

Career Success

WITH FOCUS ON INTERVIEWS



SUNDAY 13 JUNE 2010

VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

Interview: The Gateway To Success or Failure



There are many aspects of career that could be considered, but our focus at this point will be centred on interviews as this is a common gateway to success or failure, not only in career but also in other areas of life.

Interview can be an obstacle to progress or an open door to career success depending on the outcome. Daniel, a slave in a foreign land, was catapulted into significant success following his excellent performance at his interview with the king, who found him ten times better than other candidates. Had he not succeeded that well, his story in captivity could have been completely different from what it was.

In times like these when most job adverts are usually inundated with many applications from equally qualified and capable candidates, it is normally the interview process that is used to decide who to offer the job. Sometimes it may not be the most qualified candidate

that gets the job, but the candidates who interviews well. It is therefore important that everyone who intends to make career success brushes up his / her interview skills so as to make the most of life.

The generic principles shared in newsletter can be adapted for success in various interview situations, including such as:

- 1 Students searching for work experience placements.
- 2 Those finishing school and looking for places with their higher education.
- 3 Those looking for their first job after graduation.
- 4 Those wanting to change job.
- 5 Those seeking promotion for career progression.

Whatever the reason for the interview, it is good not to lose sight of the fact that the outcome can make or mar one's changes for career success.

It is also important to realise that not all interviews are formally conducted. A lot of informal interviews routinely take place through avenues such as a chat during / over:

- 1 Tea,
- 2 Drinks
- 3 Meal
- 4 A picnic
- 5 Dating
- 6 And lots of other similar settings.

From these informal chats, information are obtained, opinions sampled and conduct assessed that gives rise to decisions that could result in business partnerships, long term relationships such as friendship or marriage and other similar opportunities.

Whether formal or informal, interviews hold the key to present and future happiness or sadness - and therefore need to be taken very seriously and carefully.

Even as we prepare for career interviews, we must not forget the interviews of life, and particularly at the Great White throne (Revelations 20:11), which will determine ones fate in eternity. God's word clearly tell us in Romans 14:12 "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God". The question is what will you answer God on that day? And will your answer qualify you for an eternity in heaven or in hell?

Supernatural Determination

Many people fail in life, not because of the lack of skills or opportunities but due to the



absence of determination to persevere to the end. This message is aimed at showing you how to succeed in your career, business and in everything you do, through supernatural determination.

A lot of Christians just give up in life when things get tough because they lack supernatural determination. You need to believe in The Holy Spirit for you to have the supernatural determination working in you. There are five things you need to know that will not only move you from hesitation to supernatural determination but also enable you to stay there. You need supernatural determination in today's marketplace and in everything you put your hand to.

A lot of people have broken down, faltered in theory, are exhausted or just given up because the spirit of hesitation came upon them. The bondage of bondage of hesitation can be removed through the Spirit of determination.

Imagine if you were operating in a system where the possibility of giving up, giving in and walking away did not exist at all. Your attitude and approach to things in such a situation would be akin to manifesting the Spirit of supernatural determination. Even where circumstances are not as described above, you can still approach the situation with the spirit of supernatural determination - i.e. Living a lifestyle where giving up or walking away does not exist.

Most people today simply operate according to the dictates of their circumstances rather than in supernatural determination.

This has the potential of failure due to lack of faith. It is important to believe so that God can work through us.

God wants us to have high achievement in life for his glory. How many times do we get caught up in a conversation, in a job interview or even in a market place and the next thing we know we are tempted to give up. A giving up life says, "I can't do this anymore." However, with God's supernatural determination in and around you, the thought of giving up just does not exist.

With supernatural determination everything is spiritual, without the power of the Holy Spirit, everything is limited and done in the power of the flesh. You are restricted and when things start going against you, you say "Oh, I can't do this anymore"; whereas God promises in Romans 10:13 **"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."** Call upon God today and everything will start coming together perfectly. God can do more in one breath than you can do in a lifetime of 24/7 effort. If you are struggling today to find a career or to open a business, you need a dose of supernatural determination. Your heavenly father believes in you.

