



Session One

PREPARING FOR YOUR PROMOTION

God has equipped you for great victory—not just merely to break through, but to release and establish the dominion of Heaven around you.

However, it’s your responsibility to use these tools to bring strength to yourself so you can stand in that victory.

“Now David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters. But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God” (1 SAMUEL 30:6).



Week 1

VIDEO LISTENING GUIDE

Two things that cripple the people of God:

1. _____ (or resentment).
2. _____.

David functioned as a:

1. _____.
2. _____.
3. _____.

Your _____ prove the grace of God that is on your life.

How to get positioned to minister strength to yourself:

Become _____ - _____.

Two areas to avoid in order to strengthen yourself in the Lord:

1. Don't _____ God.
2. Don't move into shame or _____.

The purpose of promotion:

1. God acknowledging the _____ that's functioning in us.
2. God positions us in a place where the people around us will _____ from our promotion.

*“Now David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters. **But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God**” (1 SAMUEL 30:6).*

SUMMARY

To fulfill your destiny in God, you need to learn the practical yet powerful steps to strengthening yourself in the Lord. This is how King David persevered through his long season of process. Even though David was anointed by the prophet Samuel and received a significant promise—to be king—ultimately, there was a great span of time between his promise received (at his anointing) and promised fulfilled (when he finally becomes king). Even though there were countless opportunities for David to give up, he persevered. When absolutely everyone turned against him, from mentor-turned-enemy King Saul to his previously devoted mighty men, he made a destiny-defining choice that ultimately positioned him to step into his greatest hour of promotion: David strengthened himself in the Lord.

During these eight powerful sessions, Pastor Bill Johnson will share keys from the life of David and from his own journey with God that will keep you spiritually strong through difficult times. The goal is not simply to strengthen yourself so that your circumstances can improve and you can step into divine promotion. That’s step one. Your life of breakthrough is meant to change the world around you. God created you to be a divine change-agent in your sphere of influence. Get ready to discover practical secrets to release the strength, power, and joy of God’s kingdom *in your life and to your world.*

SESSION 1 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. There were many years between David's anointing (promise received) and David stepping into his destiny (promise fulfilled).

Why do you think it's *very important* for there to be time in between promise received and promise fulfilled?

2. What does it mean that God cannot put something heavy on a weak foundation?
3. How does strengthening yourself in the Lord position you to fulfill your divine destiny and not give up during times of pressure?
4. In this study, we will address the topic of promotion frequently.

Discuss what you think promotion means and explore why you think that, biblically, promotion is very important to God.

5. It is possible for your most significant breakthroughs and destiny-defining promotions to come during/after seasons of tremendous difficulty. (Consider the life of David.)

To keep yourself strong, why do you think it's so important *not* to: 1) blame God when things don't work out the way you thought they would, or 2) move into shame or guilt, blaming yourself?

6. Based on 1 Kings 10:9 (the statement made about Solomon), what is the end result of personal promotion? Why do you think it's so important to maintain this perspective?
7. Share a story of a time in your life when you experienced significant opposition and difficulty—where *immediately* after

the difficulty, you entered into a season of promotion and breakthrough.

During this difficult time, how did you specifically:

- a. Strengthen yourself in the Lord
- b. Persevere
- c. Learn from your mistakes
- d. Arrive at promotion and breakthrough

ACTIVATION EXERCISE: LEARN TO RECOGNIZE YOUR AREA OF PROMOTION

All of us are being summoned into new areas of promotion, as God is all about taking us from *glory to glory*.

Today, you are going to learn how to identify these areas with greater clarity so you can more effectively cooperate with the Holy Spirit as He leads you into new places of advancement and breakthrough.

1. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to show you what areas in your life He wants to promote. (It could be anything from growing in your spiritual life, to advancing in your job, to improving a specific relationship, to fulfilling a dream or desire you have, to following through on a career ambition.)
There could be multiple areas.
2. Don't overwhelm yourself if many areas of promotion come to your mind during this exercise. Focus on a select few—*one* is probably most advisable.
3. Ask the Lord, *What area do You want me to focus on in this next season?* Even though there might be a few, it's best to start somewhere. Most likely, the Lord will highlight something to you.

