up, stopping in front of my mom's front door. That made me very nervous. I didn't need her stepping out onto the porch, ruining any chance I had of getting money and a car like the one those guys were riding in. Not to mention, I had an opportunity to get away and hang with who I thought were some cool guys. They left an impression on everyone around. I'm sure many people were already spreading the news just by having that fly ride stopped in front of my porch. That encounter wasn't at all planned, but it was necessary. For a split second, I evaluated the importance of my mom's "don't leave the porch" rule. For one, by doing so, I would be disrespecting her house. After all, she paid the bills and fed me. Secondly, until then, none of us kids had ever tried my mom on her word. Still, I was presented with an opportunity to spread my wings. Before I knew it, I had sprinted to the Jetta and hopped into the back seat.

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