So, what do we need to do in order to move from natural to supernatural determination:

1. Shift your perspective - you need to shift your per-

spective from the natural to believing in the Holy Spirit. You need to believe in the Lord, you need to believe in the unseen power of God. **"While we**



look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18). That is when the Lord works through you and things begin happening for you that even surprises you. With God's invisible power, you have more choices and open doors; you overcome all obstacles and you have more solutions. The invisible power of God gives you advantage over other people and you find solutions other people can't. God opens doors that you can't even knock on. Challenges become opportunities as restrictions and barriers melt away **"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippines 2:13).**

2. Shift your focus - you need to shift your focus from the horizontal to the vertical and connect your-



self with God. The moment you first realise that your success works from a vertical power, everything changes. **“Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:2).** Focus on God pouring his faith on you, showering you with blessings and call for prayer. Ask God to fill you with faith, just say “God, fill me with faith because I am at the end of mine,” and suddenly you will be filled with confidence.

3. **Break the actions down** – Break your actions down and do not get discouraged by a long “to do” list. God had a seven day plan. He created everything in six days and rested on the seventh. We need to do the same, break everything down, step 1, step 2, 3 and so on. **“For precept must be upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little and there a little” Isaiah 28:10.** That’s

breaking down step by step, which enables you to go all the way.

4. **Write a pledge to God** – write down a pledge to God that you are not going to give up on your career because it is His power that is going to make it happen. It is the invisible power that will bring you success. Write down the pledge and put it in your bible – for frequent reminder and you will see the power of the Holy Spirit soak it to fulfillment.

5. **Keep your sight on the end** – Don’t worry about what is happening around you. Don’t worry about all the challenges and storms, just keep your sight on the end. Just imagine Jesus at the finish line welcoming you home. It’s the destination that is God’s glory. It’s the destination that is going to bring glory to him. **“He who stands firm till the end shall be saved” (Matthew 24:13).** You should never give up. Have supernatural determination



and things will be easier for you.

So let go off the hesitation. Believe in supernatural determination and God will open doors for you, in your career, studies and in everything you do. Expect God to give you salvation, direction and open doors. Do not wish for it, expect it, and you will realise it.

Necessary Preparations Before The Interview Day

Going for an interview can be likened to going into war. Your objective is to win. To this end, the better you prepare the more chance you have of being successful.

To start with, you need to know where you are, where you are going and how you are going to get there. You need to know what traps and pitfalls there are along the way and how to scale over them - hence the need for diligent planning and preparations.

In these competitive times, when qualifications often assume secondary importance, to succeed at interview, you must be able convince the interviewers that you are the best candidate for the job. You can achieve this by showing the interviewers that you know about their organisation, the job, how to do the job and that you are the best person for the

role. This can be achieved through preparations such that you are able to present yourself in a cool, calm, collected manner but not too cocky! This is easier said than done. The following guidelines should help you to achieve this:

1. Analyse your Curriculum Vitae (CV) and relate it to the requirements in the job advert. Some questions may be asked based on information in your CV, written application and / or the job advert. Failure to answer them well can give wrong



impression about your authenticity and / or suitability for the job role.

2. Do some research about the employer. This might impress the interviewer that you are not just writing applications in desperation but are really keen in getting the job. Information about the employer may be readily available from Internet, library, leaflets and other sources.
3. Prepare to arrive at the interview location on time by planning your journey and knowing how long it will

take you to get there. A trial run is not a bad idea. It is very discourteous to be late and it really annoys most people, so you are not going to get off to a good start by arriving late. Early arrival also helps you to compose yourself as well as make a few final checks on your appearance (e.g. in the lavatory) before the interview.

4. Prepare to create a good first impression. It is a generally accepted fact that decision can be made within the first few moments. The first few seconds at the interview are crucial, so think carefully about how your dressing, body language, handshake, demeanour, perfume, personality etc. will help you create a winning first impression. Neatness, cleanliness and suitable dress code appropriate to the job type all contribute to the image created, and feeds into the first impression. As a rule of thumb, it is always a good idea to “dress above the rest” at the interview so as to make a special impression, but steer clear of bright outrageous “cartoon character” styles. Avoid body odours whether from sweating or from strong perfumes.

5. Consider whether it would be appropriate to confirm in writing the interview arrangements prior to the date of the interview.

Some employers may see this as a sign of courtesy, manners, initiative and attention to details. This may also give you opportunity to provide vital information (e.g. documents) that the interviewer may wish to see in advance.

