

# ***Single-Minded Singleness:*** ***Handling the Challenges and Rewards of*** ***Being Unmarried in Missions.***

*Seminar (1.0 Hr) Presented at the Global Missions Health Conference “GMHC”  
Louisville, Kentucky, USA ~ November 10-12, 2022*

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## = Abstract =

There are a lot of **advantages** for being unmarried or unattached tightly to family when involved in broader work, strategic endeavors, or caring ministries. Yet there are some **disadvantages**, obstacles, and challenges that run parallel to that living style and relational condition. In this seminar we will **redefine** the labels and terminologies used to describe the singleness or *unmarried status*; we will review the *major frustrations, mental challenges, unpleasant experiences, emotional longings, common temptations, and unmet needs facing*; we will highlight the *positive gains, leading advantages, and additional achievements* that unmarried people possess; and finally, we will explore the many ways they can cope, manage, and strive in life and ministry. It is very possible that they can do that with a **powerful mindset, constructive hope, and marked resiliency**, as they engage multitude of other people, significant leaders, on personal level, and with kingdom-work to become role-models, influence broadly, and leave a long-lasting legacy.

## *= Learning Objectives =*

- *Identify two commonly used definitions of the terms “single” or “singleness.”*
- *Describe two rewards and advantages of being an unmarried-unattached person in the helping professions.*
- *List three kinds of frustrations with which the single professionals usually struggle.*
- *Discuss three ways unmarried servants can handle potential obstacles and face anxiety, stress, and challenges, and eventually become more creative and resilient.*

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An unmarried person is a full human being, with all the faculties, possibilities, connections, networking, and abilities to live a very productive and enjoyable life.

And regardless of the marital status, or past history, life is meant to be both

***Endured*** and ***Enjoyed***.

A single person, never-been-married or used to be married, is not a different species or an alien coming from another planet or outer space.

So, labels are important, and names and words are powerful.

Any stage or phase of our livelihood is meant not only to be endured, but to also

be enjoyed. And is true of our spiritual journey, as it is the ultimate aim of all

human beings ***to glorify God and enjoy Him and forever.***

*Not all attached-married people are similar either or the same type, and nor all the unattached-unmarried people are the same!*

**Marital status is only one factor.** Not all married couples are happy not all unmarried persons are miserable. There are a lot of other factors, faculties, and personality-traits and social engagement that enter into the picture and define our human role, function, posture, and existence.

A person is only worth the value of his or her network, relationships, and sense of community. We are not a **Cohesive Self** unless we are a **Social Self**. Therefore, a close **Connectivity** leads to a meaningful living, while **Disconnectivity** leads to isolation, dissatisfaction, disillusionment, and loneliness. Actually, it is possible to feel **alone** and mentally-emotionally disconnected even in a crowd or within a committed relationship, like marriage and ministry-team.

*Some of us are unmarried-adults by choice or chance, by default or by design... but we are people!*

People exist both on individual and social levels. All of us are private selves and public selves. We integrate ***individualism*** with ***collectivism***. So, no one is a lone island in the vast ocean or a planet floating solo in the universe. We all run in orbits, function in communities, operate in system-networks, and are vital part of local tribes and maybe global movements.

So, by way of definitions, we can add that ***Single Adults*** or ***Unmarried Status*** is not a defect, deficit, desolation, inferiority, disorder, or ...

The classification and categories used at times in society in general and churches in particular-- Separating singles from the rest of population and treating them as different subculture, may not be sound or healthy. Children are children regardless whether they have one or two parents. Adults are adults regardless if they are attached to someone specific or not, if they live alone or in a full house... as they have the same value, possess the same strengths and weaknesses, hold the same jobs, mix with the same groups, and make the same contributions.

As singles, we are regular people, normal, balanced, and very able. Not awkward, or lacking, or outcast, or unable to attach, or second class, or unqualified, or incomplete, or incompetent or disordered...

We are free to orbit as many human circles and spheres and free to have as many significant others and special colleagues as we can manage.

