

HORIZONS UNLIMITED

Pastor Sarah W. Utterbach

REDEEMING LOVE CHRISTIAN CENTER

Insights For
Each Day

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Insights For Each Day

A ministry of
Sarah W. Utterbach



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All scripture references are taken from *The King James Version*, unless otherwise noted.



The passages in this devotional are drawn from words the Lord has spoken to me in my daily fellowship with Him. I know they are divinely inspired because of what Jesus said in John 10:27: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow me."

More than 20 years ago, I was prompted by this verse to begin to train myself to be able to distinguish the voice of the Lord from all other voices. Since Jesus said that as one of His sheep, I would hear His voice, then I began to expect to hear Him. When He said, "I know them," I concluded that those who know me speak to me. And, the better we know each other, the more often we talk. So I decided to cultivate such togetherness with the Lord by beginning each day with Him, before the clamor of the day had a chance to begin.

Jesus stated that His sheep "follow" Him. To know Him became more than a mere suggestion—it became my desire, resulting in a way of life. I no longer want to walk any other way with anyone else. Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life I pursue.

As you begin this devotional, wherever you may start to read, make Jesus your way, make Him your truth, and make Him your life.

Precious Father, please take these words and seal them in the hearts of each reader desiring to have You reveal Yourself to them. May You, precious Holy Spirit, take each entry and expand it and increase it in the hearts of the hungry ones.

I sow this book into the lives of millions to be encouraged long after I am gone, for them to experience You in a very personal way, on a daily basis.

My desired harvest is that lives will be changed, souls will be saved, and that every victim will become victorious.

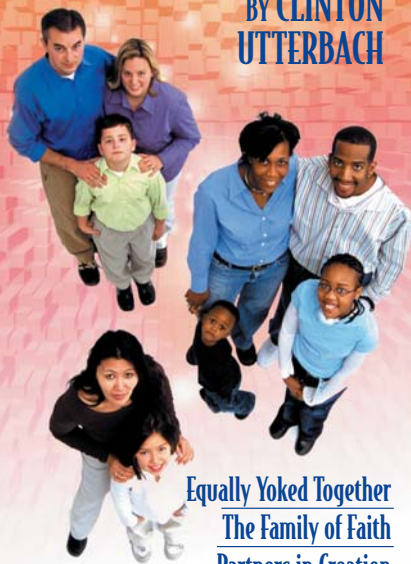
Give them this day as their daily bread Your words, which will make them free. Feed them, dear Lord, as You did me, a daily supply so that they will return for a new daily requirement to keep us both sustained and maintained for Your glory, in Jesus' Name.

His Joint Heir,
Sarah W. Utterbach

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**FROM TAPPAN ZEE BRIDGE
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TRAIN INFORMATION

There is no weekend train service to Nanuet. During the week there is commuter train service only, which travels from Nanuet in the morning and to Nanuet in the afternoon. For more information, call (201) 762-5100.

Schedule of Services

If you are ever in the area of Redeeming Love Christian Center, we invite you to attend our regularly scheduled services.

SUNDAY

Sunday Church School9:00 a.m.
Worship Service10:30 a.m.
Communion
 (1st Sunday of
 each month)10:30 a.m.
Baptismal Service
 (1st Friday of
 each month)7:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY

School of the Bible7:30 p.m.

FRIDAY

Youth Fellowship7:30 p.m.
Prayer Service7:30 p.m.

*Nursery facilities are available for
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How This Devotional Came To Be

Dear Reader,

The devotional you now hold in your hand was 22 years in the making. Or, perhaps, the real fact of the matter is that *I* was in the making for 22 years in order to be able to bring this devotional to you.

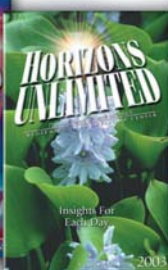
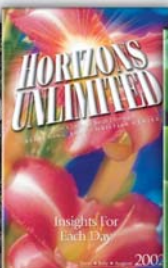
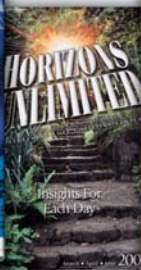
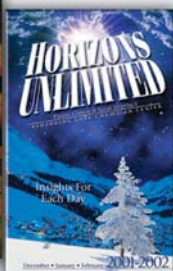
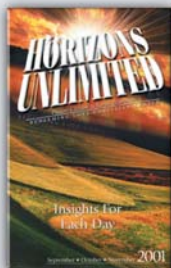
In 1979, I observed in the life of a friend a devotional practice that seemed unusual to me. Every day, my friend would walk into an open field across the parking lot from her office. There she would sit down on a rock to pray and write in what appeared to be a notebook or journal. After several weeks of watching this odd ritual, I wondered, *What is she writing down?* Finally, when the opportunity presented itself, I asked her and she said, "Oh, I'm just writing down what I hear the Spirit of God speak to my heart while I pray."

God speaks to people? I thought.

The concept left me both baffled and intrigued. I determined right then and there that I was going to start taking pen and paper into my times of prayer and devotion. I wanted to know if God would show up and speak to me, too. What I discovered was that not only did God show up to speak to me, but He had been there, *waiting for me* to listen, all along.

Not long after that, I heard a minister make a statement that marked me indelibly. His words forever altered the way I would both approach and present the Word of God from that day forward. Before he delivered his message, this man prayed, "Father, don't let the people just hear what I'm saying. Let them hear what You are saying to them *about* what I'm saying." Instantly, I recognized the distinction.

I realized that although every person present in the room that day would hear the



minister speak the same identical words, the Spirit of God would reveal and emphasize various truths in unique ways to each one of us, based upon our own individual needs and levels of understanding. That realization—coupled with my newly developed practice of writing down what God would speak to my heart by His Spirit and through His Word—transformed my life completely. It also gently propelled me into a degree of fellowship and intimacy with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit that I never dreamed was possible for me to enjoy.

The purpose of this devotional is not only to share the fruit of those times of fellowship with you, but also to let you know that the same intimacy with God is available to you as well. You *can* hear the voice of the Spirit of God. But, first, you must recognize that He does indeed want to speak to you. And He will!

During His earthly ministry, Jesus—the Son of the Living God, the Word of God made flesh—said, “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life” (John 6:63). Jesus also said that the words He spoke were not His own—meaning that they did not originate from His own intellect. Rather, they were inspired words, words given to Him by the Father. That lets us know two things: Whatever the Father speaks to us individually will be consistent with what He has spoken to His people collectively, and whatever words He speaks to our hearts personally will be just as Spirit-born and life-giving as His words that are

written in the Scriptures.

Furthermore, we find that not only do we experience comfort, correction, and instruction in what God speaks and illuminates to us personally, but we also discover key elements of His great and unique design for our individual lives.

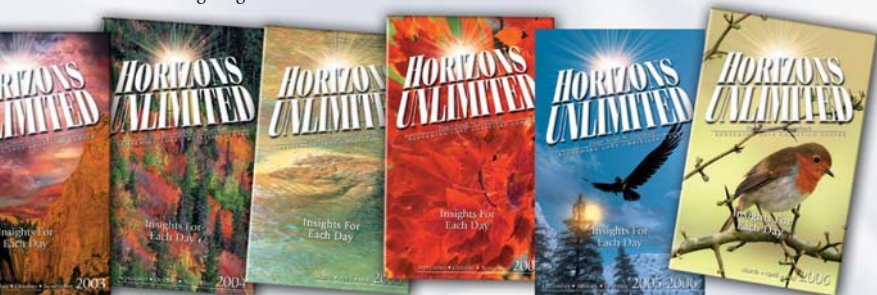
To know one’s individual purpose is the ultimate insight from God. It is divine insight or spiritual revelation which flesh and blood cannot make known to you. Divine insight is beyond the reservoirs of man’s intellect. But it is not difficult to tap. The will and wisdom of God are as near and as available to you as your own breath *if* you will simply acknowledge Him, come to Him, ask with expectancy to hear, and then...listen.

I encourage you to open your heart and allow the Spirit of God to speak to you about your own life and needs. And as you read the following devotional passages and excerpts of what He has spoken to my heart, I pray that you do more than merely read the words I have written on the page. I pray that you hear what He is speaking to you through them, and then embark upon your own journey with Him into the discovery of all the many wonderful and exciting things the Father has planned for your life.

Keep looking up; Jesus is expected!

His Joint Heir,

Sarah W. Utterbach
Sarah W. Utterbach



You Are My Salvation

Precious Father,

I thank you that the shadows of eternal banishment from you are forever departed from me. Your comfort to me has replaced your anger with me.

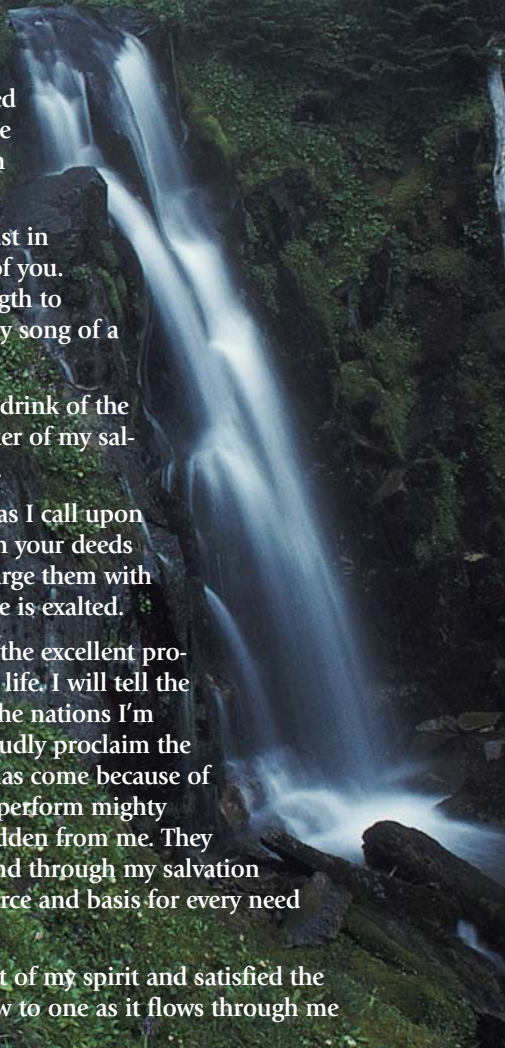
You are my salvation. My trust in you has eradicated my fear of you. You, Lord God, are my strength to accomplish all things and my song of a joyful heart.

Therefore, I will continually drink of the refreshing springs of the water of my salvation with joy unspeakable.

Daily I will give you thanks as I call upon your name in making known your deeds among the people. I will charge them with remembering that your name is exalted.

I will praise you in song for the excellent provisions offered to me in this life. I will tell the world about this. I will tell the nations I'm blessed. For my voice will loudly proclaim the joy that is in my heart that has come because of your presence within me to perform mighty exploits which were once hidden from me. They are now revealed to me in and through my salvation which has become the resource and basis for every need of this life.

You have quenched the thirst of my spirit and satisfied the desire for living water to flow to one as it flows through me to others.



Grace for Grace

John 1:16 (KJV)—*And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.*

It appears from this verse that what has been given to us is what we are to dispense to others. I suspect your head tells you at times that you just can't do a particular thing. I get the same message. Well, it is a lie straight from hell, so renounce it with every fiber of your being.

Through Jesus Christ we are complete. Through the same Jesus, we are partakers of His fullness. I assure you He is lacking nothing from the Father. Since you are His, if you have received Him, nothing is lacking in you either.

Reread that verse. It said, "grace for grace." To me that means I am a recipient of the Father's grace and His grace was given to me to extend the same grace to others.

That is not easy to the flesh because all of us can offer a reason or two why we should not have to "tolerate that situation or that person any longer." But His grace in you says, "I have given you grace for every situation and task that looms on the horizon, as well as for the one that came galloping up to your door uninvited."

What does grace for grace require of us? It makes me ask myself, "What would Jesus do?" If then He would respond in a particular way, we have no choice but to do the same.

"But why?" you ask. Because if Jesus would do it, then you have the assurance that if you do the same thing you will be pleasing to God our Father. Jesus always did what was pleasing to the Father. He did not displease Him even once in anything—ever. And we must emulate His obedience in all things.

This is how it works! Titus 2:14 reads, "Who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

Therefore, if you desire to do that which is good and your passion is to right life's wrongs and heal life's hurts, then you are eligible for God's grace: grace for salvation and all that encompasses, but also grace to perform every good thing possible.

It's all in being zealous, not slothful, lazy, or half hearted. Grace for grace is for those excited and thrilled to do good to and for others. Do you get the message?

Harness Your Tongue

Proverbs 18:19 (KJV)—*A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle.*

Protect and guard the words you speak—especially words you speak to friends. When you speak hurtful words, walls go up that separate the best of friends. The Bible said it's easier to conquer a fortified city than scale walls built by words that shouldn't have been spoken.

The trouble with negative words is that they remain in the air and continue trying to accomplish what you sent them to do. We may try to "call them back," but I'm not sure we can, which is why I've learned to watch my mouth. Often people will more readily forgive something done to them than something said to them.

After all, since death and life are in the power of the tongue, I suspect that a wounded friend wonders, "If you have the ability to speak life to me, why are you speaking death when you call yourself my friend?" It's hard to win these friends back because they don't understand why you wounded them, and they don't know what might trigger even more hurtful words. Of course the Bible says that those who love the law should never be offended (Psalm 119:165), but everyone hasn't arrived at that state of maturity.

Certainly, we bridle a horse's tongue to train it, so maybe some of us should fit our tongues with a new harness if ours shows signs of wear and tear. Even the best fitting foundation garment needs to be replaced after much use.

One of the greatest lessons I learned in life is that words have power to create or destroy. From that point, I was responsible to train my tongue to speak only words that edify people and glorify God.

Frankly, it's not always easy. Our tongues are hooked to our thoughts, and we tend to say what we think. Nevertheless, here's our yardstick: If we wouldn't like something spoken to us, no one else will enjoy hearing it spoken either. Don't spoil an otherwise good relationship with a tongue out of control.

He Takes It From There

John 6:29 (KJV)—*Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.*

Aren't all of us sometimes guilty of what I call the "want to do's"? We always want to *do* something for the Lord, but we often neglect the one thing that is needed: to believe in Him, the One whom He has sent. Therein lies the greatest work to be done, the thing that must make the heart of the Father God happy. I still have "want to do's," but now they are properly channeled unto the ultimate "want to do," which is to do and say what pleases the Creator of this universe, my Father God.

With the Holy Ghost's help, I do not neglect the task placed before me in any area, but there are times when my preference is plain even to me. I feel like the disciples who simply wanted to know from Jesus "what shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" (verse 28).

Surely, He is the One to inquire of. However, His reply is so basic that we often miss it: "Believe on him whom he hath sent." Can it be that easy? Yes! When we begin to believe, our believing on Jesus relieves stress and strain. Anyone who believes on the sent One can stand still and see the foundation of the Lord as well as His salvation, because the Holy Spirit takes it from there.

There is so much more to accomplish for the kingdom, but the truth is that we need to simply believe Jesus is in us as believers and He is looking to see on whose behalf He can show Himself strong. The Holy Ghost stands by for directions to help us toward the next level of achievement.

Please do not compare yourself with anyone. You are one of a kind, yet with the same shortfalls as those who have gone before. Please do not complicate the work of God by waiting for someone to give you yet another project. Can you see that what you have and who you are came as a result of your simply believing on Jesus? At that very moment, the task not only appeared, but the Taskmaster took the pain and suffering away.

Please do not compare yourself with anyone.

How to Gain Honor from God

John 12:26 (KJV)—*If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.*

This verse helps to explain why some in the body of Christ enjoy an abundant life while others appear to barely make it from day to day. Servants never lead their Master; they follow closely behind, observing every deed of their Lord so that they can learn to anticipate His every need, His heart's every desire. A real, committed servant is never far away from his Lord. He and his Lord do not have separate paths and agendas.

God wants to honor us, and He determines to what degree by how we serve His Son. Our little gestures and meager efforts in the flesh are a stench in God's nostrils when we neglect His Son. The way to serve and follow Jesus is to practice His presence, obey His Word, and act on the promptings of His Spirit.

I have had employees who had to be told how to do every detail and never became creative. Then, there were others who studied me so closely that they would just do certain things and later report their deeds to me. They were not reluctant to try something new; neither were they injured if their suggestion or idea was not readily received. They would just go back and come another way until what they offered was received. In the meantime, their creative juices flowed. Why? Because their hearts' desire was to serve and follow; therefore, the Father honored them.

I have been honored to serve and follow certain men and women because they served and followed Jesus Christ. They were the human examples that helped to rid me of any and all excuses to do less than my best.

So often we extend ourselves to the point of abuse to be recognized for a moment by human beings. May I suggest that you reconsider the object of your attention and affection? Always do good to those who are of the household of faith, for in so doing you are also serving the Son of God. Follow anyone who is following Christ and prepare to take your place as one who is honored of the Father. Let me tell you, there is no honor like His honor of His children.

If Jesus Came to Your House

The message in the following poem is one I believe each of us should consider, therefore, I'm sharing it with you. Think about it. What would you do if Jesus came to your house today?

*If Jesus came to your house to spend a day or two —
If He came unexpectedly, I wonder what you'd do.
Oh, I know you'd give your nicest room to such an honored Guest.
And all the food you'd serve to Him would be the very best,
And you would keep assuring Him you're glad to have Him there —
That serving Him in your home is a joy beyond compare.*

*But — when you saw Him coming, would you meet Him at the door?
With arms outstretched in welcome to your heavenly Visitor?
Or would you have to change your clothes before you let Him in,
Or hide some magazines and put the Bible where they'd been?
Would you turn off the radio and hope He hadn't heard,
And wish you hadn't uttered that last loud, hasty word?*

*Would you hide your worldly music and put some hymn books out
Could you let Jesus walk right in, or would you rush about?
And I wonder — if the Savior spent a day or two with you,
Would you go right on doing the things you always do?
Would you keep right on saying the things you always say?
Would life for you continue as it does from day to day?*

*Would your family conversation keep up its usual pace,
And would you find it hard each meal to say a table grace?
Would you sing the songs you always sing and read the books you read,
And let Him know the things on which your mind and spirit feed?
Would you take Jesus with you everywhere you'd planned to go,
Or would you change your plans for just a day or so?*

*Would you be glad to have Him meet your closest friends,
Or would you hope they'd stay away until His visit ends?
Would you be glad to have Him stay forever, on and on,
Or would you sigh with great relief, when He at last was gone?
It might be interesting to know the things that you would do,
If Jesus came in person to spend some time with you.*

—Anonymous

How I Got Over!

Deuteronomy 1:31 (NLT)—*"And you saw how the Lord your God cared for you again and again here in the wilderness, just as a father cares for his child. Now he has brought you to this place."*

The longer I live, the more I understand the importance of trusting God and conferring with Him about everything. Why? It's because I can clearly see that the Lord's care for me has carried me to where I am today.

As I thanked the Lord this morning for allowing me to experience this day, I also reminded Him that I only want to accomplish His plan for my life so I can benefit others and bring glory to Him and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I suppose if I have a question for God at this point in my life, it is "What did You see in me that caused You to love me this much?"

Many years ago when my husband and I faced the decision to obey God by quitting our very good jobs and going to Bible school. Then I compare it with this past year, when there were many more opportunities to faint and falter. What I discover is that this past year was a breeze in comparison.

Years ago, I trusted by faith. Now I can also trust by experience. I have experienced tremendous growth in our confidence in God because of the past victories that He has given me.

Where are you today? Do you still have questions? Are you concerned that the good in your life will not continue? Are you anticipating the negative to the point that you are not enjoying the present blessings?

Stop where you are this second and think about it. Did your ingenuity get you to where you are now? No, it did not. God and His love did it, even when you did not trust Him for the health, the peace, and the wealth that you now enjoy. Well, since He did this and more when you didn't know to trust Him, why not make a decision to honor Him by thanking Him and committing to trust Him for your future?

Difficult moments will come, but never stop basking in His present benefits. One day you will be able to see that the difficult moments do not faze you anymore, for you are too busy remembering how you got over, and landed as more than a conqueror.

I Am in a Rut, and I Am Glad

Hebrews 12:13 (KJV)—*And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.*

One translation of the Hebrew word for “path” here is *a path or wagon wheel rut made in the dirt, referring to a course of conduct*. The world calls a rut a “monotonous routine” and strongly suggests that we never allow ourselves to get into one.

Well, I am pleased to announce that I am in a rut and have never been happier. The word “monotonous” means *tediously uniformed or unvarying*. Glory to God! I finally found what I needed all my life, and it is not tiresome or boring.

Matthew 3:3 alludes to the prophecy in Isaiah 40:3, saying, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” Israel had been pardoned of all of her sins, and through the prophet Isaiah God was essentially responding, “Comfort My people and tell Jerusalem that her sad days are over, and I will provide them a straight and smooth highway through the desert” (40:1-8). The “way” John the Baptist was to prepare for the Messiah is the Greek word *hodos*. It is a road which one travels, a journey, a manner of life, or action.

God wants us to follow Him on His path of being tediously uniform and unvarying. James 1:17 says that God has no variation and He doesn’t cast a shadow in the earth by turning. He is light, and light is all that He provides for us: no shadows.

His never-changing Word keeps us marching forward without wavering. We need to conduct ourselves in such a “rut” that those needing help to stay steady with God are healed, cured, caused to grow, and reinstated to take their rightful places in the body. We need them, and they need us to stay on the right path so that we will all be complete.