6. Have a good night sleep the night before your interview. If the interview is in the morning, eat your evening meal earlier than usual and go to bed a bit earlier. Avoid seasonings such as garlic or curry that are capable of giving off strong odour for up to 24 hours after eating. Also have a good breakfast in



the morning at a reasonable time to allow your body chance to digest the food prior to the start of the interview.

7. You need maximum concentration when you are called into the interview room. Remember that first impression counts! Look the interviewer in the eye and smile pleasantly. Shake hands in a firm professional manner, but do

not over do it. At the same time give a greeting of the sort "Hello, very pleased to meet you!" It is good manners to wait to be offered a seat before you sit down. Decide whether to accept or decline a drink, if offered.



8. Be calm, relaxed and control your nerves by focusing and controlling your frame of mind completely on the interview. Place your hands on your laps to avoid awkward shaking.
9. Place your handbag or briefcase on the floor to avoid dropping or tipping over.
10. Have some tissue paper or a handkerchief accessible in case of sneezing or runny nose.

IN A NUTSHELL - PREPARATION TIPS

DAYS BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- As a Christian commit everything unto God. He can fight the battle for you. (2 Chronicles 20:17)

- Cover yourself by the previous blood of Jesus
- Get prepared by putting on the entire armour of God, (Ephesians 6:11,13)
- Pray against powers of darkness that may hinder you from getting the job.
- Give yourself time to re-search about the job.
- Read literature.
- Contact relevant people.

NIGHT BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- Ensure you have gathered all relevant documents to present at the interview.
- Sleep early so you will be fresh for the interview.
- Prepare clothes, relevant to the dressing code.
- On the day of the interview, ensure you have eaten enough.

AT THE INTERVIEW

- During the interview listen attentively, you can ask the panel to repeat the question
- If you do not have the answer immediately, offer to find out and provide it later, if it is allowed by the interviewers.
- Maintain regular eye with the interviewer whose question you are answering, but avoid staring.

Performance At The Interview

You have come thus far; arrived at the interview location and have been welcomed into the interview room. You have been offered a seat and the interview is about to start. Yes, it is true that you have come thus far, but you are still at the beginning stages of the interview, so do not let down the guard but rather focus on performing well at the interview. The term **"life is a stage and you're on it"** has never spoken truer than at a job interview. At any interview you are the one that needs to put on a good performance. The following guidelines can help you to achieve this:

1. Sell your self throughout the interview time by projecting the right image. Your main aim now is to convince the interviewers (who may well be total strangers to you) to believe in you and your capability to excel in the job. There are many qualities the interviewer is going to be looking for in their ideal candidate. These may encompass qualifications, experience, you as a person and the way that you relate with others. Also they will consider your previous employment history, your enthusiasm towards your career, along with many other traits. The above are a few of the areas to think

about. They are all inter-linked and if you can employ all of them at the interview stage you are well on your way to getting that new job.

2. Maintain an enthusiastic outlook. This will be demonstrated by your facial expressions, body language and the way you answer questions. A one word answer to questions may not really look very enthusiastic. On the other hand if you answer the question as deeply and precisely as you can, and with liveliness and appropriate illustrations it may reflect enthusiasm. The key is to make your interviewers interested in you and what you have accomplished. Let them see that you are passionate about everything you do and that you will be enthusiastically dedicated to your new job should they decide to employ you.
3. Demonstrate confidence and competence to your interviewers. The more confident you are the more chance you will have of getting the job. These can be demonstrated by being positive in your answers and



letting the interviewers see that you know your stuff. Remember that positive people are great assets to an employer as they give off positive vibes and good vibrations that nearly always rub off on other employees, with the result that it creates a happy, proactive, enthusiastic work force which ultimately creates a better working environment and more efficient team. If you can demonstrate this quality to your interviewer at interview stage you will definitely impress them.

4. Watch your body language and let it collaborate (rather than nullify) your verbal expressions. Interviewers often take body language more seriously than spoken words.
5. Observe the “Dos” and “Don’ts” for successful interview - some of which are listed below:

Do:

- a) Smile as frequently as possible (especially when you are asked a question and respond to the person who has asked the question) but don’t overdo it!
- b) Keep your hands in your lap; don’t wave them around all over the place.
- c) Keep eye contact at all times (but don’t stare out your interviewer). If there is more than one interviewer, flick your eye contact from person to person.
- d) Be articulate and listen

carefully to each question before giving your answer.