***Enriching and being Enriched by so many others, Nurturing and be Nurtured by selective others, Being active in wide range of spheres, Bringing mutual Experiences, Insights, Maturity, Seasoning, and Joy to to others as we receive from them along the way.***

When we consider the life, work, and service of one-operation unmarried person we think of all these detailed-areas, perspectives, and dimensions:

*Multiple Settlements & Mobility*  
*Relation to Family, Friends, Relatives, & Society*  
*Affiliation, Accountability, & Productivity*  
*Faith & Spirituality*  
*Teachability & Approachability*  
*Vulnerability, Authenticity, & Transparency*  
*Care, Intimacy, & Sexuality*  
*Strength, Endurance, & Resiliency*  
*Growth, Grace, & Maturity*  
*Life Journey, God's Kingdom, & Eternity*

*Adapted from Dr Rev John Stott*

It has been said that the best candidate for company or marriage is not a frustrated single person but a content, balanced, anchored, and at ease single person.

An unmarried adult person is like a whole institution, a one-man or one-woman operation.

We are the product of so many influences and influencers along the journey, and the cumulative result of so many mentors who invested in us and in our character, steadily through the years.

So, as we benefit from other people legacies, let us plan to leave our own legacy, each in his or her own capacity and unique way.

*Caregiver also could imply the followings roles*

Therapist  
Physician/Nurse  
Shepherd  
Servant Leader  
Administrator  
Pastor/Minister  
Educator/Teacher  
Parent Figure  
Social Worker  
Spouse/Partner  
Child of Elderly Parent  
Coach-Motivator

Mentor/Nurturer  
Visionary/Overseer  
Humanitarian Worker  
Healthcare Provider  
Counselor/Clinician  
Psychologist  
Missionary/Volunteer  
Priest-Prophet  
Healer/Intercessor  
Spiritual Director/Guide  
Agent of Reconciliation  
Peace Activist

*Basically, there are two Types of Stresses:*

*Distress (negative stress)*

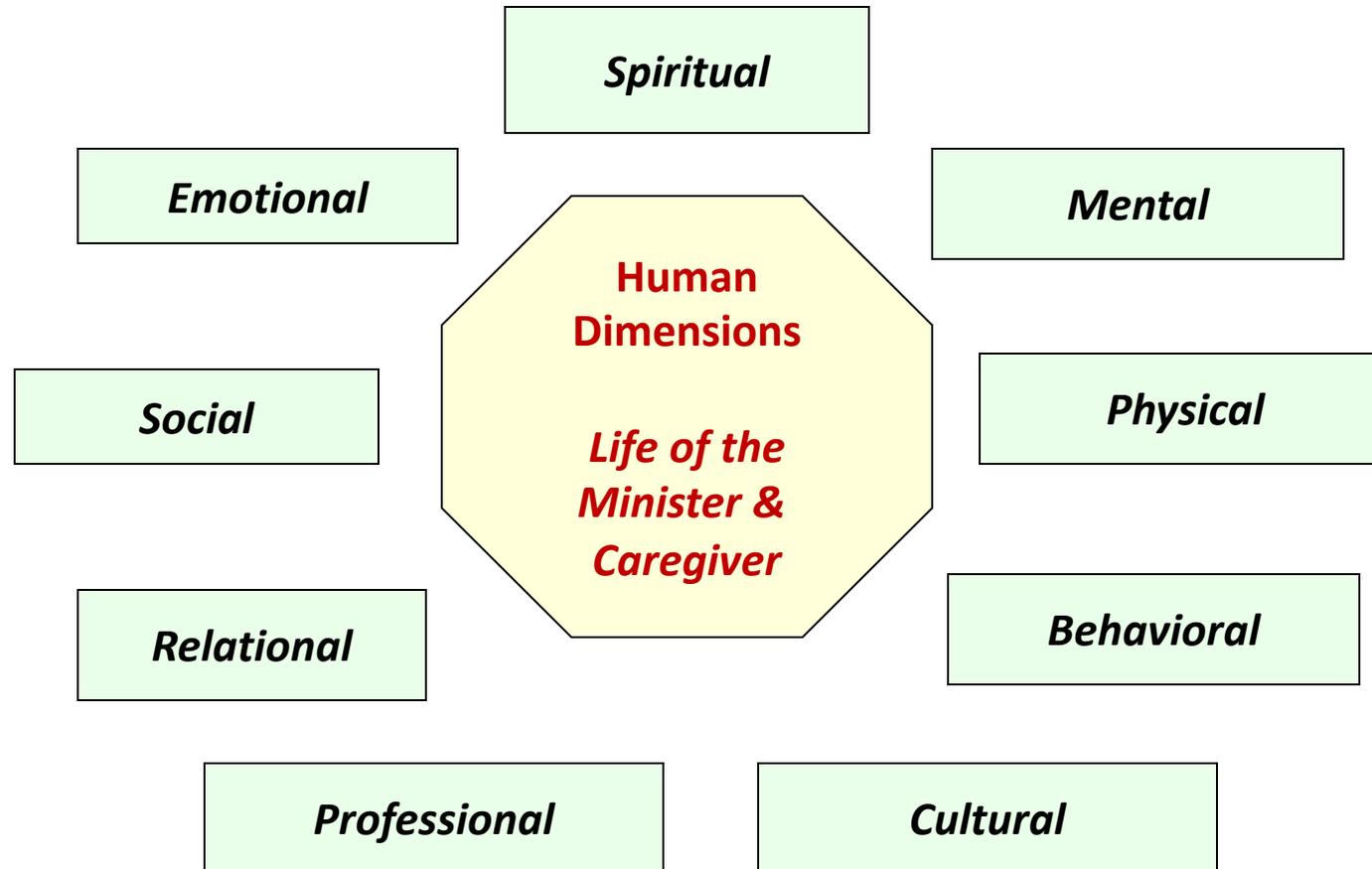
*Accident, Terminal Illness, Job Loss, Sharp Separation,  
Divorce, Financial Break, Death of Loved-Ones, Disaster, etc.*