Video Listening Guide

4. Write this area of promotion down. Commit to praying over it during the course of the eight-week curriculum (and beyond).

Share with the group what the Holy Spirit said to you about new areas of promotion.

Goal: The goal of this exercise is to remove the barriers of what you think promotion means. It's not just about making more money or securing a new title at your job; at its core, promotion is about you stepping into the divine destiny that God has planned for you! The purpose of these sessions is to help you become a person who is fit for supernatural promotion.

This will only come as you learn how to strengthen yourself in the Lord!

Day One

THE PROCESS: FROM THE PASTURE TO THE PALACE



“But the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart’” (1 SAMUEL 16:7).

With no one around, David’s pursuit of God was motivated by nothing but a desire to know God for His own sake.

God did not bring the *man after His heart* straight from the pasture to the palace. Incredibly, David did not assume the throne until 10 to 13 years *after* Samuel had anointed him to be king. In those interim years, David endured more difficulty, persecution, and rejection than many of us face in a lifetime. He probably didn’t expect it to take so long to become king.

In contrast, Saul, the previous king, had no such difficulty; he was crowned very shortly after being anointed by Samuel. But God did not want another King Saul. While Saul was truly the best man Israel had to offer when they demanded a king (see 1 Sam. 9:1-2), his heart had not been groomed through testing before he assumed the throne. As king, Saul was entrusted with a measure of anointing to lead the armies of Israel to victory and shepherd the people. Yet, without the strength of character that only comes

by winning private battles, these public victories exposed the previously hidden weakness of Saul's heart toward God. That weakness, combined with his growing appetite for the favor of man, led him to bring glory to himself and disobey the Lord. Saul's untested heart allowed what was given to make him successful to ultimately destroy him.

So David, even though he already possessed a heart for the Lord, was led into years of testing that groomed him to handle the glory and responsibility of the throne. The scriptural account of this season in David's life is filled with lessons on the kinds of character tests we all face on the road to fulfilling our destiny in God. But the real question—what is it about David that ultimately qualifies him to become king? What brings about the moment in which God says, “OK, now you're ready”? I would like to suggest that it was David's ability to do something in the face of the deepest betrayal and rejection imaginable. When he stood completely alone, that is when David “*strengthened himself in the Lord his God*” (1 Sam. 30:6). David's response to the Lord in private would ultimately position him for public promotion. The same is true for you and me. How we respond to God in the secret place is a surefire indicator of whether promotion would push us closer to our destiny in God, or if promotion, designed to be a blessing, would actually become our downfall because we don't have the maturity to carry its weight.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How do you think your private life with God determines the level of promotion you will walk in?

2. Explain how promotion and blessing can actually become destructive to us. Why is maturity so important when it comes to receiving and carrying our promotion?
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EMPOWERMENT PRAYER

*Jesus, You see my heart and You know what I can handle.
Thank you that You prepare and groom me for my destiny. I
receive the grace to pass these tests that qualify me to carry the
glory and purpose You have placed on my life.*

Day Two

HOW TO RESPOND TO REJECTION



“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me” (PSALM 23:4).

David’s breakthrough kept him standing in front of an unseen door that was just about to open—the door to the throne room.

David had been rejected by King Saul, rejected by the Israelites, and even rejected by their enemies. (You know you’ve had a bad day when the *devil* rejects you.) David’s seriously bad day would have been the last straw for most of us. But in this moment, David faces the deepest and most betraying rejection of all. At the sight of their burned city and missing families, his mighty men—those he’d turned from disenfranchised to contributing citizens, whom he’d persevered with for years, and whose families he’d protected and provided for—talked about stoning him. Now even the rejected of society had rejected him. David was rejected and was about to be killed. There really isn’t much difference between their attitude and the common prejudice in our society today: If there’s a problem, get rid of the guy at the top. But this is a deeper injustice because these men owe their lives to David.

Scripture records what David is feeling in this moment:

Now David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters (1 SAMUEL 30:6).

Without question I would feel “greatly distressed” too if my life was threatened by my closest friends. But how does David respond? Does he run for his life? Does he become indignant and start defending his place as their leader by reminding them that they owe him their lives? He easily could have done either, but this is what he did instead: “*But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God*” (1 Sam. 30:6).