- e) Keep calm and don’t panic!

Don’t:

- a) Cross Your Arms: It makes you look defensive.
- b) Sit on the edge of your seat.
- c) Mess with your face or play with your jewellery or hair.
- d) Rock on the seat.
- e) Interrupt when being asked a question. Remember that nobody likes to be interrupted, and the interviewer may feel that his / her question is more important than your answer.
- f) Give one word answers (unless the question requires it).

Answering Interview Questions

Your potential new employer is looking for a candidate that can do the job and will fit into his or her organisation. Chances are that the successful candidate will be expected to be a team player who can listen and give enthusiastic and positive input into their daily work life. The employer will try to evaluate the suitability of each candidate by how they answer questions. It is therefore important to try and answer all the questions posed. Try and keep your answers brief and precise, but not “yes” and “no” answers. If you are asked a specific question that requires you to provide an example of how you have dealt with a situation then give an



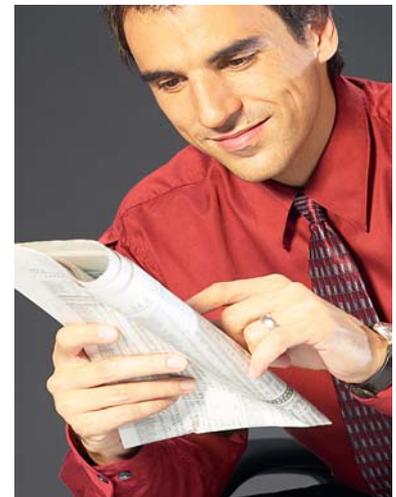
example that makes your achievement stand out. Inevitably there may be times when you run out of steam and these moments can be quite frustrating, so just sit back and relax and take a few seconds to compose yourself before you deliver your answer to the question. Listen attentively and patiently to the question before attempting to answer. The ability to listen without interruption will make a good impression!

It is not practicable to explore all possible questions that can be posed at an interview as these would differ depending on the interview panel members, the organisation, the type of job and other factors. For example, some of the questions posed to a nurse will be different to those posed to a teacher, an engineer, a University Lecturer, a medical doctor, a dentist, an artist, a shop assistant, a cleaner, an astronaut, an Information Technology consultant, etc. The key principle for coming up with “a perfect” answer is knowing what the interviewer is looking for by asking that question. In some cases (e.g. hypothetical cases) identifying what the interviewer is looking for may simply be a matter of intelligent guesses, except where it is otherwise obvious (e.g. specific technical questions that tests knowledge of certain procedures or disciplines).

The secret to giving perfect answers is repeated practice using potential interview questions. It is a good idea to do practice interviews with your colleagues, friends or relations and get feedback on your performance and areas of improvement. Why not have a go using the following questions as well as other ones that you come up with. Try to ascertain what the interviewers may be looking for from each of these questions before advancing an answer. At the end, evaluate the appropriateness of the answer you gave in relation to what you think the interviewer was looking for. If you have opportunity, get a second opinion from a friend, colleague, relation, etc. Thereafter, have a go again in providing a better answer. Repeat the process till you are confident that you have come up with a perfect answer to the question. As part of the preparation process, write down the answers to each question as that can help in the final revision for the interview. Hints are provided to some of the questions below, but do not rely on them as they may not be 100% accurate in all situations. Remember the adage that **“one man’s meat is another man’s poison”**. Therefore, an answer that may be perfectly acceptable to one interviewer may be considered unacceptable by another. Simply use the hints as a rough guide for the practice, or ignore them if you think they may not be applicable to your situation. A few of possible practice questions are listed below:

1. Tell me about yourself (Hint: do not start rambling. Try to make the answer relevant to the job you are applying for. If you are not sure what aspect of you the interviewer is interested in, you could ask a question like “What would you like to know about me?”)
2. What is the most enjoyable part of your current job? (Hint: The interviewer may be checking on your attitude to mundane or repetitive tasks. Be careful what you say).
3. Tell us about the biggest challenge you have ever faced in your career? (Hint: Pick a challenge where you have been successful and explain how you overcame it and what the outcome was).
4. Why do you want to leave your present job? (Hint: a positive answer e.g. career development can give you better chance of success).