Good-bye, world. I have found a course of conduct that does not just benefit me but causes others to recover also. Yes, it is tediously uniform to the world, but not to us. It is unvarying, but so is the One I am following; it is the only path to take. The world’s rut is very tiresome and boring, even to them. But we are happy.

I Don't Like It, but I Need It

Hebrews 12:11 (NLT)—*No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it is painful! But afterward there will be a quiet harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way.*

I grew up in an era when parents still spanked their children. My mother was not a criminal because she spanked me. She was training me for a quiet harvest of right living, which I am experiencing today. Of course, I did not find the spankings enjoyable then. No one ever does.

The Bible warned that we would not enjoy discipline. But it doesn't say to discontinue it because it is painful or uncomfortable.

Too often we forget that there is a season called "afterward." Righteousness does not just occur. It is the peaceable fruit that is yielded from the painful training of discipline.

Our flesh will never petition us to be disciplined. It is always selfish, inconsiderate, and in pursuit of what makes it happy. It is never content and satisfied. It has an addiction for more of what it has been allowed to feed on. "Enough" is never a part of its vocabulary.

Undisciplined flesh is a death certificate to its owner. In order to mature, we must allow our spirits to take the lead to master our minds and our flesh.

While my flesh never wants to hear of any type of tribulation, my spirit glories in it because it produces perseverance, and perseverance produces character, and character produces hope.

Why do we need hope? Hope is guaranteed not to disappoint because it is connected to the love of God, which He pours into our hearts by His Holy Spirit while we are experiencing the tribulation. The fruit of perseverance helps to develop our character while we receive this poured-out love of God, a gift that today gives us hope.

Don't expect to enjoy pain and discipline. Expect to enjoy the harvest that it will produce when you accept it as a part of building your character.

Parents and family members, please don't allow your emotions for your children and other family members to blind you to what is best for them. Allow the Spirit of God to help you make the right decisions involving your loved ones. The same people who say, "Don't spank or discipline your children," will be the society that turns the key to lock them up away from trained, disciplined people.

I Have Great Compassion on Him

Jeremiah 31:20 (NIV)—*"Is not Ephraim my dear son, the child in whom I delight? Though I often speak against him, I still remember him. Therefore my heart yearns for him; I have great compassion for him," declares the Lord.*

One of the rough spots in life for mothers and fathers is to find themselves in the position of having to speak against one of their children. When that day first came for me, I found that the best thing to do was to emotionally give back to God the son whom He had given me and in whom I delighted. Because the Lord declared that He would have great compassion for him, and because my compassion was already strained, I perceived that giving him back to the Creator was best for him and for me.

Our Father has shown us in His Word that harvest time comes according to each seed sown. Good seed harvests a reward; negative seed harvests a consequence. One of the most dangerous things believing parents can do is to compromise the Word of God for a child in whom they delight. Compromise will cost parents the respect of others, the anointing of God, and in some instances their very lives.

Now, I am not implying that parents should not forgive their children. All sin and wrongdoing is forgivable, but forgiveness is not automatic.

The Bible speaks of confessing our sins (1 John 1:9). It further states that those who do not confess their sin will not prosper, but those who forsake their sins will obtain mercy (Proverbs 28:13).

Nowhere does the Bible promise to reward us for ignoring or overlooking sin. When our brothers or sisters are overtaken in a fault or are weak in the flesh, we are to work with them for restoration. However, we must remember that the Bible consistently shows us that repentance—asking for forgiveness and forsaking compromising deeds—is an integral part of the healing process.

Dear Father, I am grateful that Your heart yearns for my children. I rejoice that You shall have mercy on them and work Your plan for them in such a way that they find themselves in Your perfect will. Time and faith in Your promises have repeatedly proven to be the great equalizer. I thank You that You are teaching me to be more like You. And because of Your love and mercy towards me, I am getting there.

I Don't Want to Grin and Bear It

Psalms 62:1,5 (NKJV)—Truly my soul silently waits for God; from Him comes my salvation. My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him.

Don't scream if one more person tells you to just "grin and bear it." Know that the Bible does not require us to grin when the darts, the attacks, and the floods happen all at once. A grin can be pasted on any face to cover up the pain that seems unbearable at times.

I choose to smile when someone takes my picture; most of the time I am speaking through my teeth about how grateful I will be when it is over. But once in a while someone snaps my photograph when I am bubbling over with the joy of the Lord. What a difference!

I accept that I am to endure to the end if I want my special crown. I understand that life is not one big vacation. I purpose to keep moving towards my tomorrow. I can live with the routines of life growing stale at times.

However, the ability to "grin and bear it" has to come from within. Otherwise, it is powerless to bring change, to get my train back on track and my ship back on course. As a child of God, I don't intend to let things remain the same in my life. With the help of God I'll fix what I can fix and ignore the nonessentials.

Because Jesus delights to bear my burdens and welcomes every care and concern I bring to Him, I have become quite good at bowling them in His direction, on His lane, at His alley. People who are not in Christ are always expecting. Coming into a personal relationship with Him moves us out of just expecting and into solid hope. People with solid hope know what they are hoping for because they have faith in a never-changing promise stated by a never-lying God.

If you don't want to "grin and bear it," quiet your soul with what He has said to you in His Word. Wait silently for God alone. He is about to visit you. Watch out! A grin is beginning to form on your face because you have hope in His promise to you. It's okay. He loves to see you smile.

God loves to see you smile.

God's Goal for Our Lives

Psalm 105:45 (NLT)—*All this happened so they would follow his principles and obey his laws. Praise the Lord!*

God desires to bless His people, but that is not His ultimate purpose and goal for our lives. He is more concerned about doing what He must to get us to follow His instruction and rules.

Psalm 105 is a chronology of what God did for, with, and to His people to bring them where He wanted them. This chapter tells us who God is and how we should worship Him. It teaches us that the seed of Abraham are the chosen ones and that we must remember what God has done for His people. It talks about the gift of land He gave to the seed, though they were few in number. We learn that He protected them and charged kings of other nations not to touch them. He made the land of Canaan barren and then sent ahead of them Joseph, their deliverer. Using fetters and neck irons, God tested both Joseph's character and his ability to perform his future ministry to God's people.

This chapter should encourage you if you have noticed yourself taking circuitous routes in life. Perhaps some strange and unusual events have occurred in your life that cause you to wonder if God is aware of your situation. He is.

The fact is not that God has been caught by surprise. It is that He is permitting anything necessary to bring us to follow His principles and obey His law.

God's plan is so basic, yet too few of us receive God's goal for our lives. We often plan our lives to attain the lofty ideals of life, but too often we base our standards on something other than God's will for us; then we ignore the prompting of the Spirit to change. This pattern always results in pain and disappointment.

If we would make the right decision each time the Holy Spirit prompted us, we would certainly eliminate some challenges. However, I am not so sure that we would be who we are without a few "neck-iron" experiences.

It is not what we go through that matters; it is what we do in the midst of it and how we end up afterward that really counts. Don't fight against difficulties. You may need them.

I Keep—The Lord Rewards

Psalm 18:23-24 (NKJV)—*I was also blameless before Him, and I kept myself from my iniquity. Therefore the Lord has recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in His sight.*

I get really excited about what I call the “responsibility scriptures.” When I meditate on them, a surge of power and faith is released in me. Why? Because I realize that if God has not given me the power and ability to keep myself from anything, then this verse is a farce and everything written in the Bible is either a joke to me or a joke on me. But I am thrilled to know that His Word is true and that He has given me everything I need to fulfill His requirements.

The other part that excites me is that, in addition to our being responsible, God also is responsible. He is obligated to reward us, to recompense us according to our righteousness, according to the cleanness of our hands in His sight.

God rewards me according to, or by the measurement I set for, the cleanness of my hands. God clearly observes what I am doing, how I am using my hands. He inspects my hands to see if they are sanitary or soiled. He then rewards me by His predetermined scale, which is fair and just.

God does not watch over me to determine my punishment. He is looking to see how, when, and where He can bless and reward me. He is looking for an excuse to bless me.

Make a conscious choice whether you want rewards or consequences in life. Decide from whom you want to receive your reward. Is this rewarder dependable? Has he promised to reward you? Can you fulfill his requirements in order to receive rewards? If you choose rewards versus consequences, then proceed to do what is necessary according to God’s Word to ensure His rewards. He’ll reward you according to what you do. He won’t make you do it, and He will not do it for you. But He will give you everything you need to fulfill His requirements.

Heavenly Father, again I thank You for making serving You so uncomplicated and exciting. Daily as I come to You, You point me in the direction I need to go to please You. When I follow Your directions, You always do good things to bring pleasure into my life, in Jesus’ name.

I Love It When God Speaks

2 Kings 3:16 (NLT)—*And he said, "This is what the Lord says: This dry valley will be filled with pools of water!"*

God never seems to be impressed or moved by adversity, negativity, or impossibility. He simply speaks what brings Him glory and what benefits the people. He has been trying to teach this principle to His people for a very long time. Some of us are acting on it—speaking words that glorify Him and benefit the people—and others are still floundering in intellect and reasoning.

To avoid being disappointed and adversely affecting my faith, I have learned the importance of asking God what I should request of Him before I pray, or what He would have me to speak out before I represent Him. When I do it this way, the words He gives me always come to pass.

The other effective way I have learned to receive from God is simply to listen and react when He speaks a "will be/shall be" statement to or through me. These "will be/shall be" words of the Lord are wonderful and powerful. They are seldom for me personally, yet I benefit from their manifestation. The benefit is often an increase in my confidence and a desire to trust Him even more.

Second Kings 3:17 says, "You will see neither wind nor rain, says the Lord, but this valley will be filled with water. You will have plenty for yourselves and for your cattle and your other animals." This verse teaches me that the "how" of God is not as important as the results.

Think about that. Surely if your Father God promised to provide for you and your animals, He has a plan for your hungry, needy children. Please don't focus on the "dry valley"—perhaps your kitchen cabinet or bank account. Instead, begin to worship God; then listen as He either gives you a word to stand on or simply manifests what you need.

Verse 18 says, "But this is only a simple thing for the Lord, for he will make you victorious...." We have received the victory over negative forces, fortified cities, and anything else that tries to hinder us. God's plan for our lives is available and is "no big thing" to Him.

Learn to listen for the voice of God. You will love what He says.

Identify With Me, or Deny Me

John 15:20 (NKJV)—*"Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also."*

Don't you almost wish this verse had been left out of the Bible? The Greek word here for "greater" does not mean *better*; it means *larger* or *more*. Jesus is saying, "I'm not bigger than you are. We're the same size; and what I can expect from people to cause me to suffer, you can expect also."

It is such a disservice to teach believers that coming to Christ is an opportunity to declare, "I have it made." Oh, we have heaven made, but what does salvation buy us while we're here in the earth?

What I have found since becoming a believer is that I house the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22) and an attack or crisis does not have to throw me into a tailspin. If I can't be recognized as a Christian under pressure and stress, then the hope of glory, Christ's dwelling in me, is questionable.

Every pastor would love to be able to honestly say, "The sheep in my pasture obey me." And every parent would love to say this of his or her children. But in most cases, it just isn't true.

However, I no longer see disobedience as rebellion against me. I have learned that people must first obey Jesus before they will obey their parents or pastors. Carnal believers have not totally submitted their hearts to Christ Jesus. Romans 8:7-8 says, "...The carnal mind is enmity against God.... So then, those that are in the flesh cannot please God." If they neglect to obey Him, they will never obey me.

Father, selling out to You completely allows me to walk in the Spirit, where I am immune to the effects of the world. With Your fruit cultivated in me, I can resist the devil when he tries to cause me to suffer. I can sing praises in the middle of unlawful imprisonment. I can look for Your light when the deepest darkness surrounds me. I can rejoice in the vision of heaven while I joyfully live the realities of earth. I can remain cool in the maze of confusion. I can work at being a Christian and not a carnal believer. I can seek to please You by trusting Your promises to me.

If You Made It, Don't Serve It

Psalm 135:15-17 (NLT)—Their idols are merely things of silver and gold, shaped by human hands. They cannot talk, though they have mouths, or see, though they have eyes! They cannot hear with their ears or smell with their noses.

There is no life in anything not made of God. In the very near future, a human may be able to clone another human; but can he create a heart in the clone to receive Christ? Without a spirit, there is temporary existence but no hope for the future.

Mouths, ears, noses, and eyes were created by God for a purpose. They make us aware of His awesome creation around us, which is good to see, taste, touch, hear, and smell. But none of the physical senses tell us about Him. His Spirit in us is the vehicle for that purpose, and no one except God can provide that.

Cloning is done to provide service to humankind for his pleasure, but cloning cannot bring joy to the heart of God. Anything created with the absence of His Spirit may look and act alive, but it does not have the true life.

Psalm 135:18 reads, "And those who make them are just like them, as are all who trust in them." Humans who make idols are just like the idols they make: sad, uninformed, and useless for the good of humankind and the glory of the Almighty.

The Bible speaks of many gods of the nations around His people, and we know people today still worship other gods. But there is only one God whose name endures forever, whose fame is known to every generation (Psalm 135:13). He is the I Am, the almighty Creator of all things; and He is in love with His creation. He is the one, true, and living God.

The gods of the nations require their followers to sacrifice themselves to prove their reverence. Our God provided the ultimate sacrifice for His people so that they would be equipped to better follow Him.

There is nothing wrong with creating sculptures and painting portraits: Just make sure that you don't worship anything that you can make.

Choose today to return to the One who created you. He has something special for you.

Insight and Understanding

Daniel 9:22 (NIV)—*He instructed me and said to me, "Daniel, I have now come to give you insight and understanding."*

Some things that God has decreed will not be changed, regardless of how much or how long we pray. We see in Daniel 9 that God did not change what was going to be because Daniel prayed. What He did was send a messenger to give Daniel insight and understanding of the future. Today we have the Holy Spirit to do the same thing for us.

I have accepted that there are some things I can change because of my words, but there are others that I have no power to change. I simply want to know the difference.

Insight and understanding remove the fear that often accompanies future events. Most of us do not fear the past and can deal with what's current, but the future sometimes causes our hearts to fail us.

My mother used to say, "Never cross a bridge until you get to it." In other words, deal with a matter when it's present. Many things could occur before then to alter the circumstances, and you may not have to go the way your head is taking you in advance. Why cross a bridge twice when once may be enough?

At times, God will speak to us to prepare us for future events that cannot be changed because they are part of His plan and purpose for the future of humankind. Other times, He alerts us about future events to prepare us to take our authority concerning them. Both revelations come from the Holy Spirit, and He brings us insight and understanding to distinguish between them.

Heavenly Father, I thank You for another day of learning that though You are in control and aware of all things concerning Your people, sometimes You act in Your sovereignty and other times You assign Your offspring to do some things.

Our desire is to grow up spiritually to operate with Your mind, Your compassion, Your interest. May our prayers not be contrary to Your plan for humankind and the future. Help us live in such union with You that nothing takes us by surprise. We believe we receive divine insight and clear understanding of all that we need to know, in Jesus' name.

It Is Wise, Not Size, That Counts

Proverbs 30:24-25 (NIV)—*"Four things on earth are small, yet they are extremely wise: Ants are creatures of little strength, yet they store up their food in the summer."*

I have mixed emotions about ants. I am not thrilled to have them as my houseguests, and I would prefer a picnic without their company. However, because I have watched them plan for their future with such commitment and diligence, I don't like killing them. I always feel that I have destroyed a little bit of wisdom when I have eliminated one of these little ones. I can only justify their death by saying, "If I let them live and establish their provisions for the winter, I will have more ant visitors next summer."

The Bible says that ants are small yet extremely wise. They are creatures of little strength, yet they store up their food in the summer.

The message for me in these verses is to never be concerned about my size but to consistently and systematically work at storing up what I need to sustain me.

Some may say, "That is not trusting God to provide."

I beg to differ. I believe it is, because I am trusting in God, not in my own strength. When I trust Him for what I need, He then gives me the wisdom and the power to stick with the task when others may give up and quit. Although these tasks sometimes appear to be like heaving a loaded car, I have learned to attempt them anyway. And many times, the strength comes once I've put my hands to the task.

Dear Father God, I don't lean to my own understanding, but I acknowledge that You provide me with the wisdom about where the necessary provisions are so that I can find and store them. "Keep falsehood and lies from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the Lord?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God" (Proverbs 30:7-9).

I refuse to consider my size when I think of my future, but I never forget Your size and Your might to meet every need. You, My Father, are wise. I thank You for revealing to me that it is wise, not size, that counts.

Read the Word Daily as Long as You Live

Deuteronomy 17:19 (KJV)—*And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them.*

Another way to put this would be “Read the Word daily so that you may live.” I don’t understand why any Christian, especially a leader, wouldn’t spend quality time in the Bible daily. I am just as mystified at believers saying the Bible is boring. I must be reading a different Bible, for the one I read, regardless of translation, is exciting! I resent having to stop.

I have read the Bible through annually since age thirty-seven, and each year it is as though I never read it before. His Word is new every morning.

God never wanted Israel to have a king besides Him, but He knew when they arrived in the land that God had given them they would desire a king like the nations around them (Deuteronomy 17:14). He said, “Since this will happen, let’s provide some boundaries and guidelines for that king.”

The first requirement was that the person be God’s selection (verse 15). Since God required this for a leader whom He would tolerate, why in some instances do unsaved, ungodly, unholy men and women select a pastor for a church? Jesus alone reserves the right to choose that ministry gift in the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11). It is unscriptural to have men and women deciding who will head up a local assembly.

When the people in churches fail to fast, pray, and wait before the Lord for the next shepherd to be assigned, the popular vote for the person with exciting styling and profiling of God’s message but who is not His choice will result in lots of “mess” in that church. This could explain the adultery and homosexuality in the church, and abandonment of the moral fiber God intended for His people to live by.

I believe the Spirit spoke to me concerning the exposures of pedophilia among leaders in the church. It is a result of a man-made rule that is contrary to God’s plan. He said it is not good for man to live alone (Genesis 2:18). When living alone becomes a requirement in order for one to serve God, those with sincere hearts will find themselves in compromising positions.

Stay in and live the Word, not the dictate of a man or woman.

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What man is he that feareth
the LORD? him shall he teach
in the way that he shall
choose.

His soul shall dwell at ease;
and his seed shall inherit the
earth.

The secret of the LORD
is with them that fear him;
and he will shew them his
covenant.

— Psalm 25:12-14

It Is My Pleasure to Tell

Daniel 4:2 (NIV)—*It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me.*

Anyone reading this statement in Daniel 4:2 could easily conclude that one of God's chosen uttered these words of praise for what God had done. But that is not so. King Nebuchadnezzar, a heathen king who held God's people in bondage, made this bold statement.

Can you see the message in this? If a heathen man could tell the nations of the world, the people of every language, what the Most High God had done for him, what is holding us back? When are we, God's very own children, going to get busy proclaiming with pleasure what our Father has done for us?

I have learned that one way to continue to receive from God is to build Him an altar of praise with my lips from the abundance of my overflowing heart.

I have been privileged to see God do many amazing things in life, but nothing compares to the joy of watching Him get involved in one of my seemingly insignificant concerns. It is a wonderful blessing to realize that He is just as concerned about the little things as He is about the major things that concern me.

The world around us should be saying, "I know that the Spirit of the Holy God is in you, and no mystery is too difficult for you" (see verse 9). When the world's knowledge fails and answers to challenging questions defy their wisdom, they should say to us, "But you can answer because the Spirit of the Holy God is in you" (see verse 18).

Most holy Father, once again I come to You with praise and thanksgiving in my heart and on my lips. Your signs are great, Your wonders are mighty, Your kingdom is eternal, and Your dominion endures from generation to generation. Because of Jesus, You have given Your Holy Spirit to dwell in me and be with me. Therefore, no mystery is too difficult for me, and You will give me answers to every question that I bring to You.

You know my sitting and my rising. Fear has been eradicated from my life, and faith that is pleasing to You is mine because I believe Your Word and trust You implicitly.

March 19, 2006

PASTOR

SARAH W.
UTTERBACH

*Happy
Birthday*

from your
family, friends, and
the congregation of
*Redeeming Love
Christian Center.*

Look Inside for Truth

Isaiah 35:7 (KJV)—*And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes.*

If we saw parched ground becoming a pool, as this scripture describes, we would know that was a miracle. Though this is a metaphor about God's judgment upon the nations, I have used this verse a few times to call forth rain when a drought was threatening our area of the country—and the rain has come each time.

You may be experiencing a seemingly impossible situation this very minute. Please do not consider the problem. Shut down your five physical senses and look inside, for the truth is lying there waiting for faith-filled words to command your rain to come forth.

God wants to fully furnish His children with whatever we need. Lacking necessities should not cause a believer to stumble; it should cause us to rejoice that we don't have to be moved by what we can or cannot see with our eyes.

What did God say? If He said the parched ground shall be a pool, it shall be. This is no more difficult for God than opening blind eyes, unstopping deaf ears, making the lame man leap, or the mute woman sing.

Each of us has been impregnated with God's desire. His desire becomes our vision, and the vision has an appointed time. It will not remain silent or inactive. It will speak truth. Those willing to wait for the spoken words to manifest will discover that they are in covenant with the Almighty, who cannot lie or fail.

I love the written Word of God, but I live for the words He speaks to my heart. We are blessed when we believe, for there shall be a performance (a completion of the act prophesied) of those things that we are told of the Lord.