Facing a volatile group of men ready to stone him caused him not to look to himself for strength but to the Lord his God. His faith gave him the courage to essentially say, “Come on, guys! We’ve got wives and kids to bring back!” Amazingly, this was all it took to knock the sense back into his men. He simply called them back to the purpose and vision for their lives—demonstrating the true character of a strengthened leader. God gave him the strength to master his own distress, look past the offense of his men’s rejection, and rally them together to get their families back. When he turned to the men in strength, they pulled themselves together, went after the Amalekites, and retrieved every person and possession that had been taken. But David’s personal breakthrough in this moment, his ability to strengthen himself and be faithful to his purpose instead of collapsing under pressure, not only saved his life, it also enabled him to lead his men to victory.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. From your own observation of David's story, how does he respond to the rejection that he faced?

2. Describe what you think it looks like to "strengthen yourself in the Lord" based on David's circumstances. (Even though we are early on in the study, consider the story of David so far, and based on his responses to adversity, write down some ways you can strengthen yourself in the Lord.)

EMPOWERMENT PRAYER

Holy Spirit thank You that in the face of darkness, loss and rejection You have given me the tools and keys to bring me strength and connect me with my purpose and destiny in God. Even as David felt abandoned, You gave him the capacity to turn his affection to You and find your word in a vital point in his life. I look to You and expect for You to speak and bring life to me in this same way.

Day Three

PROMOTION THAT PRODUCES A LASTING LEGACY



“The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant” (PSALM 25:14).

Mature believers are those God can trust with the secrets of His heart because they will not use the favor He gives for their own purposes, but for His.

Promotion never ends with you and me; when stewarded correctly, our blessing has the potential to unlock breakthrough for future generations and thus produce a lasting legacy. Our promotion means that the others who come after us get to begin where *we left off*. The “high places” that God’s grace brought us into become the *starting places* for a whole new generation. Consider what David’s promotion is still producing today.

The true significance of David’s promotion from the field to the throne is seen in his kingly legacy. It would be stunning enough if David had only written the Psalms, established an unprecedented form of worship in Jerusalem, designed the Temple, and brought Israel into its Golden Age; but King David was so important to God that he was named *the* forerunner of the Messiah. Jesus, throughout *eternity*, will be identified as the Son of David and sit on David’s throne. David was promoted to a place

of such favor and influence with God that he altered the course of history forever.

David's life was not set down in Scripture merely to inspire us. We only need to read the accounts of his sins to know that he was not some kind of superhero. David's life is really a call to every believer. If one man who was a sinner, who lived hundreds of years before the blood of Jesus was shed, could come into that place of favor with God, then how much more should those who are covered by that blood be able to come into an even greater destiny—to be like Christ and finish His work on the planet? John describes the destiny we've received in Jesus in Revelation 5:9-10, the destiny all of Heaven is singing about: "*You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.*" As proof that our position as kings and priests is not something less than the position David held, the writer of Ephesians states that we are seated in Christ in heavenly places (see Eph. 2:6).

If Jesus is currently seated on the throne of David, then so are we!

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How do you think David's promotion created a legacy that impacted the generations that came after him?

2. Consider how your personal promotion, blessing, miracle, or breakthrough could actually create a legacy with the potential of impacting future generations to come. Describe what you envision this to look like.

Pause for a moment and think about a significant promotion you have already received in your life. Describe how you see this promotion producing a legacy that blesses future generations. (This exercise is designed to get your mind to start thinking generationally and consider the legacy that is locked up in your promotion.)

EMPOWERMENT PRAYER

Lord, thank You for David's legacy. It's an invitation to me as I meditate on a man who moved Your heart and gained favor. May I be one that You find favor with, that blessing would rest upon my life and bring breakthrough for the generations that are to follow.

Day Four

PASSING THE TESTS FOR INCREASED FAVOR



“Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (LUKE 2:52).

God, in His mercy, gives you His favor in the measure your character can handle.

Some of us who have been raised in a democratic society may struggle with the idea that God gives more favor to some people than others. God’s favor is not the same as His love. You cannot do anything to change the vastness of God’s love for you. But even Jesus Himself had to grow *“in favor with God and men”* (Luke 2:52). This verse amazes me. I can understand the fact that He needed to grow in favor with man, but why did He have to grow in favor with God? He was perfect in every way. The answer lies in the fact that Jesus did everything He did *as a man*, laying His divinity aside, in order to be a model for us. Therefore, He, like David, had to be tested.

