

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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Redeeming Love Christian Center

145 West Route 59

Nanuet, New York 10954-2200

Phone: (845) 623-9300

Fax: (845) 623-0521

www.redeeminglovecc.org

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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.

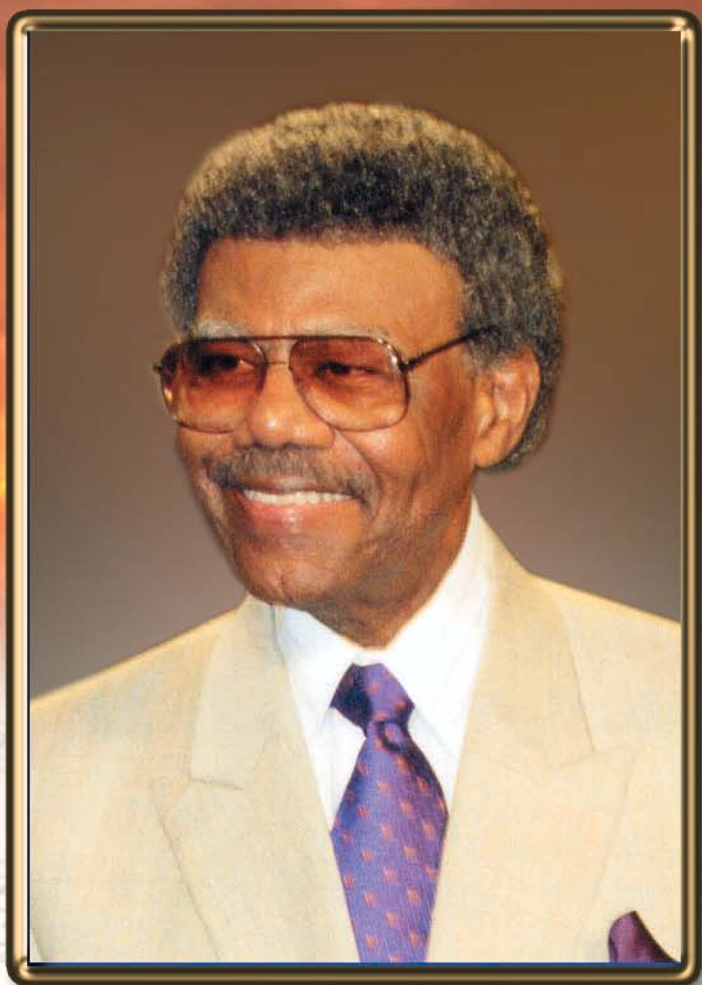
I sow this book into the lives of millions to be encouraged long after I am gone, for them to experience You in a very personal way, on a daily basis.

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

July 3, 1931–April 16, 2005



PASTOR
CLINTON *H. Utterbach*

*Pastor Sarah W. Utterbach's thoughts
and insights start on page 38.*

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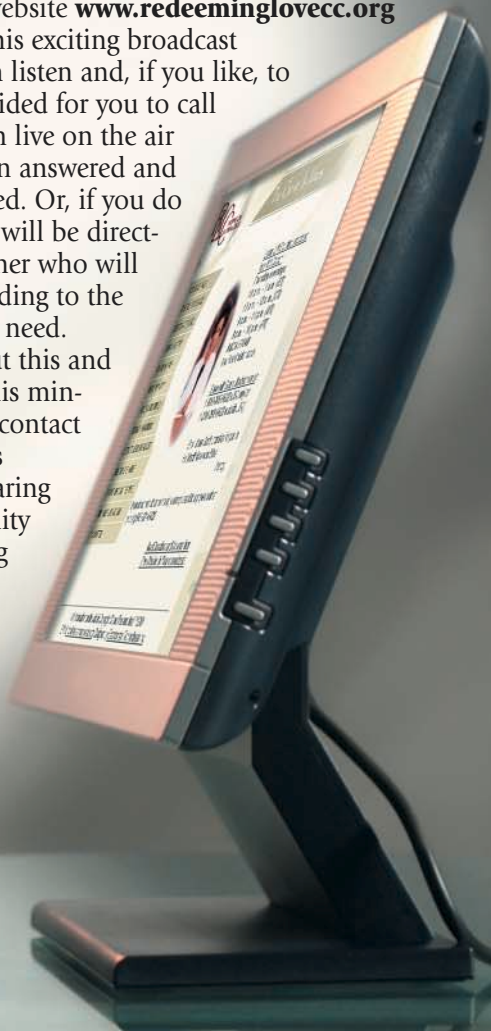
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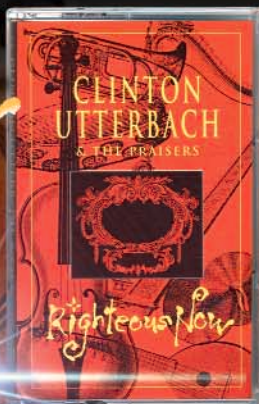
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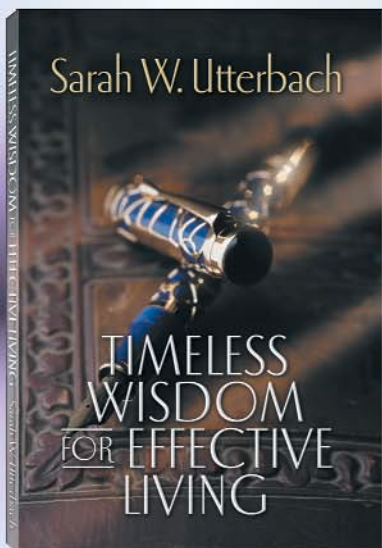
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Turn Your Life Around




...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 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!



*Press past
the problem and the
pain to obtain the
promise.*

—Sarah W. Utterbach

But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear unto myself so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

—Acts 20:24 (NKJV)

Show Me Now Your Way

Exodus 33:13 (NKJV)—*“Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight. And consider that this nation is Your people.”*

I am grateful to Moses for taking this position concerning the assignment God gave him. It has helped in my approach to God concerning what He has required of me. I won't attempt a thing without reminding God that His grace is sufficient for me, and that in my weakness He is made strong. I must have His grace and His wisdom to pursue and overtake my portion of His plan for people.

Jesus revealed the Father and His ways to us as a “right now God.” We must know Him *now* if we're going to grab the baton in this next leg of the Christian race.

We must know Him, because in knowing Him we obtain His grace.

One of the many things we need to know and understand is that there is no room in the life of a believer for prejudice, favoritism, or membership in a “special interest group.” Blacks cannot be only for other blacks; whites cannot hire other whites when a Hispanic or Asian may be more qualified for the position. As I look around me and consider some things, the one thing that I tell God is that “this nation is Your people. Therefore, You must show me Your way now.” He did and I am grateful.

God responded to Moses and said, “My presence shall go with you and I will give you rest.” What a promise! God Himself promised that His presence would accompany us. Moses said to the Lord, “If Your presence does not go with us, then leave me here, because I would not be able to trust You.” Moses wanted a specified and guaranteed word from the Lord.

The object of this lesson is to do things God's way which brings us into a true knowledge of Him. That keeps us steady while He continues to work all things together for our good.

There is no room in the life of a believer for prejudice, favoritism, or membership in a “special interest group.”

Sign On, Sign Up, or Sign Out

Mark 8:38 (NKJV)—*"For whosoever is ashamed of Me and My works in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes into the glory of His Father with the holy angels."*

The day for closet Christianity is over. We are not secret agents, fearful of being discovered. To recruit others, we want the entire world to know who we are and what we do. I am not ashamed to identify with Jesus.

I was born again in 1944. I signed on to be a Christian and signed up to be a member of the church where my mother attended. The pastor was a man on fire for God. He made the Scripture come alive. By the time I was seven, I understood it enough to get saved.

Then, that pastor died. The next pastor was more intellectual in his presentation. Around the same time, my Sunday school teacher, a beautiful woman in her mid-twenties, also died. Only recently did I realize how their passing stunted my spiritual growth. I was no longer hearing the Word taught. I was learning from Sunday school quarterlies and teachers without much anointing. I was not ashamed of His Word; I was ashamed that I did not know more of it. After a circuitous journey, I was again exposed to truth and Jesus began to make me free.

We are living in an adulterous and sinful generation, ignorant of Jesus and His words. But that does not have to be the end of the story. In spite of what some so-called Christian leaders say, satan has not taken over the Church. That is a lie. The gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. All saints need to be in the assembly for training under an anointed pastor/teacher assigned by Jesus to prepare them for the work of their ministry to the heathen.

When you are convinced that the work you are called to do with Christ cannot be stopped, don't hesitate. In these last of the last days either sign up and get busy or sign out and step aside.

Left to Test You

Judges 3:4 (NKJV)—*And they were left that he might test Israel by them, to know whether they would obey the commandments of the Lord, which he had commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses.*

This generation of Israel had never seen the power of God on their behalf nor had they fought in any wars (Judges 3:1-2). Just because they had been born into a covenant relationship did not mean they understood the terms of the covenant, and the Lord wanted to know where their hearts were.

