

Guided by Grace: My Father's Lessons on Faith, Love, and Leadership

This guide is a collection of the invaluable lessons my father, Patrick Slusser, lived by—principles to lead a purposeful, loving, and faith-driven life. May it continue to inspire and guide us all.

1. Dream Big and Live with Purpose

- Dream big because **anything is possible**.
- Support others in reaching their dreams.
- Always have a life plan—and seek to align it with God's plan.
- Be determined to succeed, and never stop working toward your goals.
- Don't give up. Dreams take time. Be patient and persistent.
- Remember: *"If you don't work, you don't eat."*¹ Success requires effort.

1. Thessalonians 3:10 (NIV): "For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: 'The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat.'"

Meaning:

Hard work and responsibility are essential. You can't expect rewards without effort. This aligns perfectly with your father's teachings about putting in the work, staying persistent, and earning what you receive.

2. Stay Positive and Stay the Course

- Keep an unwavering **positive mindset**, no matter what challenges come your way.
- Believe that **you can always make it happen** or begin again, even after failure.
- Trust that things will work out, even if they take **longer than you want**—patience is key.
- **Don't give up**. Hard times will come, and long suffering may be necessary to reach your goals.
- Stay persistent and committed, especially when things get difficult.
- Embrace joy along the journey—**smile, laugh, and enjoy life**, even through the struggles.
- Know that obstacles are part of the plan, but **with faith, effort, and endurance**, you will overcome them.
- Keep improving yourself through God's wisdom and never lose sight of your purpose.

3. Be Wise with Your Resources

- Enjoy life, but live within your means.
- Spend carefully. Don't waste money on things you don't truly need.
- Never overextend yourself financially—live within your means.

- Always keep an emergency reserve. Life's unexpected expenses are guaranteed.
- Financial peace comes from thoughtful planning and discipline.

4. Listen for God's Guidance Through Weak Signals

- God speaks through quiet, “**weak signals**” within you. Pay attention.
- These signals show you the difference between right and wrong.
- Often, the *right path* is the *harder path*. Have the courage to follow it.
- Don't ignore these signals just because the easy road is tempting.
- Have the courage to follow what you know is right, even when it's unpopular.
- Know that mistakes are part of life. Get back on track and trust in God's forgiveness.

5. When You Make Mistakes

- Know you're only human. You will fail sometimes.
- When you go off track, forgive yourself and get back to your plan.
- No mistake is too big for God's forgiveness.²
- Jesus' sacrifice³ to die for our sins reminds us: fresh starts are always possible.
- Trust that God's grace is bigger than any failure.

2. The story of Judas and Peter missing the signals and correcting their actions. This references real events from the Gospels:

- Peter's Denial – Luke 22:54-62 (Peter denies Jesus three times but later repents and is forgiven.)
- Judas' Betrayal – Matthew 26:14-16 and Matthew 27:3-5 (Judas betrays Jesus and later feels remorse but takes his own life.)

Meaning:

Both illustrate what happens when fear or temptation overtake us, but Peter's story especially highlights redemption and returning to the right path after mistakes—a theme your father deeply emphasized.

3. Jesus' Sacrifice and Resurrection. This references multiple passages, but two central ones are:

- John 3:16 (NIV):
"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."
- Romans 5:8 (NIV):
"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Meaning:

Your father spoke of God's ultimate love, sacrifice, forgiveness, and the promise of new life through Jesus. This is

the foundation of Christian faith and central to his wisdom about never giving up, knowing forgiveness is always available.

6. Love Abundantly and Put Family First

- Lead with love—be generous, helpful, and kind.
- Prioritize your family above all. Work hard to provide for them, protect them and help develop their talents.
- Make memories.
- Be generous and don't keep score.
- Be a friend, especially to those who need one most.
- Give people the benefit of the doubt.
- Forgive endlessly — “70 x 7 times.”⁴

7. Build Honest and Meaningful Relationships

- Honesty is the foundation of trust.
- Always be truthful, reliable and trustworthy so others can count on you.
- Listen more than you talk to truly understand people and situations.
- Treat relationships with seriousness, commitment, and showing vulnerability.
- Love deeply and openly. What you give will come back to you.
- Serve others. Helping people is one of life's greatest rewards.
- Be willing to forgive — “7x70 times according to Jesus”⁴ if necessary.
- Watch for God's "weak signals" to guide you in relationships.

But also... be wise:

- Some people may not have good intentions. Watch for insincerity.
- Recognize and distance yourself from insincere or harmful people, while still practicing forgiveness.
- Use discernment. Weak signals can alert you to someone's true character.
- Stay cautious around people who don't live by God's word.
- Forgive them, but protect your peace.
“Keep your friends close, but your enemies closer.”

4. Matthew 18:21-22 (NIV)

21 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?”

22 Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.”

Some translations say $7 \times 70 = 490$. That was what my father said it was.

Meaning:

This passage teaches that forgiveness should be unlimited—not something we count, but something we continually give. Jesus calls us to reflect God's grace by forgiving others over and over, just as He forgives us.

8. Manage Your Emotions and Words

- Stay in control of your emotions. Don't let anger or frustration damage relationships.
- Choose your words carefully— Your words shape your reality.
*"The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit."*⁵
- Speak positively about your life, your future, and others.
- Use your voice to build up, not tear down.

5. Proverbs 18:21 (NIV).

"Life": Speaking words of love, encouragement, truth, and wisdom can lead to growth, healing, and positive relationships.

"Death": Speaking words of hate, lies, gossip, or negativity can lead to division, hurt, and destruction. The second part, *"those who love it will eat its fruit,"* means that we will experience the consequences of the words we choose to use. Just like planting seeds, our words produce fruit—whether good or bad, depending on what we sow.

Meaning:

This verse teaches that **our words hold incredible power**—they can either build up or destroy, encourage or wound, give life or bring harm. What we say not only affects others, but it also shapes our own lives and the outcomes we experience.

9. The Fruits⁶ and Gifts of Life

To receive life's greatest gifts, first practice the fruits of the Holy Spirit:

- **Love**
- **Joy**
- **Peace**
- **Patience**
- **Kindness**
- **Gentleness**
- **Excitement**
- **Self-Control**
- **Long Suffering**

When you live with these values, blessings come in unexpected ways.

Example: Our family's trip to visit Dad—born out of love and sacrifice—led to new friendships, opportunities, and unforgettable memories.

The lesson?

Put love first, endure the struggles, and you will unlock the gifts God has waiting for you.

6. The Fruits of the Spirit. This directly comes from Galatians 5:22-23 (NIV): "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance (patience), kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."

Meaning:

Your father taught that living by these fruits unlocks life's blessings and is the mark of a good and godly life.

Final Thought: Keep Going and Live Fully

Life is a journey filled with trials, unexpected turns, and quiet signals that will challenge your comfort. Plans may get off track, and obstacles will test your strength. But with **faith, love, wisdom, and persistence**, you will make it.

Stay positive. Stay determined. Stay faithful.

Embrace the lessons, cherish the miracles, and keep moving forward with courage.

No matter where you go or what you face, remember you are never alone.

God walks beside you. Family surrounds you.

And the wisdom my father shared will always guide you toward your fullest potential and the beautiful life you are meant to live.