When God speaks a word to us, its completion is set in motion the moment He speaks it and we believe it.

My Father and my God, I am grateful that You initiate these wonderful messages that sustain me when the world around me shifts and shakes. Nothing is impossible with You, and I thank You that the Holy Spirit can comfort me with the confidence to say, "Be it unto me, according to Your Word, in Jesus' name."

Love and Confidence

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NLT)—*For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.*

God knew that the only way to reconcile us to Him for eternity was to make Jesus a sin offering to provide for us an opportunity to change internally.

Imagine having a valuable, perfect treasure and making it marred and scarred so that it could bring back to you other treasures that were less perfect but just as valuable to you. That is exactly what God did with the treasure of His Son. He let Jesus become sin and be sacrificed on the Cross so that Jesus could make us righteous and bring us back to the Father.

Not only was this act God's ultimate display of love for us, but it was also the ultimate display of His confidence in Christ. God knew that Jesus would willingly become the sacrifice for us.

Knowing this, how can we not feel loved? God loved us enough to send Jesus and make Him a sin offering, and Jesus loved us enough to accept the assignment of becoming that offering.

Humans are wonderful, and you and I may have many good friendships and relationships. However, I seriously doubt that any would offer to do for us what Jesus joyfully did.

Now is the time for us to take a serious look at the relationships we are seeking after. Let us assess the friendships in our lives. What do our friends contribute to help us become better soldiers for the Lord? We must eliminate anyone from our circles who is not working with God to improve us.

This is not the time to have our spiritual energy drained by a bunch of silly, shallow people. Yes, we must pray for them; we must be an example to them. However, we must avoid consistent, personal interaction with them.

We can't spend all of our time rebuking, correcting, and chastising others. Unless we observe someone receiving our words and making necessary changes, it is time for us to move on.

Let us seek a relationship, first, with the One who loved us enough to die for us and, second, with people who strengthen our relationship with Him.

Love Was His Purpose

1 Peter 3:18 (KJV)—*For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.*

This verse grips me every time I read it. As a parent and grandparent, I try to imagine my family loving and respecting me so much that they would submit even to death to bring me the very thing that would give me the greatest joy. I cannot imagine that kind of human love, yet the man Jesus expressed it toward His Father in His death on the cross.

People in the world today do not want to suffer, even when they are guilty. How much more do they exhaust every avenue of appeal if they are innocent?

However, as children of God and representatives of Jesus in the earth, we should be learning the other side of God's blessings. That is to develop such a love for Him that pleasing Him becomes our primary purpose for living.

The Bible certainly requires us to do some things. But what joy, what freedom, what comfort there is in loving God not out of duty but because of the sheer ecstasy we experience! It is so easy to do what the Bible requires of us when pleasing the One we love is greater than the thrill of being pleased.

Second Corinthians 5:14 says, "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead." The love of Christ preoccupies me; it compels me; it makes me a prisoner of His love.

Father, please continue this marvelous work of love that You have begun within me. I would never have thought to request this kind of love on my own because I thought it was out of control and would make me vulnerable to abuse from others. I was so wrong. The truth is that Christ Jesus' love in me protects me from abuse. I have never been more in control than when I have chosen to ignore a wrong done to me. Psalm 119:165 (NIV) says, "Great peace have they who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble." My days of offense are over because of Your deposit of love in me. Help me to keep my dial tuned in to Your frequency so that the signal is not weak under attack.

The Manifested Love of God

1 John 4:9 (NKJV)—*In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.*

Many of us know the words of love. However, the language of love isn't heard as much as it is seen. When a husband does the things that makes his wife happy, when he takes the time to please her, she knows he loves her though he may not utter a word.

In Matthew 21:28-32 Jesus tells of a father requesting his two sons to do something. The first said "no," then changed his mind and obeyed. The other agreed to do it but never completed the task. Which of the two sons obeyed? Of course, the first one did.

The one who said "no" to his father repented and went in to do the work in the vineyard. I suspect that it was because he remembered the love his father had shown him when he least deserved it.

How could we ever forget the gesture of One who blessed us and provided for us when our track record was lousy? You and I are challenged by even the thought of giving our best to someone who has not first earned it.

Stop insulting God by trying to get Him to repeatedly prove that He loves you.

Though I may never understand, I have never doubted it for a second; nor have I rejected it as too much for one such as I. Since God believes I am worthy of it, then I must be worthy. He does not make mistakes or lie. Rather than to try to comprehend it, I have decided that the best way to say "thank you" to Him is to try to imitate it as much and as often as I can.

Stop insulting God by trying to get Him to repeatedly prove that He loves you. He has no other manifestation to provide. He gave His first and His best for His least and His last so that forever we could live through Him.

God expects us to receive the manifestation of His love because His plan for us includes becoming the manifested sons and daughters of God. Creation awaits it. The world needs it, and we will do it.

Let me tell you the secret of God's plan. It started out in love, it grew in love, and love is what it will take to complete it.

Jesus: The Bread of Life, Not Just a Single Seed

John 12:24 (NLT)—*The truth is, a kernel of wheat must be planted in the soil. Unless it dies it will be alone—a single seed. But its death will produce many new kernels—a plentiful harvest of new lives.*

We seldom think of the passing of a loved one as beneficial to others. Because we have altar calls at weddings, home-going celebrations, and any social event held at our church, we have seen many friends and relatives come to Christ.

One of our members could not get her unsaved children to come to church with her. One Friday afternoon, though she was healthy and only in her fifties, she just decided to go to sleep in the arms of Jesus. At her home-going celebration, nine of her family members accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior. We often say she loved them so much that she was willing to go to sleep in Jesus so that they would not go to hell.

Jesus loved us so much that He was willing to go to hell so that we could eventually go to heaven.

I never think of a saint's passing from this earth as dying. I think of it as being planted in the soil so that at the time of their celebration of life, many new kernels—a plentiful harvest of new life—will emerge.

Jesus said in John 12:23, "The time has come for the Son of Man to enter into his glory." For a brief moment Jesus asked the question, "Should I pray, 'Father, save me from what lies ahead'?..."(verse 27). He responded with this answer: "But that is the very reason why I came! Father, bring glory to your name" (verses 27-28).

We selfishly want those we love to stay with us, but life brings with it death. Though we miss our loved ones when they are gone, we should meditate on the longevity of their lives and how fortunate we were to have them while they were here. Then we should take it a step further and believe that God does not want each of them to be a single seed. Their time of planting was to produce multiple seeds for Him as a part of His harvest.

After you have grieved, dry your eyes, wipe away your tears, and rejoice for the souls that will come to Him through your loved one's passing. Remember to keep looking up. Jesus is expected. He is looking for you. Are you looking for Him?

THE *Choice Is Yours*

Q. Pastor Sarah, I am in the middle of a difficult situation at work and I feel as though I am about to be devoured. I've chosen a path of integrity regarding a matter and my co-workers are furious because I won't join them in a cover-up that could cost our employer lots of money but save their jobs. I realize that our boss even blurs the line of truth in some of his decisions, but as far as I'm concerned, that's his problem. I'm not willing to be a liar just because he is, and I'm not willing to seek revenge against him by simply staying quiet. But with the pressure coming at me from both sides, I really need to know if God is going to come through and deliver me and vindicate me from accusations that could come from either side.

A. God tells us that "vengeance is His and He will repay." He doesn't, however, tell us when and how He will do it. And that's often the focus of our concern. But as a believer, our focus needs to be on doing right because it's right and because right is all that honors our God. I can't promise you that the situation won't escalate to the point that you feel as though you have been tossed into a fiery furnace. I can tell you, however, that we serve a God who will get in the fire with you, and take the heat out of the fire and cause you to emerge without even the smell of smoke. I can't say you won't be tossed to the lions, but as it was with Daniel, the lions' mouths can be sealed to prevent them from gaining power over you. That lion in the den with Daniel didn't lose his power; he just lost power over Daniel. But notice, when the group opposing Daniel was thrown to the same lions, they were eaten before they hit the ground.

Never fear opposition against you because of a stand for righteousness. If you draw a line to make your stand with God, you are with the majority, no matter how many people stand against you. Focus on who Jesus is and put Him first place in your life daily. Then, you will rise above whatever situation or circumstance strikes you and you'll know by the Spirit of God, who is the Spirit of Truth, what you need to say and to do.

Loneliness or Solitude?

Mark 1:35 (KJV)—*And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.*

If you have not learned to enjoy solitary places, it could mean that you have not been out among the crowd much. For some of us, crowds represent work. Being the leader all the time is not all fun and games.

The example Jesus shows in Mark 1:35 is one each of us should adopt. A habit of rising up early, especially before daybreak, pretty much guarantees that one will not encounter the multitude. There is nothing quite like being in a solitary place with the Father before the rush of the crowd starts.

Crowds don't always mean people. If humans don't show up to occupy your time, other things on assignment to attack, distract, and attract you certainly will. Jesus understood the value of that "up time" with the Father. The world calls it "down time," which is why they are so down.

Jesus, "rising up," chose solitude, yet He never talked about being lonely. Did you know that "solitary" and "lonely" both mean *alone without companions*? "Solitary" is alone or remote from society. It may imply a condition of being apart from all human beings or of being cut off by wish or circumstances from one's usual associates.

Jesus often found Himself in that position. Why, then, was He not lonely? A lonely person is sad from being alone. A person choosing to depart to a solitary place is thrilled to get alone in the presence of the One with all the answers to all of one's questions.

People often say to me, "Everybody needs somebody." That may be true, but do they always need other human beings? I have no problem with fellowshiping with other humans, but they are cheated if I haven't first had my "up time" with the Lord Jesus Christ and our Father God.

Has being alone made you sad? If so, begin a new regime of rising up a great while before day, departing into a solitary place, and then praying. In a very short time, you will have the security of knowing that you're not alone just because there is an absence of other humans, and you will find joy in being alone with the Father.

My Source of Satisfaction

Psalm 87:7 (KJV)—*As well the singers and the players on instruments shall be there: all my springs are in thee.*

Psalm 87 speaks of the prominence God places on Jerusalem. In this chapter, God promises that all will benefit and be blessed for becoming citizens of Jerusalem. How much more, then, shall we be blessed for receiving His Son, Jesus Christ, into our hearts and becoming citizens of heaven even before we get there?

At all their festivals, the children of Israel sang, "The source of my life is in Jerusalem." We, the redeemed of the Lord, should find every occasion to sing, "The source of my life is the Son of God," for He willingly shed His innocent blood on Calvary's tree and made it possible for us to receive Him.

We don't have to go to Mecca, Memphis, or Missouri to receive the blessing of God. Through Jesus, God offers to live inside each of us.

When we were more flesh-dominated, we thought that our possessions—our homes, our cars, and our clothes—were signs that God was pleased with and blessing us. Now that the Spirit dwells in us and we yield to His domination, we are able to see and say that our source of satisfaction is not in a particular city but in an intangible place found only in Him.

Speaking of that place, God says, "Be still, and know that I am God..." (Psalm 46:10, NKJV). "...Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord..." (1 Corinthians 15:58, NKJV). Notice, God is much more interested in our being than in our doing.

He also says to endure to the end and be saved (Matthew 24:13) and to do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith (Galatians 6:10).

Once we center in on the source of our satisfaction, it will not matter if we are not chosen, as Peter, James, and John were chosen to watch with Jesus in the garden—a physical place. Some of us are called to wait in His unseen presence, soaking in the essence of His Spirit.

We are not to wrestle with God. Instead, we are to learn to rest in Him. Only then will we find who we are to be. And this will enable us to do as the Spirit directs.

Jesus Christ: The Promise by Faith

Galatians 3:22 (KJV)—*But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.*

The law put all of humankind in the same lot. The scripture *concluded* (shut up together and embraced in a common subjection) all under sin.

Under the law, we were all under sin. The only way out was belief and faith in Jesus Christ. God *promised* Him by faith, He came by faith, and we must receive Him by faith to find liberty and freedom from bondage.

Before we had faith, where was it? Where did it come from? It came from a moral conviction of the truthfulness of God, from reliance upon Christ for salvation, from assurance of the truth of the Gospel.

Faith is our fidelity and commitment to serve the one God. A person involved with any other god is guilty of spiritual infidelity, or adultery. An infidel is an unbeliever who has denied faith in what God has promised and provided in scripture.

Anyone who believes God's Word will have the assurance that everything needed for life, family, and success will come from God. Such a believer has no confidence in one's ability to perform but puts absolute and total confidence in God's willingness and ability to do what He has said.

Jesus is the promise *by faith*. Galatians 3:24 says that the law was our schoolmaster, or the *servant* that took us up to Christ; but now we no longer need a servant to lead us to anything or anyone. We now have faith, which is better than a servant. We have grace, divine influence upon our hearts and in our lives. A servant (the law) could not change our hearts. But now after the servant has led us to the One who can make the change, we by faith allow ourselves to be divinely influenced in our hearts, where all the issues of life are (Proverbs 4:23).

Father, at times Your illumination overwhelms me like a strong gust of air that takes my breath away. I'm glad You give us light in Your Word. Thank You for who You are and all You have become in my life. I have accepted the promise of Your Son by faith, and He has released me from being shut up in bondage to sin and the author of sin.

Mere Humans Wither Like Grass

Isaiah 51:12 (NLT)—*"I, even I, am the one who comforts you. So why are you afraid of mere humans, who wither like the grass and disappear?"*

The only reason saints of God dread human oppression is that we forget the Lord Jesus and God the Father, who put the stars in the sky and established the earth. You and I may stumble; but we will never fall past His reach, because He upholds us with His hand (Psalm 37:24).

God promised Israel that He was with them and that He would never leave nor forsake them (Deuteronomy 31:6). Stop and think about that. Here you are face-to-face with mere humans threatening to harm you. Decide to respond to the call of God by being strong and of good courage, refusing to be afraid of them because you remember that your Maker, the One who created all things, is not only with you but is in you. What do you think will happen?

People who have come to hurt and destroy you will not respond favorably to your cries and pleas for mercy. They are out to steal, kill, and destroy you and yours. They have no favor or mercy to give. If they had those attributes, they would not be threatening you in the first place.

Accept the fact that without divine intervention, you will die. Then decide that if you are going to leave a threatening situation, it will not be by pleading for your life. Jesus said that those who seek to save their lives will lose them.

Open your mouth and boldly declare that your Creator is in you and with you to deliver you from mere humans made of nothing more than grass that withers. "Those who fear the Lord are secure; he will be a place of refuge for their children" (Proverbs 14:26).

He will take care of our children, and He will make provision for His children also. Begin to make this your daily song of praise: "You are my hiding place; You protect me from trouble; You surround me with songs of victory" (Psalm 32:7).

Singing in peacetime is one of the greatest weapons to hone for battle. Love for God and a song in one's heart are the strongest pieces of armor any believer can put on. You are a winner in Him. So dress up in your armor now.

Innocent of Sin

Jude 24 (NLT)—And now, all glory to God who is able to keep you from stumbling, and who will bring you into his glorious presence innocent of sin and with great joy.

When we allow Jesus, our keeper by His Holy Spirit, to direct and order our steps, He will never lead us into sin. We may be exposed to sin, but God can keep us by His power from becoming involved in it.

We can be innocent in the presence of God. This is not just speaking of us after physical death. He is able to keep us from falling or stumbling now. There will be no falling in heaven. Jesus is able to present us as trophies of His power in us to His Father to make Him happy.

Sin, like the poor, will always be with us. Therefore, we will always have to make choices concerning it. I found out that the devil could not make me do anything. It was my responsibility to make the choice to resist yielding to my flesh and to obediently follow the Spirit of Christ in me.

The glory that comes upon us for following the Spirit is because God made it possible. He placed His Spirit in us to keep us standing instead of stumbling. His Spirit in us can and will cause us to become innocent when we decide to follow His leading.

Because He is the Spirit of Truth, He will share only that which is truth. We then have an opportunity to hear, receive, and act on what He is saying to us. The Holy Spirit is not the Spirit of information. Any spirit will give that to you. No, He is the Spirit of Truth, which He takes to lead and guide us into all truth. He cannot lead us into a lie or that which is contrary to God's plan for our lives. Our being innocent does not mean we never miss it; it means returning to the truth when we do miss it. We enjoy the presence of the Lord when we reject guilt and condemnation.

Mistakes, error, and mishaps occur because we made a choice to follow something other than the truth. Truth will always make us free. It may not make us popular, but truth does make us free—unencumbered and without restraints that hinder us from being all that we were created to be.

Live Qualified to Teach

Psalm 51:12 (KJV)—*Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation and uphold me with thy free spirit.*

We can never have too many people who teach God's Word to heathen, since teaching is what they need in order to come to Him. However, an often missed qualifying trait to teach is found in Psalm 51:10-13.

First, we must request a clean heart and the renewing of a right spirit within. Second, we must ask to always be allowed to remain in His presence with His Holy Spirit present in us. It is not good enough to be in His presence. We must have His presence in us.

The wicked one comes to rob us of the Lord's joy, which is our strength. Ask God the Father to restore to you the same joy you received at your salvation. Then, request His help in causing any and all rebellion within you to be replaced with obedience.

When all of these conditions are in place within us, we are qualified to teach sinners God's way so they shall become converted and restored to Him.

One of the reasons that we don't see more conversions than we do is that those who are called to teach and preach are sometimes allowing sin and rebellion to remain in their own lives. You and I will never fully teach and preach with conviction until we address and confess sin in ourselves. Remember, you were saved to tell others about your Exodus experience, not just to escape the fires of hell. The only way I know to do this is to proclaim Jesus Christ, the Son of God as the Savior of humankind.

Years ago, Clinton and I, along with two dear friends, were having dinner when our server, having overheard our conversation all evening about Jesus, asked, "Are you Christians?" We said, "Yes," and then, one by one, we inquired of his spiritual state. We knew immediately that this was a set-up. God wanted him saved, and we were the vessels to be used.

Thank God, our words and our behavior all evening reflected Jesus. Thank God, our joy for being saved was evident to this dear man who was longing for a change in his life. Thank God, I was bold enough to ask him to allow me to pray with him, which I did and he received Christ Jesus. I am looking for heathen to be saved. After all, that is why I was born again. How about you?





And the vessel

that he made of clay was
marred in the hand of
the potter: so he
made it again
another vessel
as seemed
good to the
potter to make it.

Then the word of
the Lord came to
me, saying... cannot
I do with you as the
potter? saith the
Lord. Behold, as the
clay is in the potter's
hand, so are ye in
mine hand....

—Jeremiah 18: 4-6

Hoping for Nothing Again

Luke 6:35 (KJV)—*"But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil."*

Jesus requires us, His followers, to love our enemies. Where do we get the gall to do otherwise?

Loving our enemies is not optional. Doing good and lending is not optional.

It is natural to love your friends, family, and lovable people. It is natural to do good and lend to those you like or who are nice to you. It is not natural to hope for nothing in return when you have given your all to bless others.

God told us through Paul, "And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Romans 5:5).

When God's love is widespread in our hearts, we are then able to do supernatural things. In our humanness alone we do not have the capacity to love those who are hostile and hateful. Loving our adversaries and foes qualifies us to be called children of the Highest (Luke 6:35). Why? He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.

You may be thinking, "I thought we weren't supposed to love the world." You're almost right. We are to hate the deeds of the devil. And since his works have been destroyed in my life and the lives of all believers, I find that I am beginning to appreciate his futile efforts because his deeds push me closer to my Lord, my Champion, the One who has already overcome for me. Since I am in Him and He is in me, I can march to the Word, which assures me that I am an overcomer in Christ Jesus.

Loving, kind, and merciful Father, continue to unfold for us by Your Spirit that Your love, filling up our hearts, allows no room for hate, jealousy, envy, or strife. Our human training, culture, and exposure will not allow us to love our enemies or the unlovely because that kind of love is superficial and lacking in power. However, Your love entering in overwhelms our natural ability and causes us to reach out into the darkness and snatch back for Your kingdom what Adam and Eve lost in Eden. Our hope is in You, Lord.

Never Lose Hope

Ecclesiastes 9:4 (NIV)—*Anyone who is among the living has hope—even a live dog is better off than a dead lion!*

As long as there is life in us, we should have hope. “The hope of the righteous is gladness...” (Proverbs 10:28, NASB). Our dreams, passions, and desires may not yet be a reality, but hope holds on to them for a future manifestation.

Where life no longer exists, hope also ceases to exist. Anyone who is hopeless is also helpless. Ecclesiastes 9:4 contrasts a living dog with a dead lion. While a living dog will never be a lion in life, a dog can enjoy its existence while it remains alive. In contrast, regardless of how a dead lion was admired for its stately stride and its regal presence, it is dead: it is hopeless and helpless. It does not even command fond memories.

The life in us is what keeps hope alive. God places certain things in every human heart to cause each person to recreate those things for the

**Anyone who is hopeless
is also helpless.**

good of others. Every dream, desire, and passion within us can become a reality if we hold on to hope. In fact, God expects us to hope for better things in life. Our Father Himself is the substance, the basis, for this hope. When we refuse to let go of our hope, faith becomes the very audience of the invisible in our lives (Hebrews 11:1).

Heavenly Father, since my childhood, I have had hopes and dreams that could only have come from You. The older I become, the more I realize that what I hope for does not benefit me alone. My hope is in You to bring to pass Your will in the earth. My hope is that Your Word will become a reality to all people so that they can understand its practical application in their lives.