5. What is your present boss like? (Hint: this may be a trick question aimed at assessing your loyalty, working relationship and attitude to authority).
6. What do you think this job entails?
7. What made you apply for this job and why do you want it? (Hint: note that salary is not the most important reason that the company wants to employ you. They are looking for someone that can add value to the company. Therefore focus the answer on what benefits you can give to the company rather than on what you will get from the company).
8. What qualities do you think you can bring to this job position?
9. What do you know about this organisation?
10. How long would you expect to work for this organisation?
11. Where do you see yourself in five years time? (Hint: this may be checking on your goals, drive, ambition, motivation and aspirations).
12. What motivates you?
13. What is your greatest strength?
14. What is your biggest weakness?
15. What would your work colleagues say about you?
16. How would your current boss describe you as?
17. What would your friends say about you?
18. What interests do you have outside of work?
19. What type of books or publications do you like?
20. Are you a good leader?
21. Are you a natural born leader?
22. How do you feel about taking direction from your superiors?
23. How do you feel about carrying out mundane or repetitive work?
24. How well do you handle criticism?
25. How well do you work within a team environment?
26. Are you good at getting the best out of your team?
27. How do you deal with interpersonal problems within your team?
28. You have only been with your current employer for a very short time - why do you want to leave?
29. What part of your job do you dislike the most?
30. If you were starting out again in your career what decisions would you make differently?



31. Have you attended other interviews as well as this one?
32. What do you think about the war in Afghanistan, the new Prime Minister, the President of xyz country (or something else that has current social political bearing)?
33. What sort of decisions do you find the most difficult to make?
34. What do you think of your existing company?
35. What is your current salary?
36. What salary would you be expecting, for this position?
37. How well do you work in a stressful environment?

Towards the end of the interview, it is normal for the interviewers to ask if you have any question that you want to ask them. It is not mandatory that you ask questions, but if you want to ask, here are a few examples that can give you an idea of how to frame your question:

1. Will I be working in a department or in an area on my own?
2. Who else is in the department and what do they do?
3. What training will I need and how will I be given this?
4. Do you train in house or use external courses?
5. To whom am I responsible?
6. Which members of staff are responsible to me and what are their roles?
7. Is this a new position and if so why has it been created?
8. If it is an existing position, why has the previous person left the post?
9. What are the opportunities for promotion?
10. When would you be looking for the successful candidate to start?
11. Are you interviewing many people for this position?
12. When will you let me know if I am to be offered the post?

Types of Interviews And Selection Methods

There are many types of interviews and job selection techniques in use today, each having its own unique features and place. The overall objective of each is to sift out some candidates and facilitate the selection of the right person for the job. Sometimes a combination of these may be used for one job. Usually the employing organisation will inform the candidates the types that will be used. A few of these types are summarised below with a view to enabling you understand them and prepare adequately to excel:

TELEPHONE INTERVIEW

Telephone interview is often used where the job may entail working in a call centre and the

emphasis is on how well you perform on the telephone. It can also be used where the interviewer is trying to shortlist candidates in a quick manner.

In a telephone interview, the interviewer (which may be the employer or a recruitment agency who has been contracted to conduct this on behalf of the company) telephones you and chats with you over the phone to judge your telephone skills. Depending on the employer, you may or may not be told that you will be having a telephone interview. Telephone interviews should be treated as any other and it is a good idea to make notes as you go along as they can be useful in any follow-on face to face interview, prior to final selection. Also, if you have to contact the organisation before or after the interview, in relation to the job advert, treat this as informal telephone interview - as the impression you create can contribute to the final decision.

ONE TO ONE INTERVIEW

This is common in small companies where the owner may interview the candidates on a one to one basis and make job offers.

SEQUENTIAL INTERVIEW

This works by each candidate being interviewed by a series of different people from different sections of the organisation. Chances are that each interviewer will have different questions but there may be some overlap so you might find yourself answering some questions twice! At the end, the interviewers will compare their notes and make decision.