Very little has changed over these centuries. God did not tell the children of Israel to dwell among the people of the land, He told them to possess the land. It was made very clear to Moses and their forefathers that there was to be no marriage between God's children and the children of the heathen. That has not changed even today. Believers and non-believers are to abstain from marriage regardless of how much they are attracted to each other. It is not about attraction; it is about obedience.

Their choice to dwell among the nations, give their children in marriage to those nations, and become unfaithful to the one, true, living God to run after the gods of the nations has been and always will be costly. It was evil in the sight of God then and it is not acceptable to Him today.

We often wonder why God does not "right every wrong" and fix every problem so we would be "choice free" and live without concerns. When someone is always going to bat for you or bailing you out of situations, you become ill equipped to know what to avoid. He has given us all power, all wisdom, all grace, and the Holy Ghost to lead us and guide us into all truth. What we do with these determines our level of victory.

Stop complaining about the test and begin to praise God that you are counted worthy to be tested. Until you know who you are and what you are made of, you will not walk in all that is yours through Jesus Christ.

Some Things Best Left Unsaid

Proverbs 29:11 (NKJV)—*A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back.*

Words contain tremendous power for both good and evil. Therefore, wisdom dictates that it is far better to zip your lips for the moment than to vent or express your emotions. Failure to restrain your tongue and withhold certain comments could and often does result in strained, damaged relationships, sometimes permanently.

When you want to give someone a piece of your mind, first make sure you have the mind of Christ. If you cannot say it the way Jesus would say it, then tell it to Him before you speak it to another person. Not only will He understand, He will not be offended. Furthermore, He will

It is necessary to control the tongue.

not repeat the matter to anyone. As a matter of fact, He will help you to understand why you feel what you feel and will assist you with the necessary control over your mouth.

Believe me, it is necessary to control the tongue. If not properly controlled, the tongue will create challenges for you that you never even considered.

I still confront things that need to be addressed in order to put guidelines in place that will work good for all involved. However, with the Holy Ghost's help, I have learned not to attack anyone with my tongue for the sole purpose of devastating them. Every once in a while I yield to the flesh and have to repent. Since I know my flesh is not yet redeemed, I try to avoid letting people get too close to me who do not bring out the best in me. I cannot afford the luxury of venting all of what I feel.

God does not anoint and use fools. He uses foolish things often to confound the world. But He requires His people to be wise. Stop right now, and ask the Holy Ghost to help you with your tone, your temper, and your tongue. He has known for a long time that you need help with your mouth, so ask His assistance before it is too late to make corrections.

Stay Alert— He Is So Close

Matthew 24:11 (NLT)—*Just so, when you see the events I've described beginning to happen, you can know His return is very near, right at the door.*

A glance at the news on any day, whether via television or newspaper, brings reports of war and rumors of war in diverse places. Jesus told us that the end of the age will be marked by wars close at hand and far away, but we are not to panic because, although these things must happen, the end is not immediate.

Knowing that persecution awaits those who pledge to be known as followers of Christ, what is your level of commitment? Will you be one of those who turn from Him and betray and hate other believers? We know that the world will do this, but Jesus said that so will Christians who fail to remain faithful to Him. In the end times, false prophets will lead astray as many as they can. Sin will be loosed in full

Keep your attention and your affection focused on Jesus Christ because He is soon to return.

force, and those who used to be warm and even on fire for the things of God will grow cold. However, the enduring ones will be saved and preach the Good News of the Kingdom everywhere there is a person to hear it. Then, finally, the end will come.

I have observed that for many, the more prosperity they enjoy, the less they seek the Lord. The people of this country, even believers, are in the most vulnerable position human beings have been in since the days of Noah. We are so busy enjoying our abundance that many of us are not even aware of how close we are to the end.

Don't allow yourself to become distracted, either by blessings or lack, by prosperity or persecution. Stay alert. Keep your attention and your affection focused on Jesus Christ because He is soon to return.

Father, I pray that You awaken Your people to recognize that the culmination of time is so close. Open our spiritual eyes to see the need to draw closer to You now more than ever before, in Jesus' name.

Talk Long Enough and Sin Will Surface

Proverbs 10:19 (NKJV)—*In the multitude of words sin is not lacking. But he who restrains his lips is wise.*

James 3:6 reads “And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.” What does that mean? Like a tiny match that can burn down a forest, never underestimate the value or harm that can be caused by your “tiny tongue.” It can pollute your whole body and the direction of your existence and become an agent of hell itself.

When we started pastoring, one of our best messages was “Kick the Hell Out of Your Tongue.” God is not controlling our words; He gives us the grace to do that. Failure to say only what pleases God invites the devil to ignite the tongue in our mouth. It will be as though the fires of hell have fueled the tongue to consume everything in its path.

Quiet times and limited communication help keep sin from surfacing. Talking too much almost guarantees that we sin due to the multitude of our words. The fast talkers, the loud talkers, and the long talkers try to impress others with what they say. They don’t know and sometimes don’t care how you feel or think as long as you listen to them. Sooner or later, they lapse into exaggeration or even “bald-faced lying.” Sometimes it is good to calmly stop them before they dig themselves in too deep.

If you provide transportation to others, you have the right to protect your ears and your heart by establishing guidelines for what is discussed in your vehicle. People put up “No Smoking” signs. Put up a “No Talking” sign unless the owner initiates the conversation.

If you ride with a vocal driver, believe God for a new driver or other transportation. There are always earplugs and headsets—even if you aren’t listening to anything. Of course you can suggest you pray together during the day’s journey. Hopefully they will get the message.

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your own quarterly copy of
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Once we receive the envelope with your name, address and request for the magazine, we will include your name to the list of more than 100,000 persons who have requested a subscription to this timely and insightful quarterly devotional. Your name will remain on our list for one year from the date of your subscription. After that time, you will be asked to indicate if you want to continue receiving our publication.

Again, please know that we have provided this envelope to aid you in placing orders, sending prayer requests or offerings to support this ministry. God has instructed us to make this magazine available free of charge, so that whosoever may desire to receive it can do so. However, that does not mean there is no cost involved. We devote the same level of excellence to producing this magazine as we do to any other outreach because we want to honor God as we obey His command to minister to you. Therefore if you have been blessed in any way by *Horizons Unlimited*, we invite you to write us and share your testimony. And, if you are impressed to send an offering of any size, please know that it will be received gratefully and applied faithfully to meet the needs of other lives around the world.



**Important
Information
for ALL
readers of**

**HORIZONS
UNLIMITED**

Their Courage Failed

Joshua 4:24 (NKJV)—*That all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty, that you may fear the Lord your God forever.*

The same God that dried the waters of the Red Sea held back and dried up the waters of the Jordan. God always has a purpose when He performs the supernatural. Usually it is to establish in the hearts of His people a significant memorial they will never forget—which includes rehearsing it to their offspring for generations to come.

The God who provides the water to cause plants to grow and humans to live can and will allow things to dry up as a judgment. Job said those who forget God will wither like a plant, his roots are dried out below and his branch withers above (Job 8:12, 18:16).

Two things which I recently observed furthered my understanding of how fragile life is: The leadership of Baghdad, with its luxurious palaces and yachts, was gone in almost an instant. And a well-known doctor whose wealth and fame resulted from his health products, accidentally fell on ice and, after being in a coma, ultimately lost his fight for life.

Everyone needs Jesus and they need Him now. God wants us to be in position for His hand to bless us so that we can know that He and He alone is mighty on behalf of His people.

One evening during a prayer service, I asked our congregation if Saddam Hussein or Osama bin Laden surfaced saying they had accepted Jesus Christ as Lord, what would be their reaction. Most were so stunned by the question they could not answer. The Spirit of the Lord shared with me that He has serious work to do among Christians before He can move on the hearts of some heathen. Paul, who became an apostle, was at one time no different in his attitude toward Christianity than either Hussein or bin Laden are today. That is why it took years before he could fellowship with the believers—they could only focus on who he had been, instead of seeing who he had become. Has our courage failed us in neglecting to remember the transforming power of our mighty God?

They Added Nothing to Me

Galatians 2:6 (NKJV)—But from those who seemed to be something—whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man—for those who seemed to be something added nothing to me.

Pay close attention to demands placed on you that are contrary to the Word of God. False brethren required Titus to be circumcised though he was Greek. Paul said, "We did not yield in submission even for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue" (verse 5). Any time anyone requires of you things you know are not right or in the Spirit of Jesus and you agree to it, you cut off your anointing to share the Gospel.

Paul recognized that there were those who seemed to be "something." But he said whatever they were it made no difference to him. Once you understand that those who seem to be something add nothing to you, then you also understand that they cannot take anything from you. Any time you yield to personal preference and neglect to be led by the Spirit of Christ, you are headed for bondage and not liberty in Christ Jesus.