My hope is that these words I write will penetrate hearts and affect the lives of others long after I have ceased to record what You speak to my heart. I believe I receive this. I believe it is done because I have hope in You and Your promises. “Sustain me according to Thy word, that I may live; and do not let me be ashamed of my hope” (Psalm 119:116, NASB). Thank You for it, in Jesus’ name. Amen.



RLCC REDEEMING
LOVE
CHRISTIAN
CENTER

AT THE VILLAGE



Schedule of Services:

WORSHIP SERVICES:

Every Sunday evening at 6:00 p.m.

HEALING SERVICES: Every second Sunday

COMMUNION AND BAPTISM SERVICES:

Every fourth Sunday

SATURDAY SCHOOL OF THE BIBLE:

Every Saturday morning at 10:00 a.m.

For more information, please call the church office at

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FROM NORTH NEW JERSEY

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FROM UPSTATE NEW YORK

Take the New York Thruway South to 287 South. Proceed to Route 80 West. (Follow the directions above from Route 80 West to RLCV.)



No Longer a Closet Christian

Psalm 26:12 (NLT)—*I have taken a stand, and I will publicly praise the Lord.*

Though we haven't arrived at a place where we are mistake-free, one day our mistakes must become minimal and missing the mark must become an accident, not a habit.

Imagine saying to God, as David did in Psalm 26, "Declare me innocent, O Lord, for I have acted with integrity; I have trusted in the Lord without wavering" (verse 1). The qualities of integrity and unwavering trust are obviously qualities that get God's attention. David requested God to put him on trial and cross-examine him (verse 2). A person had better know that he has it all together when he asks the One who judges righteously to put him on trial! Apparently, David's personal inner lie detector had assured him that he was innocent.

Nothing is quite like having a heart that does not condemn you. It does not matter what others say or do concerning you. Stay focused on the love of God, which can never fail you, and live according to His truth (verse 3).

Too often, we adjust to please others because we value their love more than we value God's Word. If you're guilty of this, stop it now. It will cause you to compromise, which precedes corruption, then death.

What kind of company are you keeping? Are there liars and hypocrites in your circle of friends? You must learn to hate the fellowship of evildoers and refuse to participate in the actions of the wicked (verse 5).

Are your hands clean? Can you come into God's presence with a song of thanksgiving, preaching the miracle of God (verses 6-7)? Remind God that you deserve better than the fate of sinners, murderers, and the wicked. Declare what you are and what you want from God (verses 9-11).

This is the season for coming out of the closet as a believer. Unbelievers, in their wickedness and ignorance, are coming out. Let the grace of God in you abound even more. The anointing is on you to decree and declare the goodness of your God. So do it now, in Jesus' name.

SONG POEM

HE COMETH

by Clinton H. Utterbach

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In Jerusalem the crowds waved palms to worship Him
And in His hour of despair, where were they all then
But this time every holy voice will trumpet this
great theme

A new hosanna to the one who comes to rule and reign
Make a noise all ye nations, make a joyful sound
The King of glory and our Saviour, as promised is
come down

Every voice and every instrument, with one
mighty shout

With peals of glorious ecstasy, at once will all sing out.

He cometh, with ten thousand of His saints
He cometh, with myriad of angels
He cometh, and on His vesture, on His thigh
A name is written...for He is King of kings.

He cometh, and His word is like a sword
He cometh, and kingdoms fall before Him
He cometh, for He is Jesus Christ the Lord
And He did triumph...o'er all His enemies
And He did pull down every kingdom

And His kingdom shall reign forever.

Behold the one who held the earth
under his control

With all his demon legions

With condemned and guilty souls

Bound in chains and cast into a lake burning
with fire

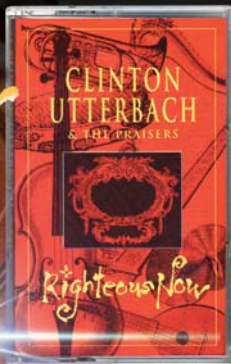
While we the saints praise Him (He) alone

Enthroned who sits on high

He cometh!

CLINTON UTTERBACH
& THE PRAISERS

Righteous Now



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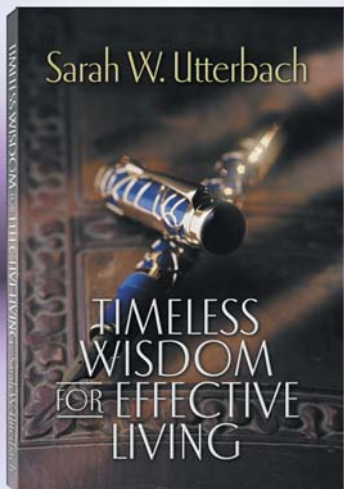
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But I trusted in thee,
O Lord: I said,
Thou art my God
My times
are in thy hand.

Psalm 31:14, 15



If the Lord Delight in Us

Numbers 14:8 (KJV)—*If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it to us; a land which floweth with milk and honey.*

God was able to deliver on His promise to take His people into the rich land described in this passage. It was understood that He wanted to be delighted with them. That principle works in our human relationships as well. For example, the more someone pleases you, the more ways you try to bless and include that person in your life.

What about us causes God to be delighted? What gives Him satisfaction? What can I do that will cause the Father God to say, "I take great pleasure in you"? First Samuel 15:22 shows us: "Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

Very early in my walk with the Lord, I began to see that God was not impressed with my effort for Him. But He was pleased with the one gift that I could give Him: my obedience to Him.

Since the king delighted in Esther, he offered her half of his kingdom. I suppose that was a good deal, but I believe we as Christians have a better one. God did not offer us only half of His kingdom. He gave us the entire kingdom; eternal life through His Son, Jesus! He did not spare anything, because we delight ourselves in Him and He is delighted with us.

When God is pleased with His children, He shows His care in every area. While on vacation some time ago, I discovered that I had misplaced my cell phone. My mind assured me that some strangers were calling all of their relatives in foreign countries at my expense, but I rested in the Lord and enjoyed my evening, thanking Him that all was well. When I went to retrieve my phone in the morning, I saw two interesting stores that I had missed the afternoon before. Their new arrivals were just what my husband was interested in. In minutes, he had the clothing he wanted and needed for the season. I believe God was delighted in us. He took what was a negative situation and worked it for our good in minimum time and effort.

Individuals, Not Tribes, Are God's Decision

Psalm 78:67 (KJV)—Moreover he refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim.

Ephraim was one of Joseph's two sons, yet it appears that what God had done for Joseph and how He demonstrated His care and concern for Joseph was not a manifested reality in the sons of this special chosen one.

Imagine what it must be like to have acquired, accumulated, and hoarded money all of your life trying to secure your future when you discover that no amount of money can heal your body or that of a loved one, but a miracle from God can.

I've shopped in some of the finest stores in the world, yet I have never found one of them with peace of mind for sale. I'm so glad I know where to go and get what I need without a price. Jesus already paid for me to simply receive it upon request.

Does it sadden your heart somewhat when you are wallowing in God's abundance and benefits while you observe your children barely making it through each day? It is one of the most helpless positions I have ever been in. But I believe that the Lord is saying to me and to you, "The fruit of your womb is blessed." However, the manifestation of that promise depends on them establishing a well-pleasing relationship with the same God who has blessed you.

God did not deal with Joseph the way He dealt with his brothers. This verse implies that Joseph's sons had to learn the hard way that their father's relationship with God was a personal one and that his "benefit from obedience" package was not automatically handed down. Oh, it was available to Ephraim and Mannaseh, but they needed to have going for them what their dad had that got God's attention in the first place.

Sons, daughters, and every seed of godly parents reading this devotion for today, examine yourself, look at what is occurring in your life, and observe what God is doing to bless your parents. Ask God to forgive you for rebellion and disrespect of your parents, ask your parents to forgive you, and go to God with a sincere heart requesting the same spirit to please Him that Mom and Dad have, and watch your life and condition change. Parents who serve God are ordained by Him to be an example. Yours are no different.

The Lord is
my shepherd;
I shall not want.
He maketh me
to lie down in
green pastures:
he leadeth me
beside the still
waters. He restoreth
my soul: he lead-
eth me in the paths
of righteousness for
his name's sake.

Psalms 23: 1-2





Look the Enemy in the Face

1 Samuel 17:35 (KJV)—*And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him.*

What has the devil attacked that belongs to you? How long will you stand by while he attacks what is precious to you? The way to defuse his attacks against you is to begin with a decision to become aggressive toward him. The devil is not prepared for aggressive believers with determination to refuse to sit around recovering from another blow. A believer who understands that Jesus did not go to the cross to have His body plummeted more than once will not put up with attacks.

Every time you and I tolerate another beating from the devil, it is as though Christ is being crucified at Calvary again. Bless God, once was enough. Since Jesus rose from the grave having had His body beaten, bruised, and bloodied, with the sins and transgression of humankind placed on Him, we the body of Christ no longer have to be passive in this battle.

David went after what was rightfully his and delivered his father's sheep because they were in his care and he felt responsible for them. As pastors, we must go after attackers of the congregations assigned to us. When David recognized the enemy turning on him, he aggressively went after the thing trying to destroy the sheep. He ran to the enemy, got up in his face, took hold of his beard or jaw, and did what was necessary to eliminate him as a threat.

How exciting it is to get a reputation among the enemy's crowd that you are not only a slayer of animals, but of giants! After a while, one stupid enough to try you again for size will surface when you least expect it. Rejoice: Not only do you know ahead of time the outcome, but your weapon is far superior to any other.

Believers, believe that the name of Jesus and the Word of God are more powerful in the mouth of one of His than anything satan can pull together. Today, choose, "I am through enduring the devil. I am no longer waiting to see what he will do next. I am going after him first by making sheep out of his goats with God's help.

I will once again demonstrate his defeat."

Of What Account Is He?

Isaiah 2:22 (NIV)—*Stop trusting in man, who has but a breath in his nostrils. Of what account is he?*

When we put our trust in humans, we abandon ourselves to total dependence on them as though they were superior to us. No human is superior to another, yet we will readily accept what a person writes or says and totally ignore the written and spoken words of God.

Once, I joined my husband for a day trip. It was a broadcast night for my live radio show, *The Choice Is Yours*. I was impressed to test the equipment at 4:15 P.M., though I normally don't check it before 9:00 P.M. Because I would not be returning before 10:30 for the 11:00 P.M. airing, I obeyed the prompting in my spirit.

When I checked the equipment, I found a problem. I called the radio station, and it turned out that it could not be fixed that night. I had prayed and operated in my authority, and it still was not functioning.

A voice said, "What are you going to do now?"

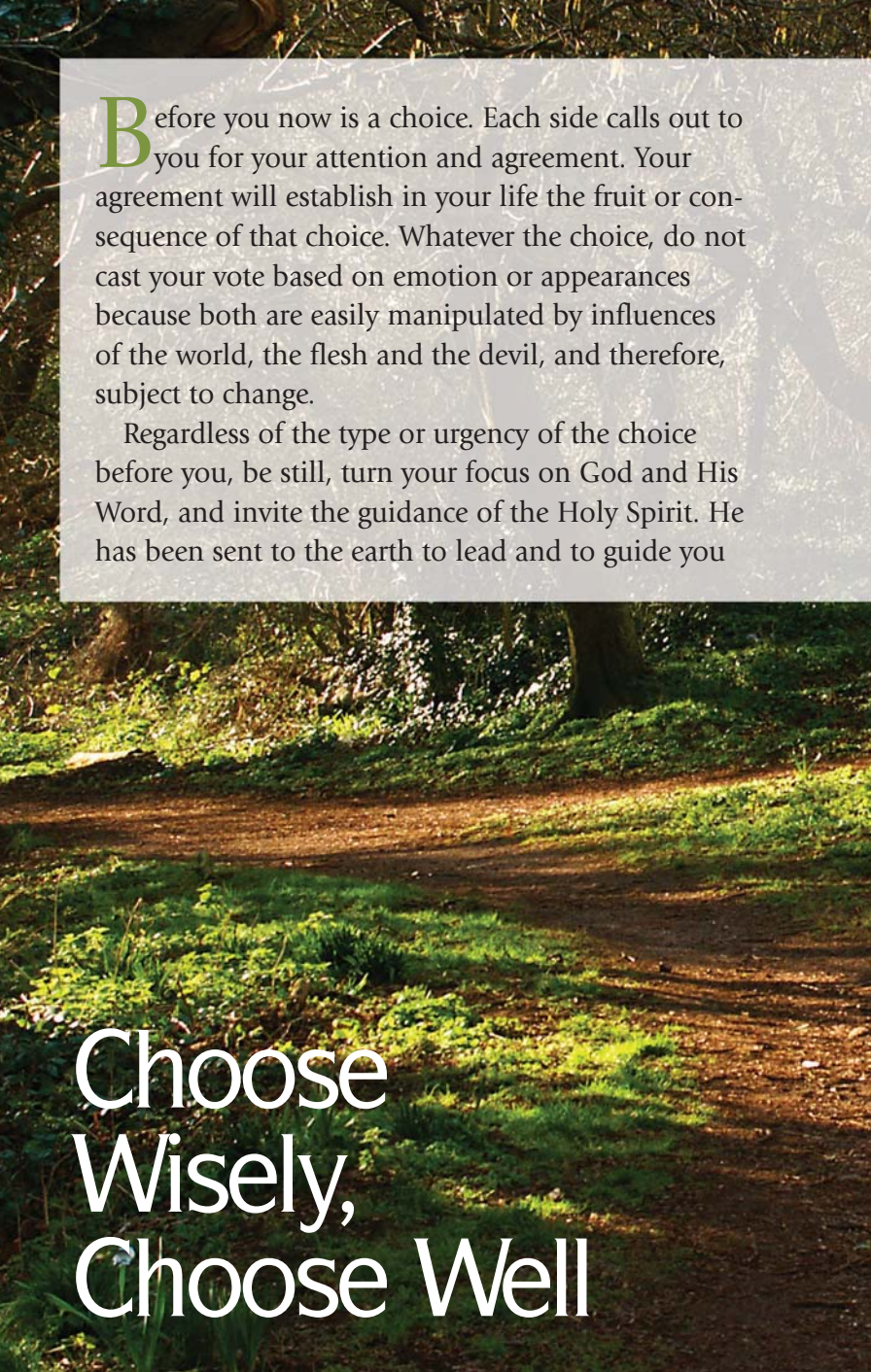
I knew that I was supposed to do the broadcast, so I asked, "Father, what would You have me do?"

I remembered that in the church service the night before I had said, "Do what you can do; then God will do what you can't do."

I called the station and said, "I'll do the broadcast through the telephone. I'll trust that the people are out there, as they always are. I'll explain that there are equipment challenges; however, if they will still call in, we'll respond by the Spirit of God."

The radio audience called, the Spirit told me what to say, and we had one of the greatest and most anointed broadcasts ever. More men called that night than ever before, and I prayed with an anointing I had never experienced.

Dear Father God, how comforting it is to know that our trust in You causes the supernatural to occur. You told us not to trust in friends (Micah 7:5), in chariots (Psalm 20:7), or in princes (Psalm 118:9). But You said that in Jesus' name shall the Gentiles trust (Matthew 12:21). You validate that trust, and Your people receive Your blessings. You are the Almighty, my Father God, and I love You.



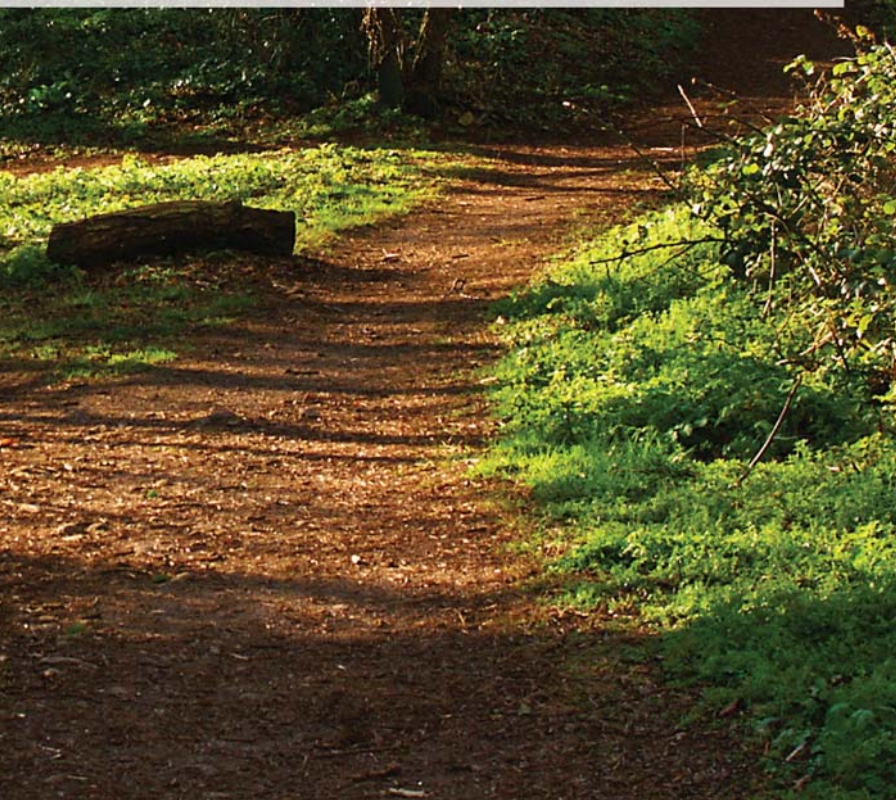
Before you now is a choice. Each side calls out to you for your attention and agreement. Your agreement will establish in your life the fruit or consequence of that choice. Whatever the choice, do not cast your vote based on emotion or appearances because both are easily manipulated by influences of the world, the flesh and the devil, and therefore, subject to change.

Regardless of the type or urgency of the choice before you, be still, turn your focus on God and His Word, and invite the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He has been sent to the earth to lead and to guide you

Choose
Wisely,
Choose Well

into all truth—in matters both great and small—and He will only lead you in line with God's will.

God's Word is His will. Give your attention to the Word of God and expect God to speak to you through His Word. God will not only reveal His will to you, He will also confirm that will to you through the Word. Your choice will set a course which may be irreversible. Choose wisely. Choose well. Choose in agreement with God's report about the situation and in alignment with His will for your life. When you do, your life and the lives of many others will be blessed.



The Old Man Ain't What He Used to Be

Ephesians 2:2 (NIV)—...*you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.*

When I was a child, I sometimes reminded my mother of things she used to allow me to do. One of her favorite responses was “The old man ain’t what he used to be.” If I talked about things we had done or said in the past, Mom’s reply was almost always the same.

That’s the way we should approach the desire to pursue the way of the world, our former way of living. Second Corinthians 5:17 says, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” We are not what we used to be, and we should be able to validate this change with our daily actions.

We should be the first ones to validate our salvation because others only know what we allow them to see. But each of us knows the full history of our own life. If others cannot recognize a change in us, then maybe we need another dose of the Word and of time in our Father’s presence.

One thing we have to learn is not to allow the world to tell us how to live our lives. Ephesians 2:2 in *The Message Bible* reads, “...You filled your lungs with polluted unbelief, and then exhaled disobedience.” When I look around at the world today, which is in the most pitiful state I’ve ever seen it, I recognize that people are following the ways of the world. They are following the ruler of the air, whose spirit is made up of the oxygen of unbelief. And unbelief, when inhaled, always manifests in disobedience, when exhaled.

Father, when I understood the purpose of Jesus’ sacrifice on the Cross and Your plan for my life, I found myself wanting to cooperate with You. I wanted not only to obey Your commands in the Bible, but also to trust You to fulfill every promise You made to Your children.

Because of Your precious works, I now have new lungs—lungs full of faith. My primary goal is to obey Your words. I am so glad that old man ain’t what he used to be. I am a new creature in Christ Jesus. What a difference! Old things have passed away. Look! All things are made new.

God Does Not Oppose Magnificent Structures

1 Chronicles 22:5 (KJV)—...*the house that is to be builded for the Lord must be exceeding magnifical, of fame, and glory.*

To build a house for God was a desire of David's heart, not a requirement from God. Though David wanted to complete the task, God would not permit him to fulfill his dream because he was not a man of peace and rest (verses 7-8).

God did, however, allow David to prepare for his vision of how the temple should look. David did not expect his son Solomon to prepare for his dream to be realized; he prepared the materials himself before he died.

Billions of dollars are spent annually on church structures. Some of the most magnificent buildings in the world are places of worship. However, we also see everything from store-front to little hole-in-the-wall churches. God does not really care which one exists providing that His true places of worship are exceedingly magnificent, famous, and glorious.

Of course, I am speaking of us, the believers, His children. Every Christian can and should be the most magnificent, famous, and glorious of all things created and built in the earth. This is true because the Father God had a vision when He created us.

God the Father prepared everything needed for the completion of "His temple." Then, He assigned His Son Jesus to take what was prepared and build His temple. We are the temple of the living God and our time here in the earth should be viewed as magnificent, famous, and glorious.

That does not mean that we should attempt to draw attention to ourselves by thinking that those attributes apply to us personally. We are to become magnificent, famous, and glorious because of the degree to which we allow the Word and the Spirit of God to flow through us, drawing all attention to Jesus.

The way for us to fulfill the desire of the Father is not to extract enormous funds from others to erect buildings of brick and mortar. We fulfill His desire when we use the tithe, offerings, and gifts to preach and teach the Word of God both to the heathen and to the believer, bringing them into the knowledge of the truth, making them magnificent, famous, and glorious temples of the living God.