*and*

*Eustress (positive stress)*

*Moving Home, Graduation, Starting New Job, Taking Exams,  
Preparing for Marriage, New Adventure, Traveling to a New Location,  
Learning New Skills, Performing big Tasks, etc.*

# ***Domains of Personality Functioning***



*The philosopher Socrates said:*

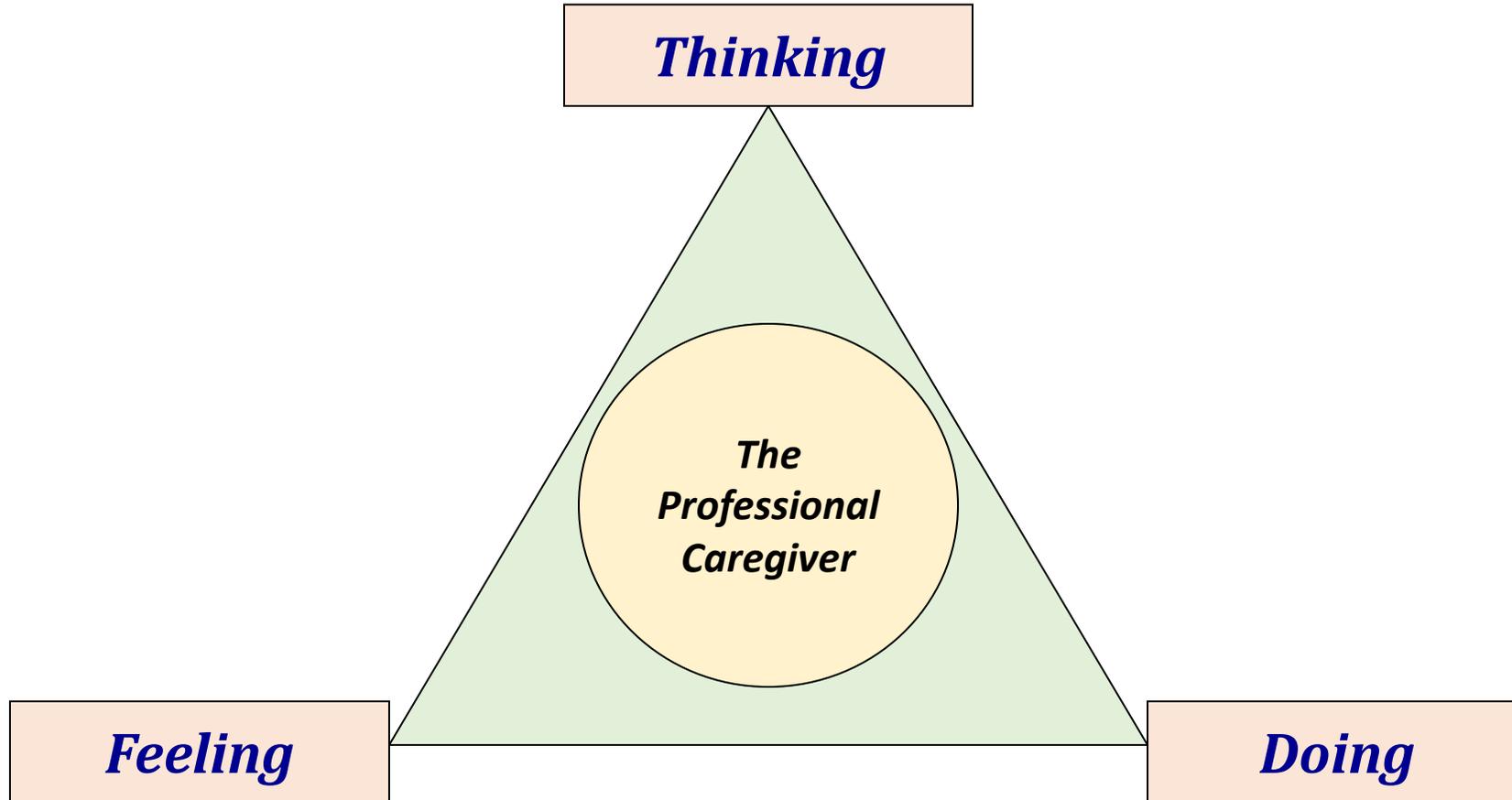
***“Know Thyself”***

*Later, many philosophers, mentors, and religious leaders instructed their disciples to*

***“Pay Attention to Yourself...”***

*Including the Apostle Paul to his Disciple Timothy!*

# *Self-Awareness*



## *Personal Exercise: Make Two Lists of Your ~*

- Strengths
- Positive Qualities
- Gifts & Talents
- Good Skills
- Things you like about yourself and want to keep and develop further
- Weaknesses
- Negative Qualities
- Lack of Skills
- Areas need major Improvement
- Things you don't like about yourself and want to change

*Check which list is longer and keep adding to them as you go along. Length will change. Some traits will fall in the middle as they qualify to be either as a strength or weakness, depending on how you use or practice them...*

## *Positive Experiences in Helping Others Cross-Culturally*

- *General Sense of Reward and Joy.*
- *Wonderful Collaboration with Locals & National.*
- *Deep Peace, Fellowship, & Sense of Accomplishment.*
  - *High Motivation. Aspiration, and Enthusiasm.*
    - *Sense of Responsibility and Immediacy.*
    - *Contribution to Global Health Movement.*
    - *Good Levels of Contentment & Satisfaction.*
- *Reinforcement by Positive Feedback & Outcomes.*

## ***Regarding Empathy:***

***Over Empathy*** approach will certainly lead to

**Fusion**

*results: no clear separation of minds or passions  
and no clear or objective perspective*