Pillars of the church should be able to perceive the grace that has been given to you (Galatians 2:9). And by the same grace you should be able to perceive what is in them. True pillars of the church may not always understand what you are all about, but if they are of a right spirit, God will show them and you can have fellowship.

Never allow anyone to threaten you with loss to get you to do what is contrary to what you know is right. When you accept people's threats you also accept their bondage and become their slave. You abandon being a slave to Jesus who will never ask you to do anything that violates the Word of God.

Security for your family is never achieved by submitting to a person's threat. Never see the one who threatens you as one who can add to you. After all, what they have came from the same source that supplies you.

**When you accept
people's threats you also
accept their bondage
and become their slave.**

Ultimate Church Growth

Acts 9:31 (NKJV)—Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.

Church growth conferences all over the world trying to teach pastors and church leaders how to attract folk to their flock. Forget the gimmicks, gadgets, and games trying to attract people.

If people come to your church for any reason other than the Word of God and the preaching of Jesus, they will not remain.

If people come to your church for any reason other than the Word of God and the preaching of Jesus, they will not remain.

We do not find many peaceful

assemblies today. Pastors and church leaders are often uptight because of great debt or operating expenses in excess of their income. Church is almost the last place anyone looks to be edified and encouraged because the saints are not taught the foundation for trusting the Lord.

I am personally convinced that there is an urgent need to quit the “how-to’s” and the “steps to church growth.” It is time to teach the people the love of God as well as how to love God and how to respond to the ministry and the person of the Holy Spirit.

When the world observes the peaceful spirit of the saints who spend more time encouraging others rather than criticizing them, people will come to the churches out of curiosity, hear the message of Christ, and decide to stay. Do we have what it really takes to attract the heathen or can they see little or no difference between them and us?

I believe we have all that is needed to evangelize the world to Jesus. I am just not sure we have learned to trust God enough to pull it off without a “Madison Avenue” approach. Why not talk to Him about it today, Pastor?

Watch Your Choice of Role Models

Proverbs 3:31 (NKJV)—*Do not envy the oppressor, and choose none of his ways.*

The Bible tells us if anyone is oppressing another, he is an abomination to God. That person is perverse in what he is doing, therefore we should in no way want anything that resembles him to attach itself to us.

Godliness guarantees you will be privy to God's secret counsel. The New Living Translation reads, "But he offers his friendship to the godly" (Proverbs 3:31). Friends tell friends their most intimate secrets. We can and should be considered a friend of the Lord.

I am thrilled to have the privilege of knowing God's revealed words. Imagine, God wants to share His secrets with you as He did with Abraham. I suspect that in these last days, God wants His people to know all that looms on the horizon and what to do about it. Unlike the world, we are to be informed before, during, and after certain events occur so we can make righteous choices in the midst of it all. This is the will of God for all His children.

**You have no need to fear
or be anxious about
the future. God knows
exactly what you need.**

Worry is misdirected energy and not the will of God for His people. If your life aligns with God's Word, all will be well with you. You have no need to fear or be anxious about the future. God knows exactly what you need. He knows His plan for our lives—both individually and collectively, and He has no shortage of wisdom or provision concerning our needs or circumstances. Nothing and no one is powerful enough to thwart God's purpose for the world and His people.

The time has come for the people of God to choose individually and once and for all to stop doubt, selfishness, and immorality in their lives in any form. It matters not what exists in the lives of others, particularly those we would esteem as role models.

What Does the Lord Require of You?

Micah 6:8 (NKJV)—*He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?*

It is time we stop offering anything to God if we neglect to offer what He has required. Micah asked, With what shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before the High God? Was God interested in burnt offerings using one-year-old calves? Would God be pleased with thousands of rams?

**“How are you treating others
who, like you, are made in
My image and My likeness?”**

God says, “I hate your feasts and do not savor your assemblies. Your grain offering I will not accept. Take away from Me the noise of your songs, for I will not hear

the melody of your stringed instruments until you let justice run down like a river and righteousness like a mighty stream (Amos 5:21-24). I am searching for those desiring mercy and not sacrifice and knowledge of God more than burnt offerings (Hosea 6:6).

“What purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me, says the Lord. My delight is not in the blood of bulls, goats, and lambs. Put away the evil of your doing, wash yourselves, make yourselves clean, cease to do evil, learn to do good, seek justice, rebuke the oppressor, defend the fatherless, plead for the widows, and I your Father will receive you. I will fellowship with you. I will open doors you knew not of and close ones that you should not enter.

“What can you give to Me? What can you do for Me that I have not strengthened you to do? Look around you. How are you treating others who, like you, are made in My image and My likeness? Your selfishness, your thoughtlessness, your inconsideration of others are an abomination to Me.

“Judge yourself this night before I judge you at daybreak. I have called you to more, I have called you to better, and I will not settle for less from you. I paid a high price. I want all of My Son’s blood worth and I want it now.”

What Is the Gospel?

Galatians 1:12 (NKJV)—*For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

Unless by the grace of God Jesus Christ is first revealed in you He will not be revealed to you in order to teach others.

There is nothing wrong with attending Bible school if God told you to do so. Paul said, "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood" (Galatians 1:15-16).

There is nothing quite like knowing whom you are to preach to. Paul was to preach to the Gentiles, not the Jews. I am learning who I am to preach Jesus to by basically staying at RLCC. The Spirit will bring the people there to hear what He gives me to say because RLCC in Nanuet, NY, is where I am called to be.

Paul was an apostle, and he had to go to a number of places. I am a shepherd, and shepherds are to remain with their flock. I go other places occasionally, but as the Spirit directs. It is only for a brief time and never to the neglect of the sheep in my own flock.

God arranged for us to attend Bible school to separate us from family and secular work. Then through our obedience He could prove to us that the just could live by faith. When you look back over what you used to be, hopefully you and others who knew you when, can see Jesus now revealed in you. People are more willing to listen to revelation about Jesus when they observe in you who He is and what He has done in and with you.

I don't remember every detail of the subject that I learned in school, nor have I tried to teach them. But I do know who I have become because of the revelation of Jesus in me. I can preach that because I can support it from the Word of God. Jesus revealed in me is the Gospel.

People are more willing to listen to revelation about Jesus when they observe in you who He is and what He has done in and with you.

Who Are You Following?

God gave me ten challenges to set before the Church today. Each one pertains to our own personal consecration before Him as well as the qualities we ought to seek in those who would be role models for our lives and conduct:

1. Always be transparent.
2. Develop an uncompromised love for the Lord.
3. Diligently hunger after God's Word.
4. Commit to obey God's Word regardless of the power or popularity of those who disobey.
5. Acquire an understanding of both the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit—one produces stiff consequences, the other brings rich rewards.
6. Cultivate sensitivity to the voice of the Lord and a desire for what pleases Him.
7. Never touch the gold or the glory.
8. Observe what you dislike in others and make a choice to refrain from doing it.
9. Acknowledge that you are predestined to be conformed to the image of God's Son.
10. Avoid anything or anyone who is unwilling to support you in your commitment to the other nine.

Who are you following? Who has become a role model for your life and pursuits, in one way or another? Be certain that man or woman is lined up with the Word of God and not living contrary to God's Word or His ways. Although God will indeed set mentors and models before us, Jesus is the standard to which we are to be conformed. Follow Him.

Who Assigned You?

Galatians 1:1 (NKJV)—*Paul, an apostle (not from men, nor through man but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead).*

We used to sing: “The world didn’t give it and the world can’t take it away.” It is good to first know where your assignment came from and remember that that is where your source and resource will be found.

Whatever a human can do for you, a human can remove from you. When you understand that your calling, your location, and your future steps are ordered by God, no obstacle will ever hinder you. When a human appoints or assigns you to perform a task, they can reward or remove you as it pleases them. But when you know, doubting nothing, that God through the Lord Jesus has given you your title and the accompanying authority, you listen only for His voice to receive your direction. Teaching tapes are good, but there is nothing quite like sitting in the presence of the Lord and reading His Word to increase in revelation provided by His Spirit.

Good nuggets can be gleaned from the mouth of God’s anointed servants. But why receive truth secondhand when as an child of God, you can receive revelation by His Spirit firsthand? Firsthand revelation remains with you forever.

Your commission to preach, teach, or witness does not come through human channels. Not only does God commission you, He foreordained you to be conformed to the image of His Son Jesus. Your speech, your walk, and your attitude should be viewed by all as that of one belonging to the Lord.

When surroundings or circumstances determine your choices, it is a signal that maybe you are trying to please people more than trying to please the Lord. Watch it—such choices may make you popular in the eyes of men but a stench in the nostril of God.

Any man or woman leaving this life having pleased God is successful. Take a moment to assess where you are and how you got there. You will find that the source of your commission is where you will obtain your supply for future success.

Wisdom Is Born of Strange Things

Proverbs 29:15 (NKJV)—*The rod and reproof give wisdom.
But a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.*

A rod can be used as a weapon or a tool. One punishes, the other corrects depending on whose hands it is in. Rebuke or reproof also can correct, but it also chastises.