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*For I have given you an
example, that ye should do as I have done
to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you. The
servant is not greater than his lord; neither
he that is sent greater than he that sent
him. If ye know these things, happy are ye
if ye do them.*

John 13:15-17

Pay Anyway

Matthew 17:27 (NLT)—*"However, we don't want to offend them, so go down to the lake and throw in a line. Open the mouth of the first fish you catch, and you will find a coin. Take the coin and pay the tax for both of us."*

When Jesus was presented with the option to exercise His liberty, which could have been offensive to those not free, He essentially said, "We are not obligated to pay, but let's pay anyway."

Did you notice that Jesus knew exactly what He wanted Peter to do? Peter didn't have to spend the whole day on a fishing boat to achieve the Lord's will, but he did have to go to the lake. He did have to throw in a line. He did have to open the first fish's mouth. I am personally convinced that it wouldn't have mattered which fish Peter caught first. All of them had coins and were prepared to honor the Master's word.

Everything and everyone had a part to play to enable Jesus to not only provide for His need but to also take care of His servant who obeyed Him. Jesus had to speak; Peter had to follow precise instructions; and the fish had to yield to the Lord's words.

Jesus could have said, "I am King over all things and am not required to pay taxes." Instead, He humbled Himself as a man and chose not to offend anyone. Instead of exercising His right, He complied with human requirements.

When we make adjustments in order to avoid offense, we help to create an atmosphere in which God's power can be released to flow. We arouse the curiosity of those who know we had the right to protest but chose not to.

Are you so bent on getting everything you're entitled to that you miss the bigger picture? When you agree to go the extra mile, God provides you with not only the grace but also the resources to do it.

I used to think I had to exercise my right and get all that I was entitled to. One day the Spirit of grace showed me that I had the right to choose not to exercise my rights while trusting God to do what was right for me.

When I humbled and yielded myself to others' requirements for the sake of not offending, God supernaturally intervened in my life. I have not experienced lack since then. Are you willing to trust Him?

The Personal Question of the Ages

Matthew 27:22 (NIV)—*"What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called Christ?" Pilate asked. They all answered, "Crucify him!"*

As a believer, I am to allow Christ's life in me to become clearly manifested to others. I am to let go of anything or anyone that would prevent me from following and obeying Him. I am to submit every thought, every word, and every deed to Him for pruning, polishing, perfecting, and purifying. I am to imitate Him to the point that others won't recognize where He ends and I begin.

As a believer, I am to understand and accept that Calvary has truly covered all for me. Racial and gender discrimination, hatred, anger, anxiety, and compromise must be a thing of the past because Calvary provides for me a brand new pad to launch from.

One of the greatest lessons the Holy Spirit has ever taught me is that though I may be unable to change another with the Word of God, I can allow it to change me every second, every minute, every hour, every day, every week, every month, and every year. In fact, that is how the process should occur.

Allow the Word of God to change you second by second; then move on in the Spirit until neither you nor others recognize you.

The question "What shall I do with Jesus, who is called the Christ" is settled for me because I have chosen to become a believer. However, there is one additional thing I am to do with Him. I am to introduce Him to the Pilates of the world. I am to share Him with all those who cross my path who are hurting, confused, lost, and without hope. I am to reflect Him in such a way that they, too, desire Him in His fullness.

I am to receive Him and give Him away at the same time, for when I do this I find there is no end to Him in my life. He is enough for me with some to spare.

Father, You promised to give the heathen to me as a part of my inheritance. I call in the heathen today to this family. Heathen, come forth now, in Jesus' name. Thank You, dear Lord, that this is a done deal for which I give You praise, glory, and honor.

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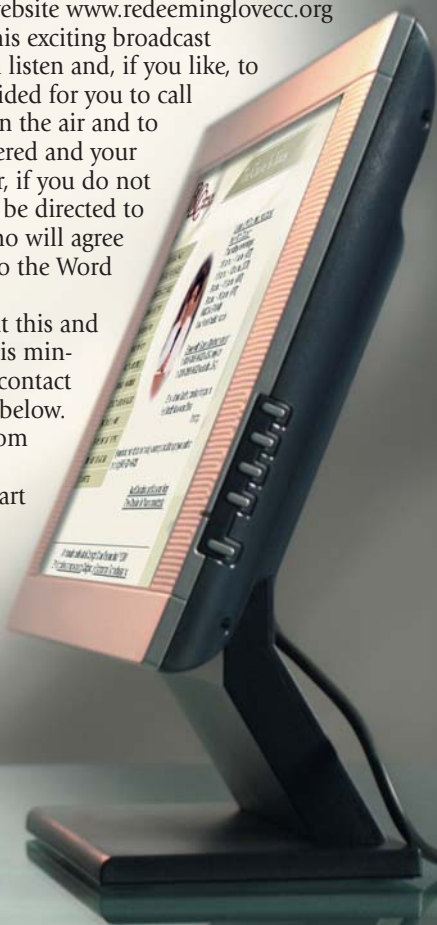
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Turn Your Life Around



...by submitting your life to Jesus Christ. If you do not recall making a confession of Jesus as your Savior and Lord, we invite you to say the following prayer. Confessing the prayer marks the beginning of a new life or being "born again" as Jesus explains in John 3:3-6.

Father in Heaven,

I believe that You are God and that Jesus is Your Son. I believe that Jesus died for my sins and that after three days, He arose from the dead. Today I make a quality choice to turn from my past ways. Jesus, I ask You to please forgive me of my sins and I invite you to come into my heart to be Savior and Lord of my life. Make something new of me. Create in me a hunger for Your Word. By Your Spirit lead me to a church where I may gather together with other believers and be taught Your promises and principles accurately and uncompromisingly. I want to fully understand my responsibility and authority as Your child. Thank You for salvation and for the promise of abundant life—spiritually, physically, economically, and socially. Father, I purpose to give Your name the praise, honor, and glory with my words and with my life, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Amen.

Note: If you prayed the preceding prayer, welcome to the family of God! We invite you to contact us so that we can mail you a memento of this important step. We're waiting to hear from you!

Praise and Remember

Psalm 103:2 (NIV)—*Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.*

Once you form the habit of remembering all the good things that God has done for you, praising Him becomes automatic.

Never let the devil trick you into thinking that God is not pleased with you or that He has abandoned you. God would have to abandon Jesus before He could abandon you and me. He will never do that.

Psalm 103:2 says to praise and remember. Remember where He brought you from; then watch the praise flow freely. If you have been rehearsing and dwelling on the negatives, stop. Don't you know that God is working even amidst the negatives for your good? He did not say that all good things work together for your good. He said "...all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28, KJV). *All things* means the good and the not-so-good.

God created you on purpose. Then He gave you a purpose: to do as He commands. Stopping and quitting are only thoughts the devil sends, hoping you will receive them and take yourself out of God's game of life. The devil knows that he cannot stop you as a believer, so he sends thoughts that he hopes you will grasp so that you will derail yourself.

The Bible says you are a believer, so believe. The Bible says you are more than a conqueror, so conquer. The Bible says all of your needs are met, so stop looking at what you don't have and see by faith what is yours according to His Word.

You may be so low in spirit right now that you are having difficulty remembering what your good God has done in your life. If that is the case, stop trying to remember, and begin to praise Him. Praise is a choice you can make. Choose to worship the Lord Jesus for His willingness to shed His blood for you to be free.

Never wait for a feeling before you begin to praise. Praise Him by faith, and watch the feeling flow into and through you. Once you start to praise, you will quickly remember why. Do it now.

Recognize Enticers to Idolatry

Deuteronomy 13:3 (KJV)—*Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.*

Nowhere in the Bible are we encouraged to follow prophets, dreamers, signs, or wonders. Stay far from anyone or anything attempting to entice you away from the one true and living God. It makes no difference whether or not a prophet prophesies truly or a dreamer dreams accurately: if they are not pointing you to Jesus, avoid them. Signs and wonders are for us today and are not to be ignored, but will they cause you to forget Christ?

I have repeatedly heard people who love the Lord say, "But you should see what happened in that person's ministry. You just don't understand. They told me all I needed to know about the many questions I had," or "They dreamed about everything that I was going through." I don't have a problem with any of that. My question is simply, "Is your focus still on Jesus, or are you following after that person now?"

I've known ministers to suddenly uproot their families to hook up with the person used to cause a supernatural encounter in their lives. Please do not be misled by your experience. Instead, ask, "What would Jesus have me do?"

God used a successful businessman to help my husband and me to receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost as evidenced by speaking in other tongues. But before we could become involved with the man, we saw that he had a challenge with the "faith message," while God had told us to go to a Bible school that focused on that very message.

I was miraculously healed of an eleven-year chronic back challenge when a minister prayed for me. A year later, this minister singled my husband out to tell him something I'd just prayed about the night before. There were many opportunities to follow this man, but because my heart was pure to do only the will of God, God allowed me to learn of an alarming indiscretion of his.

Stay willing to do God's will. Never be locked into visions, dreams, signs, or wonders. Accept what ministers do as vessels of God's power; then listen to what they say. If they are not pointing you back to Jesus, avoid them before you are trapped by them.

SONG POEM

I'M SO GLAD

by Clinton H. Utterbach

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I'm so glad, that when all my efforts fail
No matter what I do, You're the one
That if I wholly, solely lean on
Will see me through, will see me through.

I'm so glad, that nothing happens in my life
That takes You by surprise
And I'm glad that You're equal to every situation.

Sometimes only a miracle will work
It already seems too late, use to be
That I would give up, start to doubt You
And refuse to wait, I lack the faith.

But I'm glad, now I know just who You are
And the things that You can do
Again You prove that You're equal (hallelujah)
to every situation.



I have learned that my
decisions can't compare
With the ones You make for me,
since I know
That You're the source of information
And it's given free, free to me.

All I need is to turn my prayer dial up
The answer's there,
Furthermore, You renew again in me my inspiration.

Refuse To Confuse Your Faith

John 11:22 (NKJV)—*"But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You."*

In John 11:21, Martha says, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." But in the following verse, she changes gears and says, "Whatever You ask of God, God will give You." She essentially says, "Jesus, You have the ability to work with the living, but You'll have to get God's help once they are dead." Her faith was confused, and confused faith never pleases God; He does not authorize confusion of any kind.

Like Martha, so many of us who call ourselves believers confuse our faith. We say one thing in one breath and something else in another breath.

Even when Jesus said, "Your brother will rise again" (verse 23), Martha assumed Jesus meant that he would rise in the final resurrection of the dead (verse 24).

John 6:63 says, "...The words that I [Jesus] speak to you are spirit, and they are life." How often do we, too, find ourselves missing what Jesus is saying to us because we think He'll wait for tomorrow to do it?

Martha should have responded to Jesus' word with "I agree, Lord; and since You didn't say when, now is as good a time as any." Likewise, if we can believe that Jesus could have prevented something or that He can talk God into doing something, why should we not believe that His spoken word to us is for the moment?

Precious Father, thank You for being so patient with us while we learn not to confuse our faith. If we believe that Jesus can prevent the enemy from destroying us, let us quickly learn that Jesus does not have to go back to You for another injection of authority and power to get the next level of a miracle done.

Help us to remember that Jesus' spoken word is sufficient to fulfill what He says. Unless He specifies a time, we simply need to agree with what He says and claim it "even now." I now understand that many blessings in my life were delayed because I did not know Him as a "right now" Jesus. I expect to claim all His promises to me now, unless He tells me they have an appointed time. I refuse to confuse my faith.

Purified by Fire and Water

Numbers 31:23 (KJV)—*Everything that may abide the fire, ye shall make it go through the fire, and it shall be clean....*

Have you wondered why you had to endure certain difficult and at times painful things that came knocking at the door of your life? I can assure you that God loves you too much to destroy you, but He also loves you enough to purify you for what He has called you to do. This is a lesson that is learned, not just known. It seems to take time and repeated survivals before we get the message.

The sons of Levi did not qualify to offer a sacrifice and an offering in righteousness until God refined, purified, and purged them as gold and silver.

Those challenges that are always in your face are just that—challenges. They are meant to be overcome. They are already defeated and conquered. They are allowed so that you and I will settle it, that as God's children, we have already won.

God told Israel, "When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned." Both parts of this statement are promises. Promise one is that your journey will take you through some very hot, scorching times. Promise two is that there will be no burning. In fact, you will not even be singed. But nowhere does it promise that you will avoid the fire in order not to be scorched.

I can personally promise you when you remain faithful to God's voice and His Word, the day will come when the test, the trial, and the temptation will become a season of rejoicing because your attitude and approach will have changed. You'll thank God for counting you worthy for service following some time on the obstacle course.

I have learned to look for God in every test because I expect to find Him as His Spirit takes me by the hand as we go through together.

Have you ever seen young children not wanting to hold their parents' hand because they want to try something new and different? Don't go there, please. The Lord may permit you to experience the new and the different, but never allow your hand to be removed from His, for He knows the way that is best for you to take. Trust Him.

Spiritual Sacrifices: The Outcome of Natural Ones

1 Peter 2:5 (NLT)—*And now God is building you, as living stones, into his spiritual temple. What's more, you are God's holy priests, who offer the spiritual sacrifices that please him because of Jesus Christ.*

My growth and maturity as a believer are based on discipline. Discipline—the natural sacrifices I make in obedience to the Word of God—prepares me to offer spiritual sacrifices that I would otherwise be unable to make.

Aren't you tired of losing ground and having to retrace steps you have been over before? Good! God has given us everything we need to work with as He prepares us as living stones for His temple and as His holy priests who make spiritual sacrifices. But we must first give God the natural discipline that shows we are willing to sacrifice for Him. We can forget about making spiritual sacrifices if we neglect to make natural ones.

Then, God can and will build us as living stones as we let go of operating only in the natural. The natural has a season, but that season is over for those of us who want to go on to be spiritual temples and holy priests. God's best was not living in a temple made by hands and having priests who needed to clear up the sin in their lives before standing in for the people.

We, His living stones and His holy priesthood, are His best and His final plan. Hopefully one day we will fully grasp the value placed on us as the creation of God, made in His image and likeness.

I used to read my horoscope to try to find out what my lot in life was to be. I even foolishly believed that I was getting advanced information. Then one day the Spirit spoke to me and said, "I wish you would give My Word as much respect as you do those horoscopes." I suddenly realized that I had been consulting the wrong source and that my faith was in the wrong report. That ungodly information changed daily, but God's Word never did.

I made the adjustment, and I asked for the Holy Spirit to help me stay focused. What I found was that life for me was a lot simpler than I ever thought it could be, yet at the same time I was accomplishing more as I was being led by His Spirit. Won't you join me?

The Victory Is in the Benefit

Romans 12:21 (KJV)—*Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*

If evil is supposedly so superior or powerful, then why would the Bible tell us to be not *overcome of evil*? Sounds to me as if we have some choices, some options. We can choose to not allow evil to subdue us, or we can choose to be overcome by it. We can refuse to be conquered by evil, or we can allow evil to defeat us.

God wants us to know that we can resist evil from prevailing in our lives. We do not have to tolerate Satan getting the victory over us. He may come trying to sell or give us worthless, depraved, harmful, bad, and wicked things; but we do not have to make a purchase or accept a gift from him.

The Bible tells us to utterly detest what is evil: "Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good" (Romans 12:9). When we obey this command, we can overcome all the devil's negatives with God's good, with His benefits, with what is well. When we cleave to the benefits and what is well, then we can dispense it in evil times.

When our benefit package is dispensed, it will subdue, conquer, and prevail against evil. We will get the victory not only for ourselves but for others also.

Notice that the devil tries to overcome us *of* evil. That phrase reminds me of being overcome *of* smoke. People are not overcome with smoke: They aren't cooperating with smoke. *With* suggests voluntary involvement. Some cigarette smokers may get lung cancer *with* smoke because they cooperate *with* it. In a fire, though, one is overcome *of* smoke.

But praise God, we overcome evil *with* good: We voluntarily involve ourselves *with* the benefits, *with* what is well. When we utterly detest everything that will not benefit God's creation, we are positioned to win.

Heavenly Father, I thank You for allowing me to see that the victory is not in retaliation toward what others do to me or say about me. Real victory is in detesting it but choosing to cooperate with good that can only come from You. Thank You for letting me be a part of every victory I win with You, in Jesus' name.

A New Kind of Defense

Psalm 35:1-2 (NLT)—O Lord, oppose those who oppose me. Declare war on those who are attacking me. Put on your armor, and take up your shield. Prepare for battle, and come to my aid.

I know God, His nature, His character, and His unique way of winning every battle. Therefore, when I ask God to oppose those who oppose me and to declare war on those who attack me, I know He will win every war.

God fights with the weapons of love, compassion, kindness, and wisdom. His whole defense is to attract people to Himself, to bring them into His family, and to instruct them in His righteousness. God does not seek the destruction of any human whom His Son's shed blood on Calvary poured forth to save. God's armor and shield is light, love, truth, and unlimited liberty.

I need God to fight for me because I am still learning to fight battles with His weapons and not the weapons of destruction. One of the greatest weapons that He has helped me to lay aside is my tongue. In His Word, I found that no weapon created by humans could be more destructive to me than my tongue used to speak evil, unkindness, and words contrary to His plan for humankind.

My flesh does not like it when others oppose me. I do not enjoy being attacked. However, I no longer struggle to refrain from retaliating. Now I thank God for those who test the fruit of the Spirit in my life, because any fool can follow the dictates of the flesh, but only the sons and daughters of God can be led by His Spirit.

The wars that come my way are familiar. The devil can only recycle his tactics, but my defense is totally different and I win every time. It is wonderful to enter into God's rest, knowing and understanding His promises. It is reassuring to allow Him to fight for me and protect me as I continue to cultivate His Spirit in me.

If you have not yet learned this new kind of defense and you are interested, just ask Him for it. He will gladly provide you with free lessons.

A Quarter's Worth

John 6:33 (KJV)—*For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.*

We have a friend who, when he discovers a new or unique thing that gladdens his heart, will respond with "I want me a quarter's worth of that."

Some of us are old enough to remember when you could not purchase things by the pound and would say to the merchant, "Let me have a quarter's worth." Often, a quarter's worth made the sandwiches for the next day's lunch.

Thank God, we don't have to settle for a quarter's worth of anything anymore, especially Jesus and the Holy Ghost. We have them in full force and unlimited measure. When Jesus came down and gave life to the world, the things that once caused us concern were defeated.

Our ultimate goal and responsibility now is to communicate to others this good news. Some people are still settling for a quarter's worth when all of heaven and the resources of God Almighty are available to them. Help me to tell the world they are blessed. They are blessed if they are saved, and they are blessed to have the opportunity to become born again if they are not saved. Salvation is a privilege available to everyone. We must let them know, and no one person or ministry can reach everyone. We must knit together in unity with this common goal: to set people free of the bondage of sin and satan, and enter this life of liberty in Christ Jesus.

There is just no room in His body for division and competition. The Spirit is calling us to unite according to the Bible and the Spirit of Christ in us. Our doctrines, culture, and habits impress neither God nor the devil. In fact, the devil would like nothing better than to keep us occupied with anything that is void of Holy Ghost power.

Christians should get together socially occasionally, but there should be a time in our social settings when we are fine-tuning our spiritual antennae to hear the voice of the Lord on how to reach the lost, heal the sick, raise the dead, and walk in a victorious posture in the middle of adversity, controversy, persecution, criticism, and anything the devil hurls at us.

I want more than a quarter's worth of the power of God.

A Set Time to Possess the Promise

Joshua 1:11 (KJV)—*Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over Jordan to go in to possess the land, which the Lord your God giveth you to possess it.*

Time passes between God's promise and the possession of the promise. God gave the promise of the land to Abraham, but He never set a time for the land to be possessed. God told Moses to arise before the people and begin the journey to possess the land beyond the Jordan, but He gave no timeframe for the possession. It was after Moses died that God gave Joshua a set time to possess the land—"within three days"—though it was theirs from the time He spoke it to Abraham.

Please stop trying to possess the promise before the fullness of time. Faith says, "I have it now," when it is spoken. Possession in the natural is simply a manifestation of what you received at the time of the promise; it is not something you can make happen. The promise feeds your faith, and your faith leads you to hold on until the time of possession. Let patience have her perfect work in you.

Jesus told His disciples not to depart from Jerusalem, "but wait for the promise of the Father.... For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence" (Acts 1:4-5). In other words, Jesus was saying, "The Holy Ghost was the second part of the promise to Abram concerning the future of his family [Genesis 12:1-3]. But now, in a few days after all of these years, the Holy Ghost will become a permanent resident in the earth."

There is a fullness of time for God's every promise. He alone decides the set time to possess. Through a vision in early 1977, God promised Clinton RLCC before we quit our secular jobs and went to Bible school. I read about the building that would eventually become RLCC in a newspaper and agreed with my manager that it would become a church, as it had closed as a nightclub. In God's set time, we possessed it as our worship center in 1985; in 1996, we ordained my former manager in it as the co-pastor of a church she and her husband started.

Receive the promise at once; then wait for the word as to when you are to possess it, and it will not be a struggle for you.

Accurate Comprehension and Judgment

Isaiah 11:2 (KJV)—And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, I confess this day that I am the branch of the divine Vine, Your Son, Jesus. I believe that Your Spirit rests upon me because I am in Him. Therefore, I thank You that I have Your Spirit of wisdom, which allows me to comprehend all matters.