At Jesus’ baptism, He received His anointing as the Spirit descended on Him and remained, and He was declared by the Father to be the Son of God. But instead of launching right into His ministry, He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. There He was tested by the enemy, specifically in the area of the Word

that had just been spoken over Him. If you look at the account of Jesus' temptation in Luke, you'll notice that He goes into the wilderness "*filled with the Holy Spirit*" and He returns "*in the power of the Spirit*" (Luke 4:1,14). Because He passed the test, the expression of the word over His life, the favor to walk in His potential, was released in a greater measure.

The "favor" that Jesus grew in is the word *charis*, which refers to the divine grace and ability of God Himself that comes upon and enables a person to accomplish His purposes. As Jesus modeled, each of us must grow in favor if we are going to fulfill our destiny in God. But favor, because it is so glorious and powerful, is a weighty thing. Thus, God, in His mercy, gives you His favor in the measure your character can handle, taking you from glory to glory, faith to faith, and strength to strength.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Describe the difference between God's love and God's favor.

2. Why do you think that God gives you His favor based on what your character can handle and sustain? What does this look like?

EMPOWERMENT PRAYER

Father God, I want to grow in wisdom and increase in favor with You—just like Jesus did. Would You increase my capacity to handle the favor You want to give me? Thank You for developing my character and for strengthening me.

Day Five

STRENGTHENING YOURSELF TO SUSTAIN BREAKTHROUGH



“O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water” (PSALM 63:1).

Those who seek God’s face and pursue His destiny for their lives when nobody is around are the people who possess the initiative required to strengthen themselves.

Perhaps the first quality that distinguishes a leader is *initiative*. God knew David would succeed as a leader because he took the initiative to seek Him in the secret place. This is the same quality of maturity that He is looking for in us. To experience the positive peer pressure and momentum of a move of God in a corporate group is wonderful. But those who seek God’s face and pursue His destiny for their lives when nobody is around are the people who possess the initiative required to strengthen themselves. If they learn to sustain their initiative to seek God by strengthening themselves in testing, they will be the people who will experience the personal breakthroughs that release a corporate blessing to those around them.

God wants us to learn how to strengthen ourselves through Him because developing our skills will promote spiritual longevity.

We need longevity because our destiny and potential cannot be attained in a few years; they extend to the end of our lifetime here on earth. For this reason, I like to tell the students in our School of Supernatural Ministry, “Anyone can burn for God for a year. Come back in twenty years, take me out to coffee, and tell me you’re still burning.” Then I spend much of the school year teaching them the tools I’ve learned for strengthening myself. It’s obvious that the students possess enough initiative to pay the price to come to school; but without discovering and using tools to minister to themselves, they won’t, I’m convinced, be able to sustain the desire that brought them initially.

This study is designed to give you some practical tools to sustain a life of breakthrough. Longevity is what we are after. It is one thing to pray and receive a miracle. The answered prayer is, without a doubt, worth celebrating. However, there are many people who want to substitute miracles for maturity. Instead of becoming catalysts who *release* God’s power to the world around them, this perspective keeps people imprisoned in an “up one day, down the next” spiritual existence where every need demands a miracle, prophetic word, or supernatural manifestation. I value all of these things and welcome their vital place in our culture. However, a point needs to come where we discover how to sustain our own breakthrough so we can usher others into that very place.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Describe what you believe *sustained breakthrough* looks like.

2. Why do you think your private life before the Lord is so important when it comes to you receiving/walking in public breakthrough and promotion?

EMPOWERMENT PRAYER

God, I want to burn continually for You. Thank You for hunger, for access and for continually fueling what you are doing in my heart. I trust You to fan this flame so You can release longevity for the long haul.

FOR DEEPER STUDY...

Strengthen Yourself in the Lord MP3/CD <https://shop.ibethel.org/products/strengthen-yourself-in-the-lord--2>

The Ascended Life <https://shop.ibethel.org/products/the-ascended-life>

Longevity <https://shop.ibethel.org/products/longevity>

Your History with God <https://shop.ibethel.org/products/your-history-with-god>

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