From an early age, I knew that my mother thought her two children were special. She worked hard to have my brother and me behave and look as though we were special.

I am grateful. Most of my memories of my mother are fond. However, some of her painful choices contributed to the wisdom I enjoy today.

Mother at times inflicted pain in correction, but never abuse. With a child like me, she did not have a lot of choices. I thank God that I was not left to myself. We never brought Mother shame because she did not leave our training to ourselves or to each other.

We didn't get a lot of spankings. Spankings accumulated until they became whippings and she said, "This hurts me as much as it hurts you." I thought, "Then why do it?"

One valuable lesson at age five was that you never hit "Mama." After spanking me with a cord, Mother threw the cord on the bed beside me and turned away. A voice inside me said, "Whack her across her backside." I did, and that was the only time I ever did that. Shortly after that incident, I began my quest to distinguish the voices speaking to me, because that one tried to get me killed! Years later, I paid attention when Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice and will not follow another" (John 10:4-5) and "I came to give you life abundantly and the thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy" (John 10:10).

Parents, do not allow your offspring self-expression with you that will not be tolerated by others. Stop listening to society, heed Scripture concerning your child, and avoid shame.

Wisdom Is Seeking You

Proverbs 8:4 (NLT)—*"I call to you, to all of you! I am raising my voice to all people."*

People often say "I am seeking after wisdom." James 1:5 tells us what to do if we need wisdom: Ask God! If we want to know what God wants us to do, we can ask Him and He will gladly tell us. The reason He responds to our asking yet ignores our seeking is that He knows Wisdom is seeking us already. She is not seeking a chosen few, but everyone.

In Proverbs 8:6, Wisdom says, "Listen to me! For I have excellent things to tell you. Everything I say is right." Since Wisdom is pursuing us to share with us these excellent things that are right for us to know, then we just need to simplify the whole thing by asking to receive the one who is in hot pursuit of us.

Why do we need Wisdom? Proverbs 8:12,15-16 says, "I, Wisdom, live together with good judgment. I know where to discover knowledge and discernment.... Because of me, kings reign, and rulers make just laws. Rulers lead with my help, and nobles make righteous judgments." That might not sound important or practical for your daily life, but what would it be like to have leaders making unwise rules for us to live by?

It is comforting to know that Wisdom is on the prowl for us, because she owns good advice and success. Those searching for Wisdom by simply asking the Father for her will find her. She is the possessor and distributor of unending riches, honor, health, and justice. Those who love Wisdom inherit wealth, for she fills their treasuries.

It is time for us to lay aside human gimmicks, games, and strategies with their limitations. Let us, instead, request to be united with Wisdom, who was formed before the creation of any other thing. Not only was she the architect at God's side, but she was God's delight and was happy with all that He created.

We are the greatest of God's creation; we need only Wisdom's daily counsel to complete His masterpiece. Wisdom desires to be yours, as she is His. Ask for the Wisdom who seeks after you, and receive her. You'll be glad that you did.

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 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.

**Watch out for people who
are gathering people to
themselves. It is idolatry.**

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, but God alone was worthy of worship. 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.

You!

Deuteronomy 5:33 (NKJV)—*"You shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God has commanded you, that you may live and that it may be well with you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which you shall possess."*

The subject here is pretty obvious. God is speaking directly to each one of us. Why is it that we still look over our shoulder to see who is following? What does it matter who goes with you? You must follow the voice of the Good Shepherd and the leading of His Holy Spirit.

One of the best reasons that I know to listen to and follow His voice is so you may live and testify to God's goodness. One way Clinton and I do that is by taking care of what the Lord has given us. We are very cautious and concerned about what we eat, how it is prepared, and generally what we can do to prolong our days here on the earth.

Reread Deuteronomy 5:33. It says each of us is due an inheritance; some of us will be given physical land. Are we possessing the portion allotted to us? We can if we walk in His ways and do that which He has commanded of us.

I love these "you" scriptures. Not only do they challenge me, they clearly state what my part is in this earth suit. They eliminate the wonder or the worry. I have never found God to obscure what He wanted me to do. Moses reiterated the Lord's instruction to the children of Israel that they should not turn aside to the left or to the right. That could only mean they were in a forward march because retreat and reverse were never His plan for His children.

It should excite you to know that God's love for you is such that He would specify for you what His expectations are so that you are not trying to walk in another's shoes. Follow God's plan for you. It will prolong your days and cause things to go well for you.

**Follow God's plan for you.
It will prolong your days
and cause things
to go well for you.**

Your Attitude Affects Your Health

Proverbs 14:30 (KJV)—A sound heart is the life of the flesh; but envy the rottenness of the bones.

Jealousy and envy are as bad for the body as consuming acid. They are deadly. They can become the breeding ground for cancer by allowing the disease to take root. Envy and jealousy are not in themselves a disease, but their negative effect is the same.

All of us have to suppress envy or jealousy at one time or another regardless of the gifts and blessings of the Lord in our lives. We have to work at not comparing ourselves with others. Some are jealous of fame, for others it may be looks or wealth that

cause envy, for many it is relationships. Whatever it is, rid yourself of jealousy, and do it quickly. Never give life to jealousy by speaking to anyone but

Can you rejoice in the blessing of God in someone else's life?

God about it. He is the only one who can deliver you.

To envy or be jealous of another is to say to God, "You don't love me the same as You do him or her." It also says to the devil that your sufficiency is not in Christ and you want more. The devil will accommodate you temporarily until he has you hooked, then he will withdraw and gloat over your confusion.

Does someone have something you want, or live where you'd like to live? Are your friends married while you seem to be all alone? How do you respond to negative information? Can you rejoice in the blessing of God in someone else's life? A sound heart is one that says, "I may not have all that you have, but I have all that I need or desire." There is a saying, "We may not have it all together. But together we have it all." Get rid of the attitude of envy and ask God to give you an attitude of gratitude instead. Anchor your heart in whatever will produce life to your flesh in order to walk in divine health.

Do what you do as unto the Lord and wait on Him for both your reward and your recognition. He has not forgotten.

Your House Is Covered, Not Theirs

Joshua 2:18 (NKJV)—Unless when we come into the land, you bind this line of scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and unless you bring your father, your mother, your brothers, and all your father's household to your own home.

Rahab had acknowledged the God of the Israelites as the one, true God. She asked the spies to spare her parents and siblings when they returned to possess the land given to them by God. She understood that everyone was going to be either destroyed or enslaved, so she was buying some insurance for herself and her family also.

When you cooperate with God's plan for people, His covenant is with your house, not that of your relatives. Joshua stated, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15).

When you are the head of the home, you choose which God you will serve. Rahab chose Jehovah, her family had not. But because she did, God protected her house. Therefore, anyone in her house enjoyed the benefit of her choice for God. Her family could have rejected her offer and remained at home, however, they chose to move in with her. As a result, while everyone around them was destroyed, they were totally unharmed.

As much as you want God's protection for your loved ones, they have to establish their own covering with Him unless they come into your home and live according to His requirement of you and your commitment to Him.

Jesus is available to everyone who chooses to come to Him. **If your words to your relatives do not seem to penetrate, perhaps you need to stop talking to them about the Lord and begin talking to the Lord about them.** Stay in God's face and walk according to His Word. He will honor your request because it is already His desire for them to be a part of His family. He will perform the supernatural, if that is what it takes. Commit them to Him. Rest in Him. Thank Him in advance for the manifestation. Start today.

The Unity of Nature

I believe the Lord is saying, "Take the time to observe Mother Nature. She has given birth to beauty beyond mortal description, and yet none of her offspring is identical. Look: Each tree is different in shape, color, and size; yet they grow together to effect total beauty. Without their blending in harmony, something would be missing. Though they change from season to season, there is unity among them.

"Study, My dearest, the boulders and the rocks. They are not bright and colorful as are the trees, yet their beauty is found in their strength and steadfastness. Though the boulders and the rocks change not with the seasons, each one is so different that only I, the God of the universe, could fashion something so magnificent.

"Every ridge, every crack, every crevice is a stroke of the Master's touch. See them standing strong in the midst of the comparatively fragile trees. They are not there to detract from the trees; they enhance and add yet another dimension of beauty to the whole.

"Oh, but what would all this be like without the consistency of the evergreen's rich and true color?

"Though all of nature is different, true beauty appears in their harmony, which I created. Differences are acceptable and good, but disharmony is not.

"My child, you must always remember that all things were created for My pleasure, though you may find enjoyment in them also.

"I, the Creator of the universe, comprehend better than anyone what pleases Me. My understanding of beauty surpasses any master artist's conception of the word. What you see around you was not captured with the stroke of a brush but by the word of My power.

"It is written in My Word that all will not be hands or feet or eyes or ears, for each is needed for a complete body. I am not confused, My child. I made variety, and therein lies true splendor. Never allow the differences among you to pervert My original purpose for you. Continue to observe Mother Nature and her offspring as you learn to live with each other in the same way. Then I will experience pleasure the likes of which I have yet to know.