You have given me Your Spirit of knowledge to judge accurately all of the intricate affairs of this life and this ministry. All of my abilities are a result of Your knowledge in me to perform. I have the Spirit of Your counsel to use discretion and to act cautiously in doubtful matters.

The strength of Your Spirit on me allows for supernatural feats to be accomplished in and through me as I submit and yield to that strength.

Your Spirit of knowledge allows me to know all things—past, present, and future—that You need me to know pertaining to life and godliness. I will never be in the dark about anything that I should be enlightened to.

The awesome reverence that I have for You, Father God, is due to holy fear that You have given to me. I continually delight in honoring and reverencing You because You are so worthy of my honor and reverence.

Please help me to never judge anything by what I see with my natural eyes, or to make decisions based on what my physical ears hear. Instead, I desire to stay open always to Your Spirit of righteousness, which will enable me to judge fairly using sound words of Your wisdom and Your truth.

When my enemies plot against me, they will be destroyed by the breath of my lips, which will speak with love only Your laws, Your counsel, Your statutes, and Your commands.

Your righteousness and Your faithfulness I will wear as a belt around my waist for that which is needed to cover my vital areas. (See Isaiah 11:2-5.)

Aid Does Not Mean Eliminate

Hebrews 2:18 (NKJV)—*In that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.*

Of course, we would prefer that Jesus eliminate all temptation from our lives, but the Father did not prevent Him from being tempted. Therefore, Jesus will not prevent us, His body, from being tempted. What He will do is to keep a continuous flow of His grace moving in our direction. He promised that His grace is sufficient and is more than enough for every temptation.

Jesus has promised to aid us with the sufficiency of His grace. He knows how much we can bear, because He experienced every temptation known unto man yet remained faithful to His Father, to His call, and to being our example of resisting temptation.

We often think that Calvary was all that Jesus faced. However, the fact is that the way He handled Himself on earth made Calvary possible. Had He submitted to the temptation surrounding Him, He would have disqualified Himself from Calvary's triumph.

I sometimes hear Christians making requests to the Father to fix, change, and do things that are not scriptural. The promise to us is deliverance. There will be no deliverance where there have been no traps, pitfalls, and pain. I suppose a life free of traps, pitfalls, and pain would be okay, but I believe that we would have less tenacity and resolve without them. Since living brings with it good and evil, life and death, riches and poverty, health and sickness, it would appear to make more sense to operate in His grace, which is His aiding me.

Years ago when I was clearing out our home to sell it, a number of people who obviously care about me came in to assist me. No one person did it all, but they all did a part and I was aided greatly.

Jesus has done the major part for us to have access to His power. He was the example. He willingly and joyfully suffered death on the cross. He went into hell for three days; then He ascended to His Father and sent His Holy Spirit to empower us to endure any and all temptation.

He promised to aid us when we are tempted. He never promised to eliminate temptation, so stop asking Him to remove what you have the power to resist. Do your part.

Pure and Generous Gifts

2 Corinthians 8:2 (NIV)—*Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity.*

All of us can give when we have. Granted, many don't; but we can. God looks for those inspired to give, regardless of their lack. Notice I said, "inspired," not "coerced." He seeks givers whose hearts are joyful. Such givers have ceased to be concerned with what they don't have; they are busy being joyful about what they do have.

There is always someone who has less than you have, but God may inspire you to give to someone who has more than you have. The key to knowing where to give is obedience to the Spirit. Listening and responding to His leading will help you avoid being taken in by boisterous, greedy leaders who take advantage of their position and of the people they are supposed to bless.

While Clinton and I were in Bible school, the norm for us was to be broke. At offering time in one of the evening services, we were faced with the choice of either holding on to our last two dollars or putting them into the offering plate.

The wisdom of God allowed us to look at the two dollars in two ways. We could see them as the last we had, though they would not put a dent in the \$1500 we needed; or we could see them as seed to be sown, in which case God would have to come on the scene two dollars sooner. We sowed those two dollars with joyful hearts. Never be caught eating your last seed. Sow it.

We were immediately treated to some ice cream cones, which we didn't need but we certainly appreciated. And because of our total abandonment to be directed by the Spirit, to give our pure and generous gifts, and to show our gratitude for the two-dollar of return we started with before the whole harvest arrived, we did receive the full amount we needed—and then some.

Father, I thank You for teaching us that a pure, generous gift is not the quantity or size of our gift. When we give our all, we have given generously, and the gift is certainly pure. Our hearts rejoice that we can trust You for seed to sow but also that we can trust You when the last of the seed is sown. You alone are our source.

Any Disobedience Is A Turn Toward Wickedness

2 Timothy 2:19 (NLT)—*But God's truth stands firm like a foundation stone with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and "Those who claim they belong to the Lord must turn away from all wickedness."*

The Bible is very clear. God knows who are His. It is just as clear that those who claim they belong to Him must—not should—turn away from all wickedness. You and I can't fool God.

Claiming to belong to God, yet continuing to act like the devil reveals that we are making unwise choices while expecting to enjoy the benefits God provided for His children.

Often we say, "Things aren't working for me like I want them to," when the truth is that we are not working with the Word of God. We must give the Holy Ghost something to work with, and it usually starts with our obedience to God.

Once, a young friend visited me concerning a proposal she wanted implemented. As she was leaving, I asked about her dad. She began to cry. The long and short of the story is the family was being challenged and my friend felt that it had gone on too long.

As we shared, I found out that her dad was not attending church anywhere because "he is not receiving what he is looking for at this time."

The Bible tells us, "And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage and warn each other, especially now that the day of his coming back again is drawing near" (Hebrews 10:25).

Did you notice that nowhere in this verse is there a discussion of what we want to do? As I told my young friend, the bottom line is that I could easily explain the family's struggle. Dad, the head of the family, is out of order according to the Word of God, which puts him out of the will of God, which disqualifies him from the benefits if not the blessings of God.

Folks, we can't fool God. Although we may think we're living a good, clean life, any disobedience to God's Word is a turn in the direction of wickedness.

One Gracious Blessing After Another

John 1:16 (NLT)—*We have all benefited from the rich blessings he brought to us—one gracious blessing after another.*

Jesus' coming to earth benefits us. It saddens me when people, not understanding God's love for them, accuse God of negative things that happen to them. Jesus' obedience unto death for them and God's superiority as a parent indicate that God would never harm His own creation. God has given us His best, and He continually watches over us and gives us every good and perfect gift.

Negatives come my way, just as they come yours. Contrary trials and tests knock on my door, just as they knock on yours. But let me tell you how I respond to these unwelcome visits. When I answer the door, I recognize the visitor and where he came from. I don't knowingly invite him in. If he happens to sneak in or get his foot in my door, I don't go running to God to ask, "How did this happen?" or "Why are You letting this happen to me?" Instead, I remember that God is my Father; and I honor His love for me by focusing on the truth that I, along with all of His children, benefit from the rich blessings He has brought us.

You will never resist the devil's influence or attacks by blaming God. This is the time to cast your anchor solidly on Christ and His purpose for coming into your life. This is the time to know that God will work all you are going through together for your good and that this light affliction is but for a moment.

You say, "But there doesn't seem to be an end to the pain and suffering assigned to me." First, know who assigned it; then decide to praise and worship the Lord while the enemy is sitting in your house. Then you will be free of the effects of what Satan came to do.

If the devil is unlawfully visiting your home, job, or life, tell him of all the rich benefits and blessings that God has provided for you. Satan and all of his imps will flee from your voice as you sing and proclaim the gracious benefits of your God. Forget how you feel for the moment. Do it by faith, and watch your feelings line up.

When God Is Convinced

Genesis 22:12 (KJV)—*And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.*

We often want to be convinced by outward appearances and circumstances that God is for us. However, do we give as much thought and consideration to whether God is convinced that we are for Him?

We may use the language of love when we communicate with Him. We may speak beautiful prayers of adoration and devotion. We may sing lovely, eloquent songs in worship services about Him. But in our everyday lives, do our actions support what our mouths claim?

Just as God gave Abraham the desire of his heart when He gave him Isaac, God gives us the desires of our hearts. He provides creature comforts that exceed our dreams and expectations. He meets our needs often before we even ask. He gives us the desires of our hearts—above and beyond what we could ask or think.

But I must ask a question for all of us to consider. What have we done lately for God? Do we obey His Word? Do we keep His written commands and statutes? If so, do we also willingly obey what He speaks to our hearts? Certainly, God is pleased when we do what is written in His Word, but can He depend on us to do what He speaks to our hearts—even when it may be a bit out of the ordinary?

Are we able today to give back to God without hesitation what He gave us in the first place? Unless and until we do, God is not convinced that we love Him and that He is first and foremost in our lives. God does not want us to be afraid of Him, but He does want us to reverence Him to the point that we will give up all to follow Him.

The rewards of pleasing God far exceed the fear of losing anything or anyone.

Heavenly Father, forgive me for the times I even thought to hesitate about what You required of me. Continue to teach me to experience and enjoy your gifts and provision with an attitude of willingness to let go of anything or anyone that will hinder my progress with You and Your plan for me. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Are Things Working for You, or Are You Working for Things?

Romans 8:28 (KJV)—*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

All of us experience challenges in our lives that we would prefer to do without. But it appears that all humans—sinners and saints alike—share in certain things. How we handle the experiences makes the difference.

Notice Paul said that all things work together for good. He did not say they have worked (past) or will work (future), but they work (present) together for good. With that established in my mind and in my heart, I look for and expect to see God in all that I am exposed or subjected to, even when it appears He is nowhere in view.

Everything does not feel or look like joy every moment of my life, but I elect to count it all joy anyway, because I'm protecting my heart by agreeing with God's Word. When I do that, the issues of life that flow from my heart will sustain me while God is working them all for my good.

How can I be so sure of this? Paul says, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." I know that I love God; I know that I love Jesus; I know that my only desire to remain in the earth is to do what pleases Him. I know I have no agenda of my own, and I am determined to do only His will.

With that in mind, I've settled on the fact that I am called according to His purpose. Therefore, I do not have to work for things because He is working all things together for my good; thus, the good things pursue me.

Father, help me to always focus on Your plan and purpose for my life. Give me clear understanding of the true values in life, and teach me to remember to store my treasures in heaven, where they are protected from the decay and contamination of this world. I accept that You are God of the present and Your efforts on behalf of humankind are ever available. I thank You for that kind of care, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Those Outside Are Not the Enemy

Colossians 4:5 (KJV)—*Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.*

While God certainly doesn't reward sin or evil work, John 3:16 tells us that His Son allowed for everyone to again have access to Him.

First Thessalonians 4:12 says, "...walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing."

I have found nothing in the New Testament to support the teaching that God takes all that the sinner has—his finances, his home, et cetera—and gives it to believers. My Bible tells me that He rains on the just and the unjust. He has mercy on whomever He pleases to.

As a believer, I don't sense that I need to believe that the non-believer's belongings are to become mine. I sense that I should believe that the nonbeliever should come to Christ. If a nonbeliever gives me too much change at the store, can I truly see that as a blessing or gift from God, or should I not attempt to return it, as I would to a brother or sister in the Lord?

Those outside the faith have neither what I want nor what I need. I have what they want and need, though they may not realize it. They may have material wealth, but that is temporal. We have eternal wealth with an unlimited resource supplying us.

God has reconciled us to Himself and given us the ministry of reconciliation. Our ministry is to offer to the lost this gift of grace. I do not believe the outsider would find my God and my Savior very attractive if He took from him to give to me. Let's wake up and see what God has left us here to do: To be wise in His ways, to offer the light to the lost—not to extract from them their earthly accumulations.

Remember, we are God's. Everything belongs to Him, and He denies us nothing we need and can manage.

Gracious Father, help us see that the lost, the hurt, and the dying are all the reason for Calvary's tree. You separate sin from the sinner when You look through Your eyes of wisdom and compassion. Were that not true, where would we be today? We desire to reflect You in Your fullness to everyone, especially to those without, in Jesus' name.

Ask God to Confirm

Judges 13:8 (KJV)—*Then Manoah intreated the Lord and said, "O my Lord, let the man of God which thou didst send come again to us, and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born."*

What a reputation this woman must have had. Her husband took her at her word with no question or doubt though she had been barren and had borne him no children. He did not give her the third degree and wonder if she had been too long with the liquid spirits. Obviously, she had on occasion imbibed; otherwise, why would the angel tell her to leave off the wine and strong drink (verse 4)?

This woman evidently had not been deceitful to her husband in the past. In fact, she did not rehearse what or when she should discuss this with Manoah. She, knowing that his cooperation would be needed to make this message a manifestation, did not hesitate to share with him.

Sometimes, we get talked out of the promises of God by neglecting to testify of them to those involved. It is one thing to believe the promise that she would after all this time conceive, but her faith was not enough to believe that conception would occur without her husband's involvement. So, if it takes someone else's cooperation to make God's word to you come to pass, why are you not talking to that person about it?

When you fail to approach others concerning their part in performing for you what God has spoken to you, that is a sign of doubt, and double-minded people should not even think that they will receive anything from the Lord (James 1:7).

Yes, your doubt concerning the spoken word of God in your life will hinder the written Word from becoming alive and real to you. Dispel doubt and don't allow it to return. Too much is at stake to permit doubt of any size to linger.

Are you looking for the desire of your heart to come to pass? Looking alone will not get it. You have to believe and involve anyone else who is to make it happen. If your words have been honest and you have not violated others' trust in what you say, get ready to go forward, and all involved will be in agreement with your words.

Step Up To The Plate

Matthew 7:21 (KJV)—*Not everyone that saith unto me, "Lord, Lord," shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*

Confessing and saying can be done until we are multi-colored in the face. Failing to do the will of the Father will prevent our successful walk while here in the earth and affect our entering into the Lord's kingdom. We can call Him "Lord, Lord." But failure to do the will of the Father blocks our entrance into His kingdom.

Words have power, and they have been given to us to use as weapons against the enemy. Every demon in existence must obey our words. But the Lord is more interested in what we do than what we say. We are not to just say the will of God. We are to do

The devil laughs at our words when our actions do not line up

His will. The devil laughs at our words when our actions do not line up with what we are saying.

Continue to make your confessions according to God's Word. Speak to every mountain and situation that needs to be changed. But if you want your words to have power, find out the will of the Father, then be open to hear a most unusual approach to any situation that concerns you.

Rumor had it that a possibility existed that a nude bar would be opening diagonally across from our church. This information came just before we were to begin our Friday night prayer service. I told the congregation that we were not going to pray against them coming. In fact, we were going to put a sign on our marquee for all to see which would say, "Welcome, patrons of the nude bar. When you don't find what you are looking for there, visit us. We have exactly what and who you need, and He loves you very much." The proposed bar never materialized.

After I shared our planned marquee message, a visitor walked up to me after the service and said, "It is about time someone stepped up to the plate."

It's easy to step up to the plate when we allow our Father to swing the bat.

God Will Anoint What You Use for Him

Joshua 2:18 (KJV)—*Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by.*

Two spies, sent by Joshua, spoke these words to the harlot Rahab. This was my kind of girl: she didn't allow her past to hinder her future.

God does some interesting things with people not often included on our "respectable, acceptable" list. Of all the houses in Jericho, Rahab's was the one God led the two men to, and she risked herself and her family for God's plan. She told them, "I know that the Lord hath given you the land..." (Joshua 2:9). She told them that news of God's former acts had preceded their arrival and "as soon as we heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any courage in any man, because of you: for the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath" (verse 11).

As children of God, we are not to try to make others fear us or join us. When you are in the perfect will of God, you can rest in Him and allow what He has done for you to draw others to aid you in your effort for Him.

Rahab used what she had—a cord—to help the two spies escape. God even used her to advise them where to go and why. They believed this "harlot" because she was willing to risk her life to benefit God's plan for humankind.

The spies then said, "Bind this scarlet thread in the window." I believe this scarlet thread represents Jesus' blood, all that He could give. I sense that the three days they were sent to the mountains are symbolic of Jesus' three days in the grave. Not only did they emerge free from death after three days, but their obedience to remain there freed the rest of the people, including Rahab's family.

Who stands at your door? Are you observing your unworthiness, or seeing that God may be doing a new and different thing? Look at what God has done, not what you have done, and dare to get involved. Offer what you have to Him. He just may use this opportunity to bring you into a new life and save those important to you.

Never Compete for Affection

2 Samuel 15:6 (KJV)—*And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.*

Unfortunately, the Absalom spirit still prevails today. In addition, if you will handle the situation the same as David did, the outcome will be the same.

Never compete with another person for the affection of others. That is all in the flesh. However, if you will choose to do what David did, you will release the Spirit of God to operate His power for your benefit and His glory.

What did David do? Second Samuel 15:31 reads, “And one told David, saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.”

This verse saved our ministry. My husband and I got in agreement with God’s plan for this ministry after seeking the Lord about a potentially explosive situation. Using this verse as the foundation for our prayer concerning an Absalom spirit in one of our leaders, we decided to walk in love and let the wheat and tares grow together and watch God continue His work and plan through us.

Watch God take the lead to fulfill His plan. Ahithophel was once David’s advisor and seemed as wise as though his words came directly from God’s mouth (2 Samuel 16:23). However, when he advised Absalom, though it seemed good to all (17:4), suddenly, Absalom wanted to compare it with the advice of Hushai, who had been sent by David for this purpose (15:31-32).

All the leaders, including Absalom, followed Hushai’s advice as better. “For the Lord had arranged to defeat the counsel of Ahithophel, which really was the better plan...” (17:14).

Pastors, never concern yourselves with those who conceal an agenda of their own. If God has assigned someone to support His plan through you, He will defeat their counsel should they oppose you. Ahithophel, who was publicly disgraced when Absalom did not go with his plan, went home to set his house in order and hanged himself. Those opposing you will lose God’s wisdom and verbally hang themselves. You stay steady.

No Man Can Hinder Me

Revelation 3:8 (NLT)—*I know all the things you do, and I have opened a door for you that no one can shut. You have little strength, yet you obeyed my word and did not deny me.*

Any intelligent person knows that prejudice is insane; however, it does exist and some have failed to enjoy life and be happy because it is alive and kicking.

Prejudice and name-calling do not bother me at all. I became aware that I am who I am because of believing the Word of God concerning Him and His Son, Jesus Christ. I realized that I have comfortably walked through some doors in my life that I never saw or touched. The Holy Spirit has guided me from and to some very interesting events and happenings.

If the demon of prejudice is so powerful, why couldn't he prevent God's plan for my life? He cannot stop what God has on schedule for me or you. I don't deny that prejudice does exist. I simply deny its effect in my life. No amount of prejudice emanating from any person can hinder me.

I never concern myself with who can open a door for me, because in sixty-nine years I have had doors open to and for me, and I have yet to exert any energy or thoughts about how to get ahead. I have been ahead for so long walking through doors that Jesus opened for me that I hardly remember when I was behind or beneath.

I believed that each door my Lord opened, no man could shut. Consequently, I walk in and out at will, believing that no man can hinder me. How do I do this? I daily acknowledge that I have little strength, believing that His grace is made perfect in my weakness.

I discovered that obedience to His every word and refusing to deny Him and His influence in my life are a written guarantee of a successful life in Christ.

My faith is not in rulers of the land. My faith is in the One who is on the throne of heaven.

Nothing in My Flesh Is Good

Romans 7:18 (KJV)—*For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.*

Unless and until you view your old sinful nature as rotten to the core, you will be in a struggle. The Bible does not teach us to pamper our flesh or yield to it in any way. We are to crucify, mortify, and reckon it as dead, because the will of the flesh has but one purpose and that is to prevent us from walking in the Spirit.

Paul was not giving us a license to excuse what our flesh wants to do. He was simply telling us that the flesh is real and unless you take the mastery over it, it will dominate you.

Never expect your fleshly, carnal nature to cooperate with any spiritual endeavor you want to enjoy. One of the worst things you can do is to think that you are so mature spiritually that you cannot possibly miss it. The older I become and the closer I draw to the Lord, the more I expect to arouse the attention of the devil.

With that in mind, I absolutely must ask for the grace of God in everything. Don't make the mistake of thinking that your confession of Jesus Christ will prevent you from "messing up." What Paul did teach us was that although living in these earth suits can be a struggle, it is not a wrestling match you have to lose. Once you are able to see that there are two laws working in your body parts, you can, like Paul, acknowledge that the fleshly nature is wretched and miserable. It will try to entice you to every sinful deed.

So, what's the answer for us? Romans 7:25 is very clear. Thank God! Keep your mind on Him. Ask often for His grace to get through every day and each situation and learn that a second or two to include the Holy Ghost's help will make a difference in every thought, word, and deed.

The Holy Ghost's ministry is to do for Jesus what He would do were He physically still here in the earth. Think about it. Would Jesus not take care of His own body with good advice? Jesus never did for anyone what they could do for themselves, but He sure took care of what they could not when they asked Him.

Obedience Brings Blessing

Proverbs 3:33 (KJV)—*The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked: but he blesseth the habitation of the just.*

Imagine! The choice to receive Jesus Christ can change your life! That one choice will not only prevent you from going to hell; it will also provide you with the blessings of the Lord. I understand what people are trying to say about generational curses. However, a single choice to change can bring with it blessings, length of days, happiness, wealth, spiritual and material riches, along with all the other gifts God has promised.