***Under Empathy*** approach will lead to

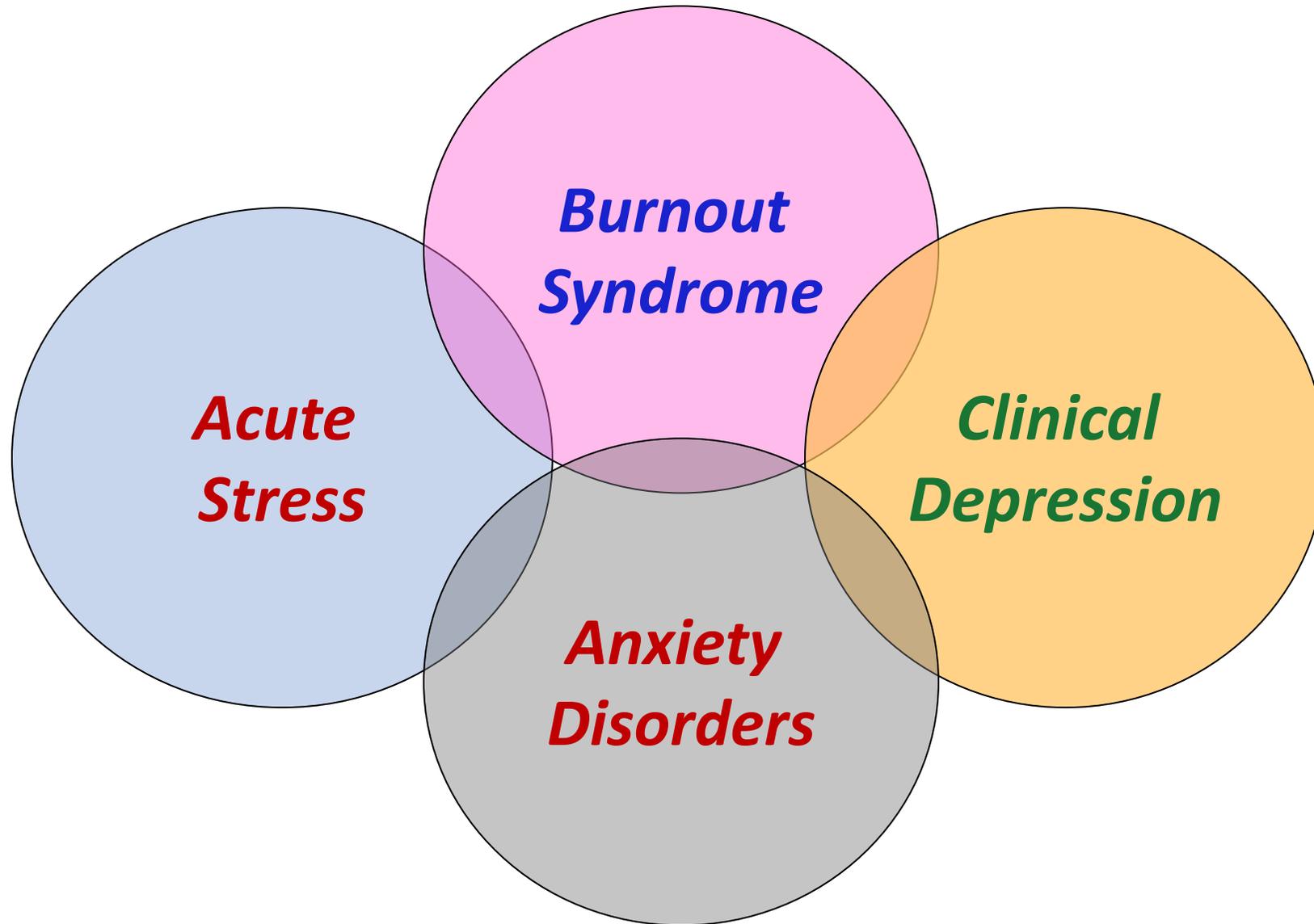
**Alienation**

*results: no passionate connection but rather  
mechanical and robotic relations*

## *“Compassion Fatigue”*

Compassion Fatigue is a new emerging term in the scholarly literature. It is the condition of *emotional* and physical *tiredness* that results when helpers are caring and giving so much of themselves and keep showing extensive *MERCY* !

Similar to *Secondary Trauma Effect* but is different in that *Compassion Fatigue* does not display any serious symptoms of trauma-related or *Acute Stress*.



# *Becoming A Global Citizen & An Effective Cross-Cultural Worker*

- **Balanced Worldview**
- **Increased Relational Skills**
- **Cultural Sensitivity & Humility**
- **Lower Anxiety & Higher Hope**
- **Cross-National Involvement**
- **Multicultural Work & Perspective**

## \* *Becoming Healthier & More Efficient* \*

### *“Prevention is better than Intervention”* دِرْهَمٌ وَقَايَةٌ

- *Time Management* خَيْرٌ مِنْ قِنطَارٍ عِلَاجٍ
- *Health Management* (keeping up the good & caring for the ill parts)
- *Relationship Management* (people can be demanding, draining)
- *Temptation Management* (behaviors, items, practices)
- *Details Management* (minor things, maintenance, money, demands)
- *Distractions Management* (paper, people, TV, digitals, etc.)
- *Serenity Management* (existential concerns, spirituality, inner peace, prayer life, etc.)