"Do it for Me, dear one."

A People Dwelling Alone

Numbers 23:9 (NKJV)—*For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him; there! a people dwelling alone, not reckoning itself among the nations.*

In the Old Testament, it was God's plan for His covenant people to dwell alone to demonstrate His power and their uniqueness among the nations. In the New Testament, however, the will of God was expressed through Jesus when He asked the Father in John 17:15 that He not take us out of the world, but that He should keep us from evil.

Jesus knew that His obedience to death would provide us with everything necessary to live "among them" in the world without being negatively affected by them. We are admonished to "...come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you" (2 Corinthians 6:17, KJV).

The last thing God wants today is for His people to isolate themselves from the world. We have what they need. Unless we share and demonstrate truth with them, they will be lost forever. Christian communes are not of God. He wants us to walk among people of the world, but to walk above their attitudes, actions, and aspirations. We were not saved to fellowship only with other believers. We come together to encourage one another so we can go back out among those who do not yet know God's love for them. We are to leave our place of assembly to tell the world that Jesus has already paved the way for them to spend eternity with the Father God through Him.

The ultimate act of selfishness is to become born again and then isolate oneself from the rest of the world, leaving people abandoned without truth and subject to the devil's merciless influence. Living alone is not the same as dwelling alone.

Any single person could and should live alone so they can enjoy quality time with the Lord. However, once we have become recharged and fortified we should make ourselves available so the Lord can send someone across our path who is in need of what we have to share. Real living is not having and hoarding. Real living is having a heart to care to share. How will anyone know you care if you spend your life avoiding them?

A Spirit of Want-To

John 7:17 (NKJV)—*"If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority."*

I have often wondered why some believers seem to mature so rapidly and others remain infantile in their walk far beyond the length of time that seems reasonable.

The answer came to me in this verse, John 7:17, which is about wanting to do the will of God. It seems apparent that when God finds anyone who is more interested in pleasing Him than in being popular or coming up with some new wrinkle to God's revelation, He releases a "spirit of knowing" to them.

I have never thought of knowing as a spirit before. Like most, I thought for years that knowing came with learning; however, I discovered that many people with academic accomplishments really know nothing.

The previous verse, 16, says, "And the Jews marveled, saying, 'How does this Man know letters, having never studied?'" They, like most, failed to realize that the type of knowing Jesus demonstrated did not come from studying; it came from a desire to do the will of God.

Nothing makes you wiser than wanting to do God's will. The first time I read that Jesus came not to do His will but to do the will of the One who sent Him, I made a conscious choice that if I was going to have a lifelong goal, that would be it.

When anyone wants to do His will, every doctrine in the Bible is suddenly illuminated for that person. However, be aware that wanting to do His will is costly and sometimes painful to the flesh—ask Jesus! But the joy and reward far exceed the pain and the price.

A friend of ours recently said, "Never let persecution change your confession." That lodged in my heart and will remain there forever.

Whatever we say about God because of what is written in His Word, whatever we confess because of His promises, does not change with our condition or circumstances. Darkness is not an option for any child of God wanting to do His will. Choose today to walk in His light. Do it His way, according to His Word.

Accomplished, Advanced, and Appointed Desires

Psalm 145:19 (KJV)—*He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them.*

All of us have our affection on something. There are certain things that bring us pleasure and that we are more favorable towards. Too often we exhaust ourselves pursuing those things. Many times we walk away disappointed and disillusioned because they always appear to be just beyond our grasp.

Why does it seem that those things are out of our reach? God said He would fulfill the desires of those who fear Him. If we were allowed to reach out and possess what brings us pleasure, then God would get no credit for our having obtained them. God is looking for people to show Him the reverential respect that He so deserves because of who He is and what He has already done. He shows His graciousness toward humankind by not swatting us like bugs because of our rebellion and acts and deeds that are contrary to His plan for humankind.

God's way is love. His way is to accomplish, advance, and appoint our desire as we set our affection on Him and the things that are important to Him.

He also promised to hear our cry. Yes, He is aware of our weeping, but that does not move Him in the same way our cry moves Him. Our cry—our appeal, petition, and adoration—is what gets through to God. God does not have to be motivated on our behalf, but I sense that He is pleased when we call on Him, or cry out to Him.

Once I observed a single deer in our driveway. I love to see their ears turn like antennae at the slightest sound, so I jiggled the blinds on my window, though it was closed. The deer immediately reacted and looked to see where that faint sound was coming from. Imagine how much more tuned in God is to you and me when we fear Him.

The icing on the cake is His promise to save us. This means that in addition to eternal life we receive His promise to defend, protect, deliver, avenge, preserve, rescue, and stay wide open to us as a part of His free package to us when we reverence Him.

The assurance of His accomplishing, advancing, and appointing my desire takes the stress from all my test, and all I have to do to is respect my Father God in words and deeds. I'll take the offer.

Almost

Psalm 119:87 (NLT)—*They almost finished me off, but I refused to abandon your commandments.*

Almost is not a word to be used when we trust God and His Word. It is not to be a part of our identity as Christians. When on assignment from God, almost is unacceptable. However, when it comes to any attack of the enemy, almost is a sound of victory for anyone who refuses to abandon the precepts of God.

When the devil assaults you as a child of God, his plan is never to just upset or disturb you; his intentions are always to destroy and eliminate you. When he comes to steal from you, he wants all that you have. When he comes to kill you, a temporary incident or an accident is not his plan for the day; he wants you finished.

As long as you are able to say, "They almost finished me off," the devil has been defeated in your life. Just make sure that you stay in a position to say, "They almost...."

How can you be sure that almost will be your declaration of his defeat? Refuse to abandon God's commandments. Anyone who stays with the promises, requirements, and principles of God's Word will be able to say of satan, "he almost finished me off."

You don't want to say, "Jesus almost saved me" or "He almost healed me." But when speaking of the devil, "he almost" is a statement of victory and is usually heard coming from the mouths of God's children who understand their covenant rights.

If today it appears that there is not victory in sight and the prognosis and diagnosis are not favorable, what does the Word of God say? If the devil could have destroyed and finished you off, he would have already. The fact that you are still standing—even if you are in a leaning position—means that he has not caused you to quit, which is the only way on earth that he can be successful.

Your choice to take God at His Word is the devil's greatest fear. Even if your strength and resolve have weakened to the point that your departure is imminent, he still cannot finish you off. As God's offspring, you are homeward bound and the devil can't prevent that.

Keep your house in order, refuse to abandon God's Word, and see what the Lord will do.

Arise and Go Do

John 14:31 (KJV)—*But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.*

As humans, at times fear of the unknown causes us to be reluctant to obey, and we hesitate to follow the command of the Lord. Our tendency is to remain with what has become comfortable. Don't do that—especially at the price of obedience.

Jesus essentially said, "I do the Father's commands so that the world will know that I love the Father." Obedience to do the will of God is a sign that we love and trust the Father. The world trusts in only what their five physical senses tell them, and most of the time they pay a high price for following their senses. What a witness it becomes for them to see and hear of success as we trust and believe the words of the One whom they have neither seen nor known. This is why when God speaks, we should say, "Arise, let us go hence; let us move out from where we are to where we are supposed to be."

When we read the Word, have a vision, dream a dream, or hear the Spirit of God speak to our spirit, it is good to stop long enough to ponder when and how the revealed message will come to pass. Know, however, that the "where" of it will only be revealed as we in obedience arise and go.

You and I will never know what awaits us on the other side of our obedience if we linger too long with the familiar. I have a poster that reads, "When God speaks, never look over your shoulder to see who is following." Friends and family can be a blessing from the Lord, but the time may come when He will direct you to an unfamiliar place to be a blessing to those whom you do not know.

Go ahead—dream your dream; ponder your vision; meditate on the word you have heard. But when you have clearly heard His voice, never allow yourself to get ahead of or far behind God. Allow His precious Holy Spirit to lead you. Then, as an expression of your faith and a statement of your love, go and do. I charge you today: Get on with God.

Avoid Divisive Persons

Romans 16:17 (NKJV)—*Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.*

We need to stop making excuses for people who are divisive and go contrary to the truth we've been taught. The Scripture tells us that those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ but their own belly or desires, and by smooth words and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the simple. Love them but let them alone (v. 18).

God wants us to be wise concerning what is good, yet simple concerning evil (v. 19). God has not given us a ministry platform to preach on racism. He has called us to preach His love, His power, and His Son's name. Racism will never be eliminated until we, with the love of God and the Word of God, proclaim the truth that will transform people from the inside out.

If we are honest, most of us would have to admit that someone of another race has had a positive impact and influence in our lives which is why we are who we are and where we are today. Conversely, many of us can recall that some of the most difficult moments in our lives took place as a result of what someone of our own race did to us. Of course it takes an honest person to acknowledge that cruelty comes in all colors.