PANEL INTERVIEW

A panel interview is where two or more interviewers, one of whom will be the chairperson, sit in on the meeting. Always try and answer each question posed by each member of the panel back to the individual who asked the question, whilst occasionally glancing at the other interviewers present, so it would not give impression that you are ignoring them.

PSYCHOMETRIC TESTING

Psychometric testing is normally used for initial sifting of candidates - often prior to a face to face interview. It may consist of one or more examination style tests (often multi-choice questions) aimed at ascertaining how you think. Generally, psychometric tests are split into four areas and can include one or all of the following; An Ability Test, A Personality Test, An Aptitude Test and Motivational Test. The ability test assesses your overall general ability, the personality test assesses your personality type, the aptitude test tests the skills you have that are specific to areas of the job that you are applying for and the motivational test is aimed at finding out what motivates you. There are plenty of information and examples of psychometric tests on the Internet. You need to prepare for these just in the same way you would for an examination.

ASSESSMENT CENTRES

This is another method that some employers use, usually along with other methods, in the se-



lection process. Assessment centres administer tests that will mostly likely involve some form of practical work or activities that require interaction with other candidates, either in small groups or the entire group but all under the observation of the assessors. The aim is to assess how well you interact with others to solve a common problem. It also assesses your communication, team-working, negotiation and leadership skills. The key thing to remember is that you are under scrutiny by your assessors for each and everything you do and say whilst you are carrying out your tasks, and this will form the basis for their selection. Having an idea of the type of qualities that you are being assessed on could help you to perform better.

SECOND INTERVIEWS

This is often used for final section of two or more strong candidates or to enable other senior managers in the organisation to assess their suitability prior to final appointment. It is important not to get complacent but to thoroughly prepare and give it your very best, keeping professionalism at the forefront of your mind throughout the interview.

After The Interview



At the end of the interview, you will want to stand, pick up your briefcase or handbag and then shake hands with the interviewer - again, in a firm but not grip wrenching manner. Thank the interviewer for the time that they have afforded to you, say goodbye in a nice smiley manner and leave the room. Some interviewers may escort you out onto the main floor; others may see you out of the building, but whichever, try and remain fully professional till you are completely out of their sight. Avoid any awkward mannerism while leaving, so as not to cancel any good impression they may have had of you. Remember that the inter-

viewers may not have made their final decision yet and that the job is not yet yours until you have signed on the dotted line!

Completion of the interview may give you warm feelings of having jumped this obstacle; but there may still be a few more things to do while waiting for the interview results, including:

1. Some think that a short letter of thanks to the interviewer is going to give the impression that you have manners; that you really have appreciated the time given to you; that you are a professional person who has good and upstanding morals and that you want to stand out from the crowd to prove that the job is really important to you. Some may feel that it is an overkill. You need to assess the situation yourself and decide whether to send a letter or not. If you decide to send a letter, make it brief and straight to the point and use first class mail.
2. Next you may want to debrief, document and evaluate your experience at the interview (including all the interview questions and the answers you gave), while it is still fresh in your



mind, as these could prove very useful in preparing for future interviews. Try and analyse the whole interview as best as you can - jotting down relevant points you can come up with or ways in which you can improve your general technique for the future. If you don't jot them down within a day or so you will forget some of the key points, so even if you only have a scrap piece of paper write them on it; you never know when they may become useful.

3. Once you have got the job remember to thank God for the success. Read the contract carefully and confirm to the employer within the stipulated timeline whether you want to accept it or not.

Programme Schedule

- a) 13.15—13.30 Opening Prayer and Song**
- b) 13.30—13.45 Worship and Introduction**
- c) 13.45—14.00 Supernatural Determination**
- d) 14.00—14.15 Necessary Preparations Before The Interview Day (+ In a Nutshell...)**
- e) 14.15—14.30 Worship / Testimonies**
- f) 14.30—14.45 Performance At Interview**
- g) 14.45—15.00 Answering Interview Questions**
- h) 15.00—15.15 Worship / Announcements**
- i) 15.15—15.30 Different Types of Interviews and Selection Methods (+ After The Interview).**
- j) 15.30—16.00 Questions And Answers**
- k) 16.00—16.05 Song, Benediction and Close**

**“Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth”
(3 John 2).**

*God Has Spoken Good
Concerning Us, Come
Thou With Us And We
Will Do Thee Good!*

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