You can live in divine health. Furthermore, you can expect that health to continue. But it does not happen by accident. When you purposefully believe and store the wisdom of God and the understanding of His promises in your heart and speak them from your mouth, God's Word will perform in your life and health will be the result.

You can sleep well at night when you love being covered by the Word of God, whether it is spoken by the Spirit or written in the Bible. You can walk safely without stumbling. And fear will not overtake you because of sudden changes in the world or your personal life. When you place no confidence in the flesh, realizing that no good thing dwells in the flesh anyway, you will keep your confidence established solidly on the Lord. And none who puts one's trust in Him will ever be ashamed (Psalm 25:2).

I encourage you not only to resist fear but also to refuse its torment. Operate in your God-given authority and command fear to go from you. It must obey. Do not allow sickness, poverty, or fear to lurk around you, probing for a weak link in your chain so it can attach itself to you.

Instead, frame your world by the words of your mouth. Take delight in remembering that when you speak what God has promised, His words or promises released from your mouth have a creative force that will cause those things which "be not" to indeed "become" just as you have believed and spoken.

Personally, I want those around me to see that obedience to God's principles and laws has produced peace, health, longevity, and wisdom for every situation in my life.

One Woman's Wisdom Saved the City

2 Samuel 20:22 (NLT)—*Then the woman went to the people with her wise advice, and they cut off Sheba's head and threw it out to Joab. So he blew the trumpet and called his troops back from the attack, and they returned to their homes. Joab returned to the king of Jerusalem.*

I have learned that it is not my place to fight physical battles for the Lord. However, it is my place to be used of the Lord with wise words that will penetrate the heart of those on a mission that could bring harm to what belongs to God. God is capable of protecting Himself and what is His.

I recall a time when I received some letters from prominent, well-known ministers, some who are personal friends whom I love, suggesting that we get involved in petitioning against the purchase of a cable TV network "because it could negatively affect the spreading of the gospel." My spirit was grieved as I read the letters because some of these same people had taught me confidence in God, how I was not to resort to the world's way of doing things, and that God was big enough to defend Himself and I was to simply follow His lead.

What grieved me the most was that these people genuinely believed that man's choice and actions could prevent the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ from being spread in these last days.

Could it be that like in the book of Acts, when the believers were all gathered together in Jerusalem, when they were told to "go into all the world," that maybe it is now time for people to get out from in front of a TV and go to a local church to be taught by a pastor? Are these people really concerned about the Gospel being shut down or are they concerned that their donor base will decrease and they need the viewers' money to support their empire?

Just as God protected the innocent when the good people were willing to rid their city of the guilty Sheba, He will spread His Word to save the sinner and to instruct the saints when we trust and follow His plan. When people stop using TV preaching and teaching as a substitute for attending a local assembly, then maybe He will cause secular stations to allow the message of Christ to be spread on their channels.

Riches Are Meaningless

Ecclesiastes 5:10 (NIV)—*Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless.*

Money serves a very useful purpose in the earth and of itself is uncorrupted and uncontaminated. However, money controlling humans' hearts and hands is the beginning of their sorrows.

Money is a servant. We are to use it as a means of exchange. We were never intended to hoard money or take it out of circulation. When we do not activate it, it dies.

Because of the decrease in the value of money, those who have stored money have discovered that it has not been as beneficial as they had planned. Those who have hidden money for their rainy days have found that life presents a lot more rain to them than it does to others. Sadly, believers who find themselves in this position discover that their faith and confidence in God as their source is sorely affected.

A lover of money has an addiction, and most addictions can only be relieved or satisfied for the moment. To money addicts, there is no such thing as enough money. The money they love so much does not bring them peace or happiness. Yet they think that if they can just gain more, it will make everything negative go away.

Ambition is good when what a person is ambitious about is for the good of humankind. Certainly, abundance and increase have their place and purpose. However, when a person loves material goods, they take control of the one intended to be their master.

Wealth in the hands of the wise can be used to help make a difference in people's lives. However, wise people understand the uncertainty of money and how transitory it really is. Therefore, they exercise wisdom in keeping it in its proper place, not cultivating affection for and dependency on it.

Father, I know that You are not opposed to money unless it hinders Your children from depending on You. Help us see that You give us money to enable us to fulfill Your plan and purpose. It is a servant for us to work with to perform certain tasks. Precious Father, work with us to remove the blinders that riches often create to desensitize us to Your Word and Your Spirit. We seek You first, in Jesus' name.

Spiritual Audacity and Divine Confidence

Acts 12:5 (KJV)—*Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.*

When the church corporately prays to God for an individual, several things occur. The one in need of prayer is able to sleep and not fret. He or she will often become aware of the presence of the Lord. This is followed by godly illumination and, finally, deliverance from bondage.

It doesn't matter if a correctional facility is your home and very thick chains are your restraints. Just look at Peter. When the church prays for you, your chains will rattle and the walls and floor will begin to shake. God may use a guard to unlock the prison door to your life of freedom. He has been known to provide angelic exits for some. He has also allowed the physical body to stay where it is while the spirit moved about in places where no passport was required.

Prayer is simply the "spiritual audacity" to approach a holy God through relationship with His Son, Jesus, having the divine confidence to remind Him of what He has promised, to thank Him that it is so, to sign Jesus' name to it, and to walk away as though it were already done.

There are many ways to pray. Sometimes we ask; other times we claim or offer thanksgiving. Most of the time, we speak what is written in the Word. We can even ask God how He wants us to pray—or even if we *should* pray. He may tell us to leave a thing alone because the wheels are already in motion and nothing could change the outcome, though we will be at peace with it.

Are you afraid to go to God with that request that is burning in your bosom? Can you really believe that He is able to create it or make it happen for you?

The true living God is not limited or lacking. Be bold and audacious. Let divine confidence rise to the occasion and need. As you walk uprightly before God, He will withhold no good thing from you. It gives Him pleasure to give you His kingdom. You are His pleasure as you receive the treasure of His words, which are designed to make you audacious and confident.

We're Not a Surprise to God

Romans 8:29 (KJV)—*For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

I am thrilled to know that I am not some afterthought or leftover of God's. I did not just recently become important to Him. On the contrary, I have always been a part of His predetermined plan. I was on His mind long before He was on mine. What did He "foreknow," or predetermine for me? He knew and planned that I would be conformed to the image of His Son. He predestinated me to be like Jesus. He determined before I was born that I would be fashioned like unto Him.

I don't know about you, but I sure don't want to disappoint God by being otherwise. I want to be everything He designed me to be.

Our adoption and our inheritance was according to God's predetermined plan and purpose. Ephesians 1:11 (NKJV) says, "In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will."

He did not confer with a single other being. He did the work after the counsel of His own will.

Why did God adopt us by Jesus Christ? He did it because it would bring Him pleasure.

Never allow anyone to cause you to wonder about your value and importance to your Father God. He knew how much pleasure He would have in His children, so He made the determination beforehand to put everything in motion that would make this a reality. Hallelujah!

Dear Father, since You repeatedly remind me that I am not Your first mistake, I accept by faith Your love. I accept by faith Your Son as my Savior. I accept by faith Your Holy Spirit to work with me to fulfill Your plan and purpose for me. I was Your idea. You determined that I would bring You pleasure. You decided to provide me an inheritance. You decided to adopt me into full rights as Your child. You decided to allot for me patrimony because You are my Father. Though my input was not a part of Your original decision, I sure am thankful that I am a beneficiary of Your counsel, Your work, and Your will. I bless You today, in Jesus' name.

You Are Precious to God

Deuteronomy 32:10 (NLT)—*He found them in a desert land, in an empty, howling wasteland. He surrounded them and watched over them; he guarded them as his most precious possession.*

Our Father guards us as His most precious possession despite what we have done, where we have been, or where we are now.

I was born again at age seven, and my history of sin was rather limited at that time. However, because I lacked godly teaching and examples, I found myself in a few deserts as I was looking for desserts.

I was always full of laughter, but there was a hollow space between my neck and my belly button. A howling wasteland was my abode even when I lived in penthouse apartments.

But because I had received the Lord Jesus Christ, I became one of God's most precious possessions. For that I am eternally grateful. I get chills when I think of how useless and unprofitable my life would have been had not God my Father surrounded, watched over, and guarded me because of my value to Him.

If you have ever in your life acknowledged Jesus Christ as your Savior, come home to Him. Don't let the negative, degrading, uninspiring words of the devil cause you to think or feel that you are a nothing and a nobody. Forget what you think or feel, confess any known sin in your life, march right into God's throne room with a humble heart, and claim what Calvary's sacrifice represents for you.

You are not a bastard; you are not illegitimate or an outcast abandoned by God. You may just be uninformed of His love and the necessity and power of confession. The Creator of the universe is your Father. He loves you, and He has personally taken upon Himself the responsibility of watching over and restoring you.

The devil knows that he can only do so much to you and that his influence is limited. That is why he wants to keep you ignorant of his devices. If you were once Christ's, and the devil has been beating you over the head for past sins, confess them and come home.

If you have never made Jesus your Lord, change that by confessing Him as such today. It matters not where you are: Jesus will meet you there. You are precious to God.

You Alone Do I Worship

Isaiah 26:13 (NKJV)—*O Lord our God, masters besides You have had dominion over us; but by You only we make mention of Your name.*

Life may have allowed for others to rule over us, but it is our choice to accept God's rule in us by His Spirit's direction. We respect and give the proper honor to parents, presidents, and people in authority, but God alone will we worship.

In 1 Corinthians 10:32-33, Paul told the Corinthian church not to give offense to Jews, Gentiles, or the church of God. He explained his desire to please others in his actions and not just to do what he liked, because his commitment to Christ Jesus was not to provide for *his* best but for *their* best so they would be saved. Then, in verse 1 of chapter 11, Paul said, "And you should follow my example, just as I follow Christ's." In other words, "Imitate me, mimic me in leading others to Christ."

Paul exhorted the church of Thessalonica to live properly by staying away from any Christian who was unwilling to work hard, who wanted to be idle and lazy. He did not want them to "mooch" off others. They were to pay for what they ate. Even though he had the right to request to be fed by them, he did not; and he wanted them to mimic and imitate him in this.

Paul was not trying to gather to himself sons and daughters. He was attempting to lead all Christians to follow Christ, who desired for all men to be saved and to come into the knowledge of truth (1 Timothy 2:4).

Watch out for people who are gathering people to themselves. It is idolatry, and God is not pleased. The purpose for our salvation is to be an example to the world and other Christians, to bring men and women, boys and girls, to Christ.

Isaiah acknowledged that humans act as masters, or as husbands and wives, but he said that he was married to one God, who alone was worthy of worship. He would mention only His name in honor and praise.

Church, it is time for us to grow up. Learn the difference between respect and gratitude for human authority over you, and pledge your absolute and total commitment to worshipping the Lord Jesus Christ.

Put Off What You Have Not Proven

1 Samuel 17:39 (KJV)—*And David girded his sword upon his armour, and he assayed to go; for he had not proved it. And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them. And David put them off him.*

Like David, you must remove the security blankets well-meaning people try to put on you. Since you are the one about to do battle for lives to come into the kingdom, trusting God for your deliverance and protection, don't concern yourself with what any human thinks. Do what you have to do to bring glory to God.

There is a real "Saul" spirit loose in the earth against the body of Christ. That spirit says, "Go, and the Lord be with thee" (verse 37), but then burdens you with what did not work for them. No natural protection will ever work for a believer like faith and trust in the tried and true God.

Saul wore this armor into natural battle, but it had no power to influence him in spiritual warfare. He repeatedly missed it with God through disobedience.

People, we are in a spiritual fight and we are expected to win. Don't think the natural attack on you is the battle to be won, or even fought. The natural attacks come to get your focus off of the true war. Learn to ignore the natural "stuff." Jesus has covered that for you by His shed blood, but only you and I can deal with the spiritual things in our lives.

Aren't you glad Jesus fixed it so that you can handle and even eradicate it? Know the strategy of your God, the tactics of your enemy, and what the battle is all about. God will never require you to go on a mission unless He already knows you can accomplish it. He sent Jesus to the cross because He was confident that Jesus could do the job like no one else.

Since you now represent His body in the earth, defeat must become a dirty word to you. Do not cooperate with the devil by saying what he says and miss the message of the "Strength of Israel" (1 Samuel 15:29), which is proven over centuries for the private and personal use of any and all of God's children.

Go, and the Lord will be with you because you have dressed up in His armor and have past experience with Him. He is proven.

Attached to the Source of Life

John 15:4-5 (NKJV)—*Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me, you can do nothing."*

Many years ago while sitting in my living room, I observed a large, healthy tree outside the window with leaves that were a deep, rich green. However, there was one branch that was almost completely severed from the tree with dead brown leaves on it. What a contrast between life and death.

I believe the Holy Spirit brought that tree to my attention to show me the importance of staying fully attached to the source of life. In other words, you can't just be born again. You must allow His Word to fill you, and His Word must be your number one priority if you expect to live productively.

Part of my daily request of the Lord is that the fruit of the Spirit be in full manifestation everyday throughout the day in my dealing with others as I represent Jesus.

My request can be a reality if I remember that the Spirit's fruit grows and matures in me as I stay joined to the Lord at all times. The only way I know to do that is through a combination of fellowship with Him and obedience to His every word.

I know wonderful, well-meaning people whom I believe love the Lord, but their level of Word knowledge is limited. They know how to quote the Scriptures, but they don't have a clue about the power it wields for them when they believe and act upon it.

The Word of God was not given to us just to quote or preach. It was provided for us to believe, to trust, and to obey—regardless. Anyone who trusts, believes, and obeys God's Word is attached to Him, the source of life and power.

Power to change things comes to the believer, not to the quoter. We can learn anything that is said or written for the purpose of quoting it. However, only confident quotation of God's Word in every situation actually releases a force to perform in the lives of those who stay joined to Him.

Believing Removes Blindness and Death

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 (NLT)—*If the Good News we preach is veiled from anyone, it is a sign that they are perishing. [The god of this evil world, satan,] has blinded the minds of those who don't believe, so they are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News that is shining upon them.*

People give the devil far more credit than he deserves. Don't you see it? He is not powerful enough to prevent you from believing. He does not blind you from believing. If he could do that, no one would become born again. No, he looks for the skeptic and the doubter. Anyone who is unwilling to submit to a power beyond one's own intellect becomes the devil's prey. It is your choice whether to believe or not.

The glorious light of the Good News is already shining upon everyone: those who choose to believe walk in its illumination; those who refuse become blinded. In fact, unbelief makes the light become as dark as night. Anytime anyone makes a choice to believe, darkness starts its departure. Believing repels darkness; doubt attracts it. God does not veil His truth: doubt and unbelief are the culprits.

Even allowing your curiosity to question the source of a sunrise or a sunset, the stars, moon, water, and wind gives God something to work with. I look out over Central Park from our condo and marvel at the beauty of God. Trees have always fascinated me. There are so many different ones, and each knows what to do in each season. The same is true of anything that is sensitive to the voice of God.

The devil wants you to scientifically explain everything around you. When you do, it gives him license to increase the blindness. However, I challenge you today to choose to believe that there is a Supreme Being making all of this happen. Then ask Him to make Himself known to you. I am confident that He will respond to the tiniest smidgen of belief you offer Him. He loves you more than mere words can express, and He delights to demonstrate His love for you.

This is your day to change the rest of your life. Everyone will one day fall asleep, but if you will believe, you will live in light here and one day relocate to an even brighter place.

Blind and Stubborn Are Not Good

Psalm 81:14(NLT)—*How quickly I would then subdue their enemies! How soon my hands would be upon their foes!*

Obedience is a quality with which I would like to inject everyone. And that would be in large doses. God does not ask the impossible. He made us sit together with Christ in heavenly places. He made us complete with Him in Christ Jesus so that all we have to do is obey Him and be led by His Spirit.

Israel may have struggled with this since they did not have the Father's Spirit in them. But we are truly without excuse. You may ask, "What difference does it make? Life is life. You win some; you lose some." Shame on you. We the children of God need not ever lose anything.

Verses 12-16 of Psalm 81 tell us what God had in mind for His people. He promised to fill their mouths with good things—no matter how wide they

opened them! He said if they listened and obeyed, He would subdue their enemies. They would have had no battles to fight, no wars to win—if they had just obeyed Him. God promised to put His hands upon their foes. That is defeat more crushing and swift than any heavyweight contender could ever achieve.

What will it take to make you truly commit to the one person who wants nothing but the best for you? God just wants to fill us with the best and satisfy us with wild honey from the Rock. You know who our Rock is, and anything coming from Him has to be the best.

Folks, we are not going to make it very far in life without walking in obedience. Obedience is the rule of the game; to play it any other way is foolishness.

Choose today to live your life God's way. Don't let happen to you what happened to Israel. God gave them up unto their own heart's lust: and they walked in their own counsel. Let's face it. You and I are not smart or clever enough to know what is best for us. According to God's plan for us, we deserve the best and it is found in Him.

**Choose today to live
your life God's way.**

What's It to You? You Follow Me

John 21:22 (NKJV)—*Jesus said to him, "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me."*

When the disciples were sitting together to eat their last supper with Jesus, Peter asked, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You...what about this man?" (verses 20-21).

People's attitudes have not changed very much since this event thousands of years ago. Too often we, like Peter, concern ourselves with things that are unimportant distractions from God's purpose for our own lives.

For example, we get so concerned about what another person has done, is doing, or will do that we neglect to pursue our own mission from God. Jesus is telling us, "What's it to you? You follow Me."

I have observed others failing to do what they were called to do because they were too focused on what someone else was or was not doing. Jesus is telling them, "What's it to you? You follow Me."

I realized years ago that I was going to give an accounting of my deeds, and my deeds only, at the judgment seat of Christ. In fact, I was not even going to be allowed to mention other people's names, let alone their deeds or lack of them.

When I realized this, I determined to make my choices and selections based on what I wanted Jesus to discuss with me at that time. Interestingly enough, this mindset eliminated most of my criticism and concern about others' deeds and actions.

Jesus was not interested in Peter's question about John; neither is He interested in my questions about you, or yours about me. He simply asks, "What's it to you? You follow Me."

Father God, in Jesus' name, I pray that by Your Holy Spirit You will continue to help me to mind my own business, which is to follow You and to do those things that are pleasing in Your sight and beneficial to kingdom-building regardless of what others do or fail to do. I desire to hear Jesus say "well done" for what I have done, am doing, and will do in the future. You are never going to run out of love or rewards, so I needn't be concerned that You'll give someone else my share of Your love or reward another for my work. Thank You for reminding me of this truth.

Chosen to Be Hated

John 15:19 (KJV)—If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of this world, but I have chosen you out of the world; therefore, the world hateth you.

Most people work far too hard trying to be loved. We don't have to earn Jesus' love, and we can't earn human love. I decided years ago, "You either love me or you don't. I can't do anything about your choices, but I can choose to love you regardless." It was not easy at first, but the more I practiced it and desired to please God, the easier it became.

I never expect the unsaved to love me. They don't know how. When you believe and confess, "I have favor with God and man" (Proverbs 3:4), people don't have to love you. The world offers many services and products for comfort and efficiency in my life and ministry. I don't ask them to love me. I just show Christ's love to them, and they give me favor. God's Spirit speaks to their hearts to do something extraordinary for me. I don't take advantage of or avoid them. I walk toward them the way Jesus walks toward me. Curiosity gets them every time. The Lord sets them up for me to witness to them about Him. I never have to attack or browbeat anyone into the family of God. They come because of the love I show them.

Don't be surprised when the world shows hatred toward you. That is your call to pray for them. The world is supposed to hate you. If no one hates you, watch out! Your Christianity is not showing.

There is nothing quite like walking in confidence into the very throne of the kingdom of the enemy and watching him stand helplessly by while you shine light in his very dark arena. What heavenly power you sense as you walk in love when everyone around you is full of hate! The only way I know to achieve this is by requesting His grace each day. I petition Him for the fruit to fully manifest in me daily and the gifts as they are needed.

You don't have to be of the world to have their favor. The more different you are, the more advantage you have even though they hate you. It is fun knowing the Holy Spirit is in control.

Diet Man's Food But Never God's Word

Job 23:12 (KJV)—Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.

At times when my flesh wants to eat, I choose to “eat” God’s Word rather than partake of a meal. Each time I do this, shortly thereafter I don’t even recall that I was hungry.

Desserts and sweets challenge me, and it’s easy to yield to them by justifying them to myself, saying, “If my clothes get too tight, I’ll just sow the old ones, and buy new ones.” Yet, that simply means there are restraints in my life, but no discipline in that area.

Recently I acknowledged this lack of discipline to myself and repented, asking God for grace to help me with each temptation—one at a time. I don’t like dieting any more than you do, but it’s essential to my spiritual development. Think about it: if I can’t

**Perhaps there are changes
you need to make in your life.
You can do it!**

resist a candy bar or chocolate ice cream, what will happen when the enemy lures me with more devastating temptations? I shudder to think about it, which is why I gave up the

thing I craved most. Surrendering what you’re not attached to is no big deal; there are no sacrifices there.

For many people dieting food isn’t an issue at all. However, there may be other things the Holy Ghost prompts you to lay aside. Are certain relationships or activities toxic for you? Perhaps you have people in your life who are good to you, but not good for you. **Whatever you struggle to resist or do without is the very thing you need to lay down.** I was called upon to diet, and I needed to refuse to indulge. Have I found a key? Definitely—you must esteem God’s Word more valuable than your next or even last meal. And when you do, God will provide the essentials of life and strengthen your resolve!