Calvary covered it all for us. Jesus did not die for us to create division. He died for us to be reconciled, restored, and renewed in our thinking. You and I may not be able to stop the messengers who have exchanged the Gospel of Jesus Christ for a gospel of race awareness. But we do not have to be so simple that we are unable to see that aside from increased division and separation, this strange gospel is also causing increase in the messengers' pockets and bank accounts.

I charge you today to avoid divisive persons. When you support them and what they preach, that is equivalent to throwing your money down a deep well, which may explain the lack of return on your investment.

Basis for My Devotion

John 14:15 (NIV)—*If you love me, you will obey what I command.*

In John 14:15, Jesus was simply saying to those professing to be His disciples, “Do it My way, and I’ll see that as an indication of your love for Me.” In John 21:16, Jesus told Peter that loving Him required him to feed His sheep. In John 13:14, Jesus declared that the only way His disciples can be identified is by the love they demonstrate to others.

No amount of service for the Lord will excuse us from walking in His love. We demonstrate His love to others when we first love Him, and we demonstrate our love to Him when we show His love to others.

The Spirit spoke to me once when I was zealous to take the Word to others whom I saw were in need. He said, “A need is not a call.” He reminded me of what my call was.

I thought He meant that my call was to my town or the people in my church, but He corrected me. He reminded me that my call was to obey His every word and that I could only do His will and perform what was pleasing in His sight as I acted out of love for Him.

When I demonstrate my love for God through obedience, He will allow me to serve His people and feed His sheep. If He is not assured of my total devotion to Him, He won’t be able to trust me with His sheep. Loving Him allows the fruit of His Spirit to be manifested towards His sheep. If I don’t love Him, I have no power to care for the sheep because sheep often mess up and appear unworthy of one’s efforts.

Love for the Shepherd will empower you to feed His sheep when you’d rather walk away.

Lord, thank You for teaching me that devotion and commitment to You must be the foundation and basis for all my deeds and efforts. I declare my love for You, and I commit to show You that love by obeying You, feeding Your sheep, and demonstrating Your love to others. You make all the difference in my life. Thank You for loving me first, in Jesus’ name.



“I’m Going the Distance.”

*Dear brothers and sisters,
not many of you should become
teachers in the church, for we who
teach will be judged by God
with greater strictness.*

(James 3:1, NLT)



*Remember, it is sin to
know what you ought to do
and then not do it.*

(James 4:17, NLT)

On April 10, John Bevere ministered two services at our church in New York. During the Sunday evening service, at his instruction, I stepped back and into a “force field” of the power of God. That’s the only way I know how to describe it. It was greater than any anointing I have ever experienced in my life.

When I got home that evening, I prayed, “Lord, when it comes to the ministry gift You’re giving me, please let me never, ever step back into the natural no matter what others may think or what they may prefer. Help me obey You, come what may.”

You ought to be careful when you ask God for things like that because you get an opportunity to put it into practice quickly.

It is with mixed emotions that I announce to you the passing of my husband, Clinton H. Utterbach, on Saturday, April 16, at 2 a.m. His spirit is with Jesus, and his body was interred on Tuesday, April 19, at 11 a.m.

Over the years, Clinton and I agreed to forego services of any kind and to teach the people to keep their focus on Jesus, who, Paul states, “will never leave you nor forsake you. So we may boldly say, ‘The LORD is my helper, I will not fear. What can man do to me?’” (Hebrews 13:5-6) In lieu of flowers or food of any kind, gifts to RLCC for our renovation project or to complete the donor wall in Pastor Clinton’s name will be greatly appreciated.

In February, Clinton was operated on to replace a leaking heart valve. For several months prior, he had been retaining extreme amounts of fluid. Although he had been found fit to undergo surgery, after the procedure his recovery was impeded by his weakened immune system which had already been compromised due to the kidney transplant he had four years ago. He remained in intensive care since the surgery.

When I went to visit him at the hospital after prayer service on the 15th, there was not any change in his condition. The doctors had given up, but he was alive. He was moving his eyes and his head, and he was aware that I was there. But when I kissed him, I realized that his mouth, face, and hands were so cold that it was only going to be a matter of hours or at best a day before he just decided to go to sleep in Christ. His body was doing what the Bible says all flesh is going to do—it was perishing.

As I share this with you, I’m experiencing mixed emotions. Part of me is screaming, yet another part of me realizes that Clinton has no more pain. No more suffering. No more sickness—nothing. He is free.

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I spent that Saturday pretty much alone. I didn't need phone calls or visitors. I needed to get myself together and spend time with the Lord to ask Him all the questions I needed to ask. So that's what I did and I am so grateful to Him for His presence. I thought I knew some things about the peace of God; truly, it is a peace that passes understanding. You can't even begin to understand or describe this kind of peace. You just have to experience it for yourself. Finally, I told my driver since he would need to take me around to make all the arrangements. But I didn't want anyone at the church to know ahead of anyone else. I told our granddaughter on my way to church and informed our assistant Minister Lewis at church just before I shared it with the congregation.

When I made the announcement to our flock, all of us took a moment together to shed tears and express the emotion that each of us felt. Then, we put our focus back on Jesus.

The song says, "I'll go the distance. No matter the opposition, I'm standing firm in my conviction that in Christ Jesus I'll go the distance."

Those words have become my anthem.

God continues to strengthen me in a wonderful way. Everyone is concerned about me being alone, but I'm not alone. A few days before Clinton departed I spent five hours driving alone with the Lord, praying in tongues during a trip to North Carolina and back. I played some of Pastor Clinton's music from Peace Hall and it was wonderful. I was caught in the glory, not knowing that God was preparing me for what was to come.

I do fine when I'm alone. The tears flow when others begin to cry around me. But God has been my strength. When friends call to express their sentiments, many have been overcome with emotion. I must admit that I don't have the energy to fight off helping others with their emotions right now because I'm trying to stay steady in order to do what I'm supposed to do.

So I'm asking your help. If you're going to call, write, or talk to me about this, talk to me in strength because I don't need pity or sympathy. Right now my husband is rejoicing. He's known about Jesus since he was four years old. He has desired to behold His face since he was four years old and that's what he shall do.

When the phone rang at 2:15 that morning, I knew what the message was going to be. The hospital representative asked me if I was coming to view his body. I said, "Absolutely not." Why didn't I go? I went when he was alive. I did not need to view his remains because an empty body is nothing but a shell. His spirit left immediately. Clinton was not there.

On the day I stepped back into that force field of God's glory, my desire was never to respond to anything in the natural anymore. I want to stay in the Spirit, and I'm going to stay in the Spirit. When I hung up the phone that morning, I said, "Okay, Lord, it's 2:30 a.m. and I'm awake. What am I supposed to do all this time besides praise You?"

So, I did what women do. I washed my hair and got my clothes ready because I knew I was going to have to make all the arrangements. I didn't feel the need to call and disturb anyone and get them involved. God's grace was going to be sufficient for me.

I called John Bevere to tell him, and he was rushing on his way to his plane. He stopped and said, "Wait a minute. I'm not in that big a hurry. I can't believe I'm not going to see my brother until I get to glory."

I said, "John, you've already seen him in the Spirit realm." And I said, "When we get to glory, we're going to focus so much on Jesus that we're not going to be looking up loved ones and expecting to have the kind of emotions that we had about them while here." And then, very interestingly, he said, "If you need to call me, don't hesitate. Get on the phone and call."

I said, "John, why do I need to call you when I have Jesus and the Holy Ghost?"

He broke into laughter. I said, "Isn't that what you were teaching us when you were here, that we are to draw near to God and He will draw near to us? I can't make you my source of comfort. I have to get as close to God as I possibly can because the closer I get to Him, the closer He's going to get to me."

And that's the way it's always going to be. I am never going to let my focus be on a human being.

I had more than thirty years with Clinton Utterbach. We had the same things that you have in your marriage. We had the good days, and the bad days. We had the ups, and we had the downs. I'm not perfect; neither was he. I'm not always right; neither was he. But we worked it out between us. We worked it out using the Word of God as our example and our judge. The Word of God became our standard that determined how we wanted to live because without God's Word as the manual for Christian living and marriage, no one is going to make it.

Why is my husband asleep in Jesus instead of here with us today? I talked to the Lord about all the questions that everyone might have. I gave our congregation the opportunity to ask me questions on the morning I shared the news with them. And I am taking the time to share my comments with you as well. Folks, it's time for the people of God, especially His ministers, to be transparent. It takes the pressure off everyone.

The same week Clinton departed this life, I was talking to the Lord about my husband's physical condition. The Lord said to me, "Sarah, Clinton's not unconscious. He's not in a coma, and he's not sedated. In the Bible, what is usually taking place when someone is not connected or not completely aware of things going on in the world and yet they are not dead?"

I said, "Well, the Apostle John said of himself, 'I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day' (Rev. 1:10). And the Apostle Paul said, 'Whether it was in the body or out of the body, I do not know' (2 Cor. 12:2). So, both were in the Spirit."