# *Common Conditions, Temptations, and Holes in the Souls*

- *Isolation by default (or) Isolating by design.*

*Watching our tendencies ~*

- *Loneliness and Disconnection [transforming loneliness to aloneness]*
- *Preoccupations / Dependencies / Obsessions / Compulsions / Cravings / Destructive Habits / Addictions / ... alcohol, drugs, gossip, over-eating, over-spending, gambling, over-working (workaholic), over-playing, over-sexualizing, etc..*
- *List some of your own Temptations & Vulnerabilities --- ---*



***Here are some Practical Hints,  
Recommendations, and Suggestions  
to Encourage us to Form new Desirable Virtues,  
Healthy Habits, Survival Skills, Positive Attitudes,  
and Resiliency Practices.***

***We Aim to seek Help, Hope, Health, and Healing for Others,  
who are in Our Care, and for Ourselves as well,  
as we Serve on the Front Lines.***

✚ Memorize scriptures/ let scriptures be 1<sup>st</sup> in morning and last in evening for your eyes to see.

That will leave an imprint in the brain translates into our unconscious then to our spiritual heart and soul.

✚ Hear the gospel daily.

✚ Sing to the Lord when alone, even push yourself to start, then the melody follows from your lips into your heart.

✚ Talk about the Lord daily with someone.

✚ Be a blessing to other even generically. Make your mind.

✚ Be intentional with your thoughts.

✚ Watch your mental focus.

✚ Let us put our lives in some good order.

✚ Do not wait until you put everything in order to you begin living well.

✚ Do what you can, with what you have, where you are.

✚ When you lament about what you are missing in life or what you do not have, acknowledge those, yet quickly remind yourself of what you actually have... So begin thanking God for them with a grateful heart.

- ✚ Avoid self-pity and dwelling on what you do not have what you miss avoid dwelling on the negative...
- ✚ Keep a diary or journal
- ✚ Try to transform any feelings or experiences of loneliness into aloneness. “I am alone with God, with my memories, with my aspirations, with my internal connections, ...
- ✚ Be an influencer. Bless someone daily (peace, blessings, how is your day? I will pray for you...) we all have spheres of influence. Consider that time as one time or last time opportunity, that may not repeat or come back again.
- ✚ Obey God and His Guidance to the best of your knowledge... even if you feel deprived. And leave the results into His Hands.
- ✚ Avoid temptations (better than fighting them). Postpone the urge to do something unhealthy – for that urge is very short lived. Even defocus, break the routine, leave/go for a brisk walk, change music or channel, call a friend, listen to bits of news, ... distract yourself.
- ✚ Watch your internet use and your dependency on screens. Been too attached or glued to screens is unhealthy and is a form of addiction, regardless of the sites or contents -- news, texts, posts, social media, computer games, sentimental sites, and overt sexual content, etc.

- ✚ Set some short term and long terms goals. The gap between setting goals and achieving them can feel unsurmountable. Start out by writing down what you hope to achieve, and then tell a friend or relative about them.
- ✚ Initiate friendships. Avoid the pressure to have a date or quickly enter dating, I mean exclusive dating. Do things on groups. Gather around you many general friends.
- ✚ Take up a couple of worthy causes and prayerfully and passionately get involved in them.
- ✚ Use time wisely. Always make lists of the important and most important things/items/tasks. Redeem time well as life is short and uncertain, building treasures in heaven-- for where our treasure is, our heart will be there also.
- ✚ When down or distressed or tempted or desiring sexual intimacy or fighting mental-emotional battles... Do something tangible-physical-behavioral. Move to change your mind and mood and physiology tone.... be intentional stretching, smiling, singing, going out for a brisk walk, drinking fluids, listening to music or commentaries... Just make effort to shift structure, time, space, activity, input, and output.
- ✚ Use imagination, visualization, mental images, or recall nice memories, and then uses relaxation techniques, like deep-slow breathing.
- ✚ Keep a journal or diary. Write in it something daily.
- ✚ We are people of habits. So, we constantly learn new habits and un-learn old ones, so keep a healthy balance.
- ✚ Have a sponsor or a mentor. Adopt a few elderly people as “parents” for nurture, homey feeling, to enjoy a family atmosphere and some safe generational connections.