Never allow your schedule to plunge you into a diet from God’s Word and voice. Perhaps there are changes you need to make in your life. You can do it! God’s voice is perfected in weakness so begin to begin, and watch your progress.

Doubt Is a Luxury You Can't Afford

James 1:6 (KJV)—*But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.*

The quantity of our requests will never exhaust God's supply. In fact, He delights in His children asking of Him in faith.

Notice I said "in faith." Some requests made are not in faith. They are made in foolishness because they have no scriptural foundation to support them. Usually, foolish petitions generate doubt, and doubt always indicates a double mind. Double-minded requests are a waste of words. They have no power to produce.

I grew up near Virginia Beach, where the waves are often large and fierce, even when close to shore. But, regardless of the size and the intensity of any wave, a windstorm or strong gust will and can redirect the wave.

Imagine what happens to petitions we place before the Father. I'm sure the Father would, in essence, reply: "No doubt, you expect to receive what you are asking of Me. Great. Then eliminate all doubt concerning it because I only manifest faith-filled prayers and petitions. When your request is full of faith, there is no room for doubting. Your request will not be tossed and driven. It will remain on course to accomplish what was ordained for you through My Word.

"Doubt is a luxury that you cannot afford. The devil does not have the power to hinder your blessing. I said in My Word, 'For let not that man think he shall receive anything of the Lord' (James 1:7).

"The reason you cannot receive is that you have allowed doubt to dilute your thinking. Do not blame the devil for what you failed to do. You ask Me in faith. You refuse to waver and, though the devil is real, he is powerless to prevent you from receiving. No doubt about it."

Isn't it time you stop coming to the throne of God with a mixed bag of request and doubt? The moment you—not the devil—allow doubt to accompany you, you will not approach God's throne with boldness. Boldness for God's children is acting as a bull in a china shop. True boldness is a combination of confidence and meekness working together for the glory of God to the edification of the individual and the benefit of humankind.

Everlasting Consolation

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 (NKJV)—*Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope of grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.*

I never thought about the consolation and hope of God as gifts with salvation. Usually you think of being consoled during the time of some tragedy or misfortune. No, this is saying that when we received Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we also received consolation without limitation that brings rest without measure.

Why is it necessary for our hearts to rest in the Lord? Because God wants us established and strengthened in every good thing we say and do. Can't you see the importance of every word and every work or deed strengthened? It produces good. Weak words and weak works are not effective in achieving God's desired results—either for us or in the lives of others.

I don't know about you, but I long to see the body of Christ produce the results that Calvary provided. That may mean setting aside some of what you thought was important. You may have to revisit and release some habits and attitudes you have been clinging to.

As I went through my morning routine of looking from our living room window out over Central Park and New York City in praying for the unsaved, I asked the Lord to give me a new prayer for them one morning. "Lord, how do You want me to pray for them?" I asked. I heard in my spirit, "Call them saved, filled with the Holy Ghost, and led by the Spirit of God." In other words, stop calling them or referring to them as lost.

Scripture says that we can call those things that be not as though they were (Romans 4:17). So often we pray what is on our mind and in our hearts. We even pray concerning known situations and circumstances.

I believe that there is a better way, which is to ask the Father what He would have us to pray. Then, watch Him answer you through the prompting of the Holy Ghost. That kind of praying produces everlasting comfort to us and to others in need. Let the Father and Jesus establish our hearts to pray according to what they want done, okay?

Experience With God Requires More of You

Deuteronomy 11:7 (KJV)—*But your eyes have seen all the great acts of the Lord which he did.*

Moses reminded Israel that they were to keep God's commandments, prolong their days, and possess the land God promised their fathers because they were privileged to see with their own eyes what He had done to their enemies to guarantee their freedom (verses 8-9).

Unfortunately, for many of us, God's grace, covenant promises, miracles, anointing, and blessings of yesterday appear to have no lasting effect on tomorrow's commitment. Regardless of yesterday's provision, we are either begging God or taking Him for granted. Let's look at where we are at this moment and reflect on where He's brought us from.

I want to laugh and cry at the same time because I have been without funds several times but have never known a day without a meal. I've never been without a bed, even if I shared it with other family members. I've never been without clothing, though it may not have been the latest design. I've survived auto accidents that could have left me maimed or dead. I've been misidentified by an attacker as another person whom he wanted to seriously harm, and nothing happened to me. I've lacked education and training in areas, but God's wisdom moved me forward once I discovered that His Word held the keys to my future well-being.

God has chastened me with His Word. He has demonstrated His greatness with His outstretched arm and mighty hand. Because of His love, my eyes have seen many miracles. He has opened doors for me that no person could have, and He has closed doors to me that would have cost me more than I would have wanted to pay.

The greatest miracle of all is to watch Him remove an old nature in me and replace it with one that is pleasing to Him and representative of Him. Probably the only lasting regret I have in life is that I did not log every intervention of the Lord in my life. I thank God for His Holy Spirit who knows what I need to be reminded of and when. I am accountable for what my eyes have seen of His great acts in my life. So are you, in case you didn't know it.

For Whom Are You Willing to Die?

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 (NKJV)—*The love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.*

Some say, "Being a Christian is so hard." I strongly disagree. Living for Jesus is a piece of cake when you live with Him and allow Him to live in you. He died for us, and we live because we have received Him as Savior. Therefore, living the old life is so out of character for us.

What freedom I found when I no longer concerned myself with myself. What a relief it is for us to no longer live to please ourselves, but to please Him. Before we make the choice to live to please Him, most of us will do almost anything to have certain things, but then we become bored with them. We start all over pursuing something new, only to discover the same boredom.

Jesus is different. He knows what pleases Him. He had it recorded so we wouldn't have to wonder. Every morning I wake up and His Word says the same thing it did yesterday, last week, and last year. Those words are the basics to live by. Any additional thing He wants of me, He has obligated Himself to inform me of by His Holy Spirit.

When you make a choice to live for Him and crucify your flesh, life really does become easier. The difficulty comes when you have accepted His life but try to live for what you think makes you happy. Remember: Whatever you eat, drink, or do, do all to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). Obesity will not be a challenge when your diet brings glory to God. You'll never be at risk of becoming an alcoholic when what you drink brings glory to God.

Are all the "whatever you do's" bringing glory to God? Think it's impossible? Jesus would never say to bring glory to God with all you do if it were impossible. Give up the excuses, and accept that you no longer own your temple. You have become a caretaker of what Jesus paid a very high price for. See yourself for the treasure you are, and show the Lord that you are serious about living for Him. I assure you that He will assist you in accomplishing it. I speak with the tongue of experience.

Fearful Choices Are Foolish Choices

1 Samuel 13:11 (NLT)—*But Samuel said, "What is this you have done?" Saul replied, "I saw my men scattering from me, and you didn't arrive when you said you would, and the Philistines are at Micmash ready for battle."*

The enemy is always ready for battle with God's people, but we are on the winning team. Stop allowing the devil to decide when and where you battle. The battle is not yours, but the Lord's. Only combat as God's Spirit dictates. And remember: He'll never ask you to battle with natural weapons. The weapons you use are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of every stronghold of satan.

Neither the enemy's presence nor the lack of human support should have concerned King Saul. Samuel the prophet had told Saul to go to a particular place and wait for him to join him in seven days to make sacrifices. He said, "When I arrive, I will give you further instructions" (1 Samuel 10:8).

What is the Spirit of God telling you to do? Will you not wait on Him to do what only He can do?

Samuel the prophet, not Saul the king, was authorized to offer the sacrifices. But Saul, like some of us, forgot that God is never late and those who trust in Him will never be ashamed.

The Spirit of God told me many years ago, "If I do not appear to assist you when you think I should, though I may have said I would on a certain day and midnight of that day comes and goes, do not look at your clock or your calendar. I will not be late. If you will wait on Me, you will not be denied."

I so wish that Saul had listened to God's prophet and not focused on the people who left him but on those who remained. God always assigns certain ones to remain with you. Learn to thank God for them. Watch His Spirit come upon them to do great and mighty exploits.

Today, we have One with us greater than any prophet. His name is Holy Spirit. Learn to listen to what He is saying to you; then wait for Him to bring it to pass. After all, He is the One authorized for the job. Never allow fear to make your choices, for that is foolishness and it could cost more than you want to pay.

Exceedingly Magnificent

1 Chronicles 22:5 (KJV)—*And David said, Solomon my son is young and tender, and the house that is to be builded for the Lord must be exceeding magnifical, of fame and glory throughout all countries: I will therefore now make preparation for it. So David prepared abundantly before his death.*

We know that this scripture refers to a natural structure, but could it offer spiritual application as well? Any house built for the Lord needs to be “exceeding magnifical.” But surely if a building fashioned by the hands of man can be exceedingly magnificent, we should enlist the Holy Ghost to also prepare us as exceeding temples where God can reside. The world should know about Jesus because His light, lifestyle, and glory are manifested in and through us.

Notice that Solomon did not prepare the temple, but David his father did. Likewise, our children may not know how to begin their godly walk with the Lord, but we who know the value of it should teach them. Our children were bought with a price, and now they have a choice to fashion themselves as an exceedingly magnificent house for God.

With the help of the Holy Spirit we can create a dwelling place for God in our lives. This may mean we deny ourselves things or allow God to help us choose friends and even fashions suitable for a place where He lives. For instance, young people often desire the fad of the day, when they should be taught to prize things that increase in value. Old does not have to be ugly and insignificant, because time has a way of balancing out worth.

Today, ask yourself and your children: What would it take to make God happy? Once you know the answer, prepare for it. God does not need our wealth after we’re gone—He’s looking for people to build Him an exceeding structure now. That covers both a natural edifice and your spiritual house as well. You’re not given abundance to hoard it by indulging yourself in things that bring no glory to God. It’s time to reevaluate our purpose for what we have, so that we can participate in what God is doing and then departs when we are finished.

Safe, Secure, and Unafraid

Proverbs 1:33 (NLT)—*"But all who listen to me will live in peace and safety, unafraid of harm."*

Properly hearing God's voice leads to peace and security. The provisions of peace and security were made for us at Calvary; they are not gifts from humans. Therefore, we must stop torturing ourselves with the feeling of disappointment when others cannot give us peace and security. We expect them to supply what they have only small doses of for themselves.

Peace and security are not places we visit or things that we possess. They are a way of life. There is nothing quite like feeling safe because of what we believe. Our security blanket is God's holy Word.

Fear is real and is not a respecter of persons.

Everyone is subject to experiencing fear. However, those who listen to the voice of God, as shared by the Word of God and His Spirit within, can and do train themselves to not be afraid of harm.

Guard what you allow your ears to hear. Make sure that it is what you want your mind to rehearse over and over again. Many times I have thanked God for changes in my life that occurred as a result of a choice to not just hear His Word, but to consistently listen to what was being said.

For years I knew no peace, and security was fleeting. To me, these qualities of life were just what a few others had. But all of that has changed for me, and it can change for you also.

Are you ready to allow God to take the lead in your life? Are you willing to admit that you need advice beyond what you have received from well-meaning friends and family? Can you see that God alone knows the story and your place in it? Are you prepared to accept and look at the picture from God's perspective?

Only one force wants to rob you of your promised peace. Only the wicked one himself would devise schemes to try to shatter your security. You can foil his plans for you by refusing to cooperate with him. Make your choice today to renounce his influence and power to hinder and hamper what is rightfully yours.

Peace and security are yours by faith in the promises of God.

Are you ready to allow God to take the lead in your life?

Do Not Run From God

1 Samuel 12:20 (KJV)—*And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness; yet turn not aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart.*

Too often I hear people say they backslid and left the church or stopped serving God because they thought God couldn't forgive them for something. This is exactly what the devil wants you to believe. He knows if you continue to serve God and hear His Word, you will discover how much God loves you and is willing to forgive you and receive you back into His family.

Sinning is foolish for any Christian, but it is plain stupid to not confess the sin and genuinely repent to God and those involved. Don't allow pride to prevent you from being restored to your rightful place—first, to God; then to those you have offended or wronged.

Proverbs 28:13 says, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." Do you sometimes feel like you are caught between a tornado and sinking sand? Have you only confessed your sins and not forsaken them? It will only get better for you when you "fix it" first with God, then with others involved.

God wants His people to avoid wickedness altogether, but by His grace He made provision for us to be restored to Him if we yield to sin's enticement. First Samuel 12:21 says, "And turn ye not aside: for then should ye go after vain things, which cannot profit or deliver; for they are vain." In other words, running *from* God instead of *to* Him leads nowhere. Verse 22 encourages us to make the right choice: "For the Lord will not forsake his people for his great name's sake: because it has pleased the Lord to make you his people."

God is not happy when we run from Him. It indicates limited knowledge of who He is and how He operates with His people. If you are tired of the devil eating your lunch every day, and if you desire once more to feast at the banquet table of the Lord Jesus Christ, reread this message and follow what God requires of you; then come home to Him. God will not run after you, but He promised to receive you when you come to yourself as did the son in Luke 15:17.

A Tried Heart

Proverbs 17:3 (KJV)—*The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold: but the Lord trieth the hearts.*

There have been times in life when I could not freely get involved with certain individuals even though the world chased after them. Other times, I wanted to hire certain people but could not follow through with the choice because my spirit was restless. I thank God for the Holy Ghost because when I heeded His directive and did not pursue these individuals who appeared impressive on the surface, it was only a matter of time before they did something ungodly, unethical, or self-seeking.

The Holy One has taught me not to look at the faces of men and women, but to ask His help in discerning their hearts.

None of us is completely flawless. But if we sincerely desire to follow after our Father, we should ask Him each day to search our hearts and remove or expose anything displeasing in His sight.

At the same time, I can tell a little about most people by their personal appearance. I occasionally

look at a man's shirt collar and cuffs to see if they're clean and crisply ironed. I notice if a person's shoes are shined. When asked to ride in a car, I fight not to judge a person if he or she must clean out the car before I can occupy a seat. And have you accepted an invitation to visit someone's home, only to have the person ask you to "take a seat if you can find one"? While these things provide some indication about people's habits or lack of them, no one judges the true character of another without the help of the Holy Ghost. Only God's Spirit in us can try the hearts of others.

Indeed, it's a good idea to heed the bells and whistles in your heart before you align yourself with others. Fewer couples would divorce—especially fewer Christians—if people paid greater attention to their hearts. Business partners would require less legal advice if they paid more attention to following their hearts. Try your heart first; then you will be in a better position to try someone else's.

**Heed the bells and whistles
in your heart before you
align yourself with others**

Win Every Time

Matthew 4:1 (AMP)—*Then Jesus was led (guided) by the [Holy] Spirit into the wilderness (desert) to be tempted (tested and tried) by the devil.*

We cannot escape tests, and we need to know that most tests are repeated until we pass them, for only then will the adversary depart for a season.

In Matthew 4, we see the devil returning three times to test Jesus. He said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread" (verse 3, NKJV); "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down" (verse 5); "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me" (verse 9).

How did Jesus respond? He spoke the Word of God: "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God'" (verse 4); "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God'" (verse 7); "It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve'" (verse 10).

Like Jesus, we must confront our tests with the Word of God. Then we must stay put, expecting the enemy to return, but knowing that when he finds us, he'll discover that we're no fun to play with because we have taken a position to stand. We have learned to say, as Jesus did, "Away with you, Satan!" (verse 10).

I often rehearse potential tests in my mind, and ask the Holy Spirit to bring to my remembrance the necessary scriptures should those tests ever surface.

We can expect a test. But we must never doubt for a moment that we can pass it. Romans 8:2 says, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death."

Learn to win with wisdom, power, and the Word of God. Without it we always lose. With it we win every time.

Father God, I thank You for allowing tests to come our way in order for us to discover and uncover how miserably we would fail without total trust in You to keep us from the evil in the world. Help us to stay focused on the final destination, not on the momentary delay. Thank You for Your Word, which enables us to win every battle. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Consider Him

Hebrews 12:3 (NKJV)—*Consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.*

What a difference it makes in your life when you consider someone else before making your choices. I know no one better to think about than the Lord Jesus Christ.

The more popular and well-known you become, the more responsible you are to stop and think about the effect your next move or words spoken will have on others.

How do you want to be remembered?

Once, a young man called my live talk radio broadcast because he was concerned that he could no longer sense God in his life. He quit his job several months earlier because he'd allegedly had an abusive boss and could no longer deal with the suffering he had endured. The World Trade Center event happened shortly thereafter and now the job market appears to be closed to him.

My question to him was "Did quitting your job eliminate the suffering you now have because you are broke?" His reply was "No."

I said, "Did you consider that you were on assignment at that job, that you were the only Christian there who could make a difference in the lives of the abusers and the accusers?"

Suddenly, this young man could see that he had missed the Lord by not considering what Jesus had endured before joy came to Him. Instead of taking time to consider those facts, he had merely exchanged suffering with pay for suffering without funds.

A lady called after that discussion to tell the listeners that six years before, she was about to tell her boss a thing or two when she turned on her car radio and heard me say, "Don't ever think about telling your boss off. You are on that job to represent Jesus, and you are about to miss your breakthrough because you are not considering your true purpose in being there. It's not important what they are doing to you. The important thing is what God wants to do for them."

Consider Jesus today before you make your choices. His plan for your life will always affect the lives of others.

Afflictions of the Righteous

Psalm 34:19 (KJV)—*"Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all."*

This verse about afflictions is as much a promise of God as is Mark 11:23-24, which says we can move mountains and have whatever we say when we pray in belief. One of the things we often do with the word "affliction," which we find in Psalm 34:19, is to confuse it with "infirmity," from which Jesus redeemed us. Infirmity and affliction are not the same.

Evil, adversity, calamity, distress, and grief often make an appointment to visit a believer. No one looks forward to affliction, yet it occurs anyway. Instead of running to the hills to hide from affliction, I have grown and learned not to sweat it or fret about it because I have the abundance of evil, adversity, calamity, distress, and grief that attempt to visit me do two things for me. First, it validates me as righteous. Second, it provides me with the good news that my total deliverance is imminent and I need not be concerned with it.

**Afflictions come,
and I can expect to be
delivered from them all.**

Afflictions come, and I can expect to be delivered from them all. Evil comes, but I expect to be delivered from it. The same is true of all the others: I expect to be delivered. However, they have to happen in order for my deliverance to take place from every single one of them.

Jesus took the feebleness of my mind and my body. He took my malady, frailty, disease, sickness, and weakness—and He never returned them to me. Therefore, I resist and refuse to accept from the devil that which Christ took and bore for me. Feebleness of mind and body, malady, frailty, disease, sickness, and weakness are best handled by Him. My righteousness is not confirmed by infirmities, but it is by many afflictions that knock on my door and discover that I am delivered from them.

Your Will and Mine the Same

One morning the Lord awakened me with these words: "My child, your will and Mine the same. For I want you to meditate on the true steps to success. I gave you a will because I want you to make choices in life. However, the choices you make should be according to My will and My plan for you.

"You never need to be in doubt about the next step that you should make. Ask Me, and I will respond to your question. In fact, if you will begin to ask Me first, you will not need to ask Me afterward why a thing has happened. I can tell you ahead of time what to avoid and what to be involved in.

"Remember, I only have plans for your good and for your success. I have spoken in My Word, 'I know the plans I have for you...plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future'

(Jeremiah 29:11, KJV). But that does not mean you will be free of

challenge in your earthly life. Know that is what they are, challenges to see how you will act and what you will do. I have given you a will, and you can choose to do it your way; but you also can choose to confer with Me.

"You may always choose to go your way, but your success will be in *your will and Mine the same*. When you don't hear from Me through the written Word, or when you have not had a confirmation of what I have placed in your heart or what you have heard spoken in a message, then choose to initiate a conversation with Me.

"I want so much for us to agree on everything. But since I cannot change, you must adjust your thoughts and plans to My way of thinking and to what I am doing. Wait no longer in a state of indecision. Talk to Me. Then listen to what I have to say. I know more about your future than you do about your past. Bring your will in line with My Word, and you will walk in a life of absolute victory. I promise."

"You never need to be in doubt about the next step that you should make. Ask Me, and I will respond to your question."

Who Is Your Sponsor?

Luke 22:35 (KJV)—*And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing.*

Sometimes the Lord asks us questions to which the answers are so obvious that the questions are almost insulting. Do you know why He asks those kinds of questions? His goal is to cause us to think and reevaluate our priorities and focus on things of true value.

When the Spirit of the Lord spoke to my husband, Clinton, about quitting his government job of twenty-eight years to attend Bible school 1400 miles from home, He used the scripture in Mark 10:29-30 to prepare him to make a choice: "Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life."

After presenting Clinton with these scriptures, the Spirit simply stated, "I seem to recall that during the 60s you would have left your job, wife, house, and all other possessions to pursue your musical career with your choir. Is not preaching the Gospel more important than a choir or singing?"

Clinton said nothing but pondered in his heart what the Spirit had spoken. It must have penetrated his heart because he awakened me to say, "Okay, we're going."

I asked, "Going where?"

He replied, "To Bible school."

The rest is history. Why did we not starve to death, sleep on the sidewalk, and have our house go into foreclosure? We had a sponsor.

Jesus says to you, His disciple, "When I send you without, I become your sponsor. Therefore, don't even take a pouch for depository. Seek Me for daily bread. You are to learn to live by faith. I will teach you. You can't even take a leather lunch bag for food. I'll feed you daily and keep your feet from ever touching the earth."