The Lord said, "That's right. Clinton and I are having a conversation, and I wish you all would leave us alone until we finish it." I knew the Lord was

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referring to me and to the doctors.

After I received the news that Clinton was gone, I said to the Lord, "Well, obviously the conversation was finished."

He replied, "Yes, and Clinton took My offer."

I said, "But, Lord, You promised me back in 1977 that I would never sit as a widow." I mean, it was so strange when I acknowledged to myself that I am a widow. I said to the Lord, "You told me twenty-seven years ago that I would never sit as a widow and neither would I know the loss of children. That word has worked for me all this time. What happened here?"

He said, "My Word will always work. Every promise of Mine will always work for everyone as long as they're in obedience. When they step into disobedience, they invite chaos into their lives."

I said, "Lord, please explain that to me because I have a congregation that I must explain this to, without making any excuses, or trying to pretend or make up anything." I said, "They need answers, and I need to be the one to give them the answers."

So He said, "I commanded Clinton four years ago to learn Spanish. He knew I had spoken to him and he shared with you and the congregation not only what I said to him but also why I required it of him. But he didn't do it. I gave him several opportunities to repent and get it straight. He would repent and he would do it a little bit, but he never took the time to follow through. I allowed him to see that while he was in the hospital all the things that he thought he had to do at the church and with the choir were still going on just the same even though he was not able to do them.

"If he had listened to Me," the Lord said, "he would have experienced for himself My all-sufficient grace. When much is given, much is required. When I ask something of My children, commanding them to do something, it is because I have given them the wherewithal to do it. My grace really is sufficient as long as you're in obedience. But when you get into disobedience, I am not a respecter of persons. I don't show partiality to anyone."

Choosing to obey is the reason I do my walking. Do you think I felt like doing thirty minutes of walking the day I received the news about Clinton? I guarantee you that I didn't, but I did it anyway. And I'm here to tell you, **just as I have told my congregation, that whatever God has commanded you to do, whatever it is, do not—I repeat—do NOT allow anything or anyone to interfere with you doing it.** We're in a time frame with the Lord now where we no longer have time to play around and ignore the commands of the Lord. He doesn't make suggestions. He doesn't make requests. He gives commands and He expects them to be obeyed. We've entered a time with the Lord where He's just not going to tolerate disobedience from those of us whom He has blessed enormously.

Brother Hagin prophesied two years ago at Winter Bible Seminar that in 2005 judgment was going to begin at the house of God. This is a classic

example. God loved my husband too much to allow condemnation to come on him. Clinton is not condemned. He is asleep in Jesus.

My husband's physical body has been under attack since 1979. First it was a dissecting aneurysm, then a near stroke in 1984. Then in the '90s it was kidney failure. He was on dialysis for three and a half years until he finally had a kidney transplant. This recent episode was the result of a leaking heart valve.

Every single time something happened, God delivered my husband, but my husband would always go back to man's medicine. Clinton could get people healed. I mean, if he laid hands on you, you were going to get healed. But Clinton did not quite learn how to apply healing to his own body. That's why you can't be only a hearer of the Word. You must be a doer of it. I don't care if you are the pastor of Redeeming Love Christian Center or you are the Pope, it makes no difference. The Word of God must be heard, received, and applied or there will be judgment if we do not judge ourselves.

My husband never committed a moral failure since we've been married. That's almost 32 years. My husband didn't deny me anything that a man should provide for his wife. I was well taken care of in every area of my life. So I have no complaints about him. I can't say, "Oh, God judged him about this, that, or the other."

Judgment came to prevent condemnation from coming because as it states in James 3:1, there is a greater condemnation to those who are teachers of the Word. That means, folks, if we're going to teach it, we've got to live it. Okay? Clinton didn't ever quite learn how to live in divine health. He knew how to teach divine healing and he knew how to dispense it, but he did not quite learn how to apply it to his own personal life.

Clinton loved RLCC more than anything other than Jesus. And he certainly loved Jesus. Of that there was no question. I think it was similar to what Jim Bakker said of himself concerning his own failure. Jim said, "I never fell out of love with Jesus. I just stopped fearing God."

Folks, I don't know about you, but I plan to fear the Lord. In fact, I feared not telling you what I'm telling you right now because under different circumstances the wife is supposed to make everything sound as though her husband was the perfect ideal person. God loved my husband very much, and my husband loved God very much. But Clinton left the door open, and the enemy got a lick in.

Now, we can either focus on the fact that he's gone, or we can go on and live what he's been teaching us all these years. Jesus is still Lord over our congregation. Redeeming Love Christian Center was built around the person of Jesus Christ, not around Clinton and Sarah Utterbach or anyone else. And, because Jesus Christ is the foundation of the work here, we will not build upon anything else but that. We're not going to have any monuments erected to Clinton. We're not going to name anything after him. We are going to honor him and what he taught us by beginning to fear God enough to do what he taught. No tribute is greater or more worthwhile than that.

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Missing it in our own lives or sinning by failing to do what we know to do is not honoring what Clinton lived for and even died for. Why Clinton couldn't get it together for himself, I don't know. That's between him and Jesus and they have already worked it out. The Lord made him an offer either to come home or to stay here. If Clinton had stayed here, it would have taken months, perhaps years, of rehabilitation to get him back in shape to stand in the pulpit. I really don't know. I just knew that the deterioration of his body was taking place to such a degree that I didn't want to see my husband suffer.

When I did speak with the Lord about it, He said, "Manifested victory will come—either with Jesus as healer or Jesus as deliverer." There's victory either way. He then said that the congregation would prefer to have him back, "but if he's not going to do what I tell him to do then you're better off letting him come home because here with Me there will be no pain, no suffering, no hurting, and no disobedience. He'll be glad to do everything, and he will still have his reward of seeing Jesus face to face." So that's why we are moving forward today. God has given me the grace and the strength I need. And while Clinton's inner man was being renewed day by day, I believe with all my heart that it was renewed enough to say, "I'm ready to give up the ghost and obtain my reward."

For whatever reason, Clinton didn't learn to take control of his own body and trust God completely for his healing. As many times as God healed him, Clinton still resorted to medicine. I'm not telling you not to go to doctors. I am telling you, however, that your trust and reliance must be upon God and not the doctors. As I told the doctors, medicine obviously couldn't heal Clinton because if medicine could have healed him, he would have been here with us today. So don't ever put your confidence in medicine or doctors. Keep your trust in God and apply the Word of God to your life.

Even the doctors had to conclude that there was nothing else they could do. The day before Clinton fell asleep in Christ, I signed the "Do not resuscitate" papers. I told the doctors, "Leave him alone. Either Jesus is going to manifest Himself as the healer, or his deliverer. And either way, he wins, and either way I can live with it."

God is so good. He allowed me to get used to living alone for the nearly three months that Clinton was in the hospital. I can't remember the last time that I haven't had someone in my life to live with. But guess what? I still have somebody, and His name is Jesus.

I'm not trying to be strong. Every hour or so I have to ask for the Lord's grace and strength to get through this because I loved my husband like you love yours—I probably loved my husband better than most of you love yours. And my husband loved me dearly. But he is gone. He's asleep in Christ. And I will carry on with my trust in the Holy Spirit who is here with me to lead and to guide me.

The Holy Spirit directed me through every bit of the arrangements. It was amazing. For example, I've never had to deal with morticians. When my stepfather passed, my mother took care of that. When my mother passed,

my brother took care of it. When my father-in-law passed, my husband took care of most of that. I've never had to deal with a mortician, especially since I've been in Manhattan. People don't tend to put morticians' names in their rolodex. They should, but they don't.

When it came time for me to contact a mortician that morning, I didn't even know the procedure to follow. At first I called the concierge to bring up the Yellow Pages because that was the only place I knew to go to for information. Then it dawned on me, *Wait a minute. What's wrong with the Holy Ghost? He knows where the morticians are.*

As soon as I asked the Holy Spirit what to do, He told me, "Call Lou."

Lou is the gentleman I led to the Lord on my birthday along with his wife. He is a mortician. When I called him, he gave me the necessary information. I didn't even have a burial plot because Clinton and I had discussed cremation. He didn't have a problem with it. In fact, we had agreed between us that our remains were to be disposed of before anyone was notified. I was not able to do that because of all the papers that needed to be filed. And, since I was vacillating about whether or not to cremate the body, I purchased a plot.

When a person's spirit is already gone, it doesn't matter what you do with the body. When a person has fallen asleep in Christ, they will receive a new, glorified body when Christ returns. So it doesn't matter whether the body has been eaten up by worms, as Pastor Clinton would say, or whether it has been consumed with flames.

When I met with the funeral home director, at first everyone was talking in the soft, whispery voices they use when they're selling you something. But I made him relax. When the people at the funeral home began asking me about what we needed, I shocked them and made them laugh a little. I said, "We don't need a funeral car. We don't need flower cars because we're not going to have any flowers. Everybody can drive their own car to get there. And we probably won't be there that long. Then again, we may stay all day, I don't know. When we start singing out there, don't be surprised if some graves start to open." He laughed and said okay. Before it was over he said to me, "I wish more people came in here like you. I get so drained sometimes with people coming in here and just taking everything out of me."