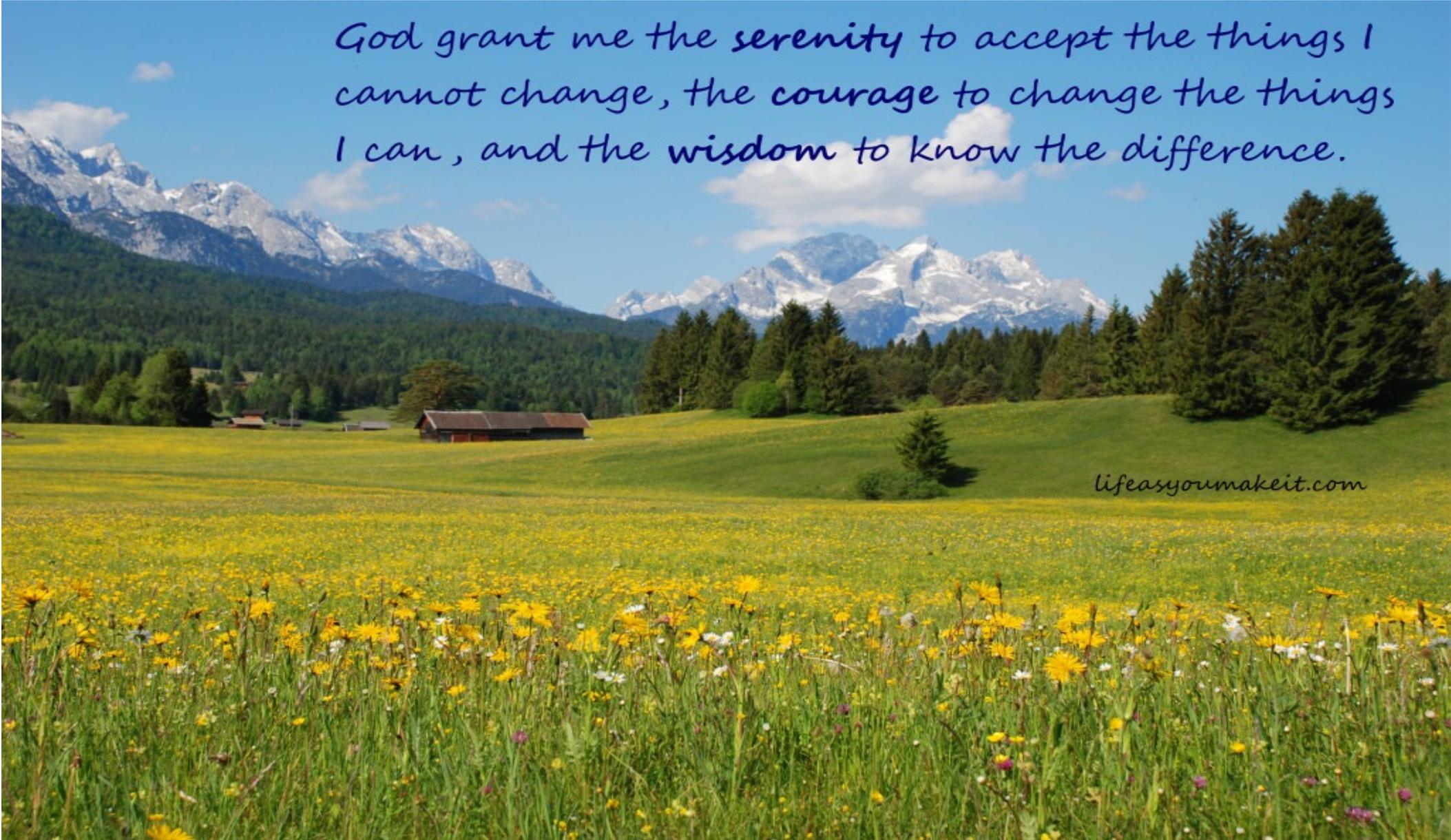
*The Bible also Says:*

*“The Lord Be Exalted,  
Who Delights in the Wellbeing of His Servants”  
Psalm 35*

*... and finally let us press on and Say with the Apostle Paul..*

~ ~ ~ ~

*“I Can Do All Things Through  
Christ Who Strengthens Me”*



*God grant me the serenity to accept the things I  
cannot change, the courage to change the things  
I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.*

*lifeasyoumakeit.com*

*The American Philosopher and Theologian Reinhold Niebuhr 1892-1971*

*Thank you for your presence and participation. I wish you well on your life and service.*

*Let us press on with steadfastness.*

*May our journey be always rich even though it may not be always easy.*

*For His Grace is sufficient and His Strength will be manifested in our weaknesses.*

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