He had to laugh, again, for example, when he asked me if I had a favorite suit that I wanted to put on my husband, I said, "No. My husband's suits cost too much money to put them in some crypt." And I'm telling you all now, if *my* body goes the way of the grave instead of being caught up in the Rapture, my St. John's suits cost too much money to be put in a grave. Don't do that, okay? Please give them to someone who can use them.

I told the man, "We're not going to put one of his perfectly good suits in a tomb. Clinton will be wearing his robe of righteousness; he will not be showing up naked before Jesus. He certainly doesn't need a custom-made suit."

I asked the Lord what to do with Clinton's clothing and shoes—some of which he's never even worn—and the Lord instructed me to sow them. So, when He shows me who He wants me to sow them to, I'll do it.

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I purchased the most basic things imaginable. I looked at the prices of those aluminum caskets that people buy in an attempt to impress other people when they haven't done what they were supposed to do by the person while he or she was alive. I purchased a simple pine box. By the way, a pine box costs \$1,200. So if you aren't ready for death, start setting aside your pennies

now because somebody's going to die and you're going to need some money for a burial.

The day a baby is born, the process of death begins right then. Death did not start for Pastor Clinton on April 16. That's the day it concluded its process. Death started the day Clinton was born, on July 3, 1931, and it ended on April 16, 2005. Clinton lived his hyphen in between those dates to the best of his ability. He lived it well enough to be able to teach God's truth to others. Unfortunately, in some areas he did not grasp how to apply it, but as far as moral sins or anything like that, he's not guilty of anything. I don't want anybody to think that Pastor Clinton died under the condemning judgment of God. Condemnation is strictly for willfully not living what you preach. But God loved him so much that in order for Clinton not to experience condemnation, the Lord allowed him to fall asleep in Christ. The reward of being able to see Jesus in due season was God's judgment of him, not punishment because of any other sin. Yes, he is guilty of the sin of knowing what to do but not doing it. However, that's not the same as pretending to do what is right but not doing it.

I want to express my heartfelt thanks to all who joined me in praising and thanking God while we were passing through the fires of adversity. I believe that my husband and the Lord worked some things out because of the fact that we were praising. There's no question about the fact that we would like to have him here. But under the circumstances, I believe the perfect will of God was done in light of the choices Clinton had already made.

If you want to pray for anyone right now, pray for our granddaughter Sarah. She's had a difficult time. Since she was eleven days old, she and her grandfather had a special relationship. Members of our congregation, our spiritual children, and even guests had some questions for me the morning I made this announcement and even since then. I have, by the Spirit of God, done my best to answer them.

In his life and even in his death, Pastor Clinton still teaches us the importance of using our authority as believers in Jesus Christ by being a doer of the Word of God in every situation. Failure to do so at all times and in all things is costly.

My prayer for you is that you will fear God, draw near to God, and obey God with all your heart and with all your strength. Live each day with all the conviction and obedience you would apply if it were your last day on earth—for one day it will be.

The following questions were received from members and guests at RLCC and responded to by Pastor Sarah the morning she announced to the congregation that Pastor Clinton H. Utterbach was asleep in Christ.

QUESTION: Did the Holy Spirit give you any guidance afterwards or did you ask the Lord about maybe raising him from the dead?

SWU: No. To raise Clinton from the dead, only for him to continue in disobedience, would have brought condemnation on him because of the choices he was making regarding his healing and one aspect of his calling. Pastor Clinton now has the victory. He had 73 wonderful years here in the earth, and I wasn't the least bit interested in raising him from the dead unless God had given me the assurance that Clinton's body would be made right and that he wasn't going to have to go to a rehab. Clinton is not disciplined enough to put himself through the kind of grueling workouts required in rehabilitation and he would have only found himself in trouble spiritually. Now he's not in trouble. He got the victory. He's just not here with us. And I'm telling you, he's not unhappy or dissatisfied where he is. We are going to miss him, but he is fine.

QUESTION: The pastor from Africa that was brought back from the dead came back completely healed. God makes us perfectly whole when we are restored to Him.

SWU: But do you know God could do that without me asking Him? That's why anything the Lord wanted me to ask, I would ask. Anything that the Lord wanted me to do, I would have done. That's why I've been spending so much time alone with the Lord so that I can hear clearly His voice and not all the voices around me. Because if I listen to everybody whose praying about this, that, or the other, it becomes a clamor around me. Pastor Clinton was the one who said he saw himself walking down those aisles in a white suit. That was not my vision. I didn't have one. But as I've gone through these last few months, what I wanted was God's will to be done because the Lord was teaching me to be dependent upon Him, not on being married to anybody. And by the way, I don't want anyone to even think about believing God for me because I'm not available. I'm married to Jesus.

QUESTION: Kenneth Copeland gave you a very specific prophecy about the future. Would you elaborate on that in this light of what has happened?

SWU: I did ask the Lord about that and I thought it was very interesting that the night before when we were both present, he didn't give the prophecy. Friday morning, when I was there without Pastor Clinton, is when Brother Copeland spoke those things over my life. Although he included Pastor Clinton, which is the correct thing to do, I know now that

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it was a prophecy to me. Otherwise God would have let him give it the night before when both of us were present instead of when I was the only one present.

QUESTION: Pastor Sarah, after one of your visits to Pastor Clinton while he was in intensive care, you told the congregation that Pastor Clinton asked you, "Am I dead or alive?"

SWU: He said, "Did I die? I thought I was dead." And I said, "Honey, you didn't die. You've been here all the time with us. You haven't left us yet. All this stuff is going on and there are many things you are hooked up to, and it looks like you ought to be dead, but you aren't."

QUESTION: Do you think that he had a glimpse of heaven and it just took a little bit of time for him to get there?

SWU: That would be what I would want to think but because I haven't heard from the Lord about it, I don't want to speculate about it. But I do believe that when you get a glimpse of glory, nothing is attractive to you in the earth anymore.

QUESTION: Jesus wept when Lazarus died. Since we're in Jesus, can we weep when we want to weep?

SWU: Go right ahead and weep, as long as I don't have to join you. Go cry as much as you feel like you want to because my grief is not going to be as those who have no hope. If you feel the need to cry and that's your release, then be relieved. Has anybody heard me say that you can't cry? I just don't have time to join you in that kind of emotion. My grieving is on the inside because I didn't know what else I could have said to him to get him to apply what I knew that he knew was the right thing to do. I was not going to be a nag. The Scripture talks about nagging wives. And since he was God's son, the Holy Ghost would either work it out with him or he'd fall asleep in Christ. Those are the only choices that any of us have as believers. Get right or go to sleep. And some of you today have that same choice. You're either going to get it together or go to sleep. So, check out your life before you check out of this life.

QUESTION: Your strength has strengthened me. I just give God thanks for you this morning.

SWU: Well, thank you, but please do not exalt me to make me more than I am. I am a female. I am a wife who hurts on the inside just like you do. But I have a responsibility to God and to you. The Lord told me that Pastor Clinton was my assignment and now that assignment is completed but my assignment here is not.

When I stepped into that powerful force field of the anointing recently, I was reaching out for all of God that I could contain. I want you to do the same thing. Reach out for more of God. Don't try to cling to me. I don't have your

strength; God is your strength. I don't want a congregation of babies who grow older but do not mature. You aren't that way and I'm not going to let you be that way.

Please understand that the strength you're seeing in me is supernatural. It is not Pastor Sarah being strong because the first time you start perceiving and esteeming me as being so strong, the Lord will let you see my feet of clay. So if you want me to continue to teach, preach, and live this thing in front of you, then I want you to be certain to give God all the glory for the grace that He's giving me during this time. My flesh feels everything that you would feel in this circumstance. I just cannot afford to give in to it. I have purposed to draw near to God so that He and all He is will draw near to me.

QUESTION: Recently, one of my relatives went home to be with the Lord after having been in a coma. I'd been praying and believing for her healing. I spoke the Scriptures I believe that God had wanted me to speak over her, but the next thing I knew she was gone. Then last week, as I was speaking the Scriptures compiled in It Is Written for My Healing, I believe the Holy Spirit told me, "Wherever you see 'I,' 'my,' or 'me,' read Pastor Clinton." Last night when I got home, I believe I heard it again and I did it. Now this morning you are saying he's gone.

SWU: Actually, he passed the night before that at two a.m. He's been gone since two o'clock Saturday, not two o'clock this morning which is Sunday. That's why when I listen to all the exhortations concerning his future, I realize that people are still growing and learning how to hear.

I never prayed once over my husband. I went and did just what the Lord instructed me to do. I counted it all joy that the fires of adversity were burning off the alloy of my fleshly nature. That's what happened. That's what God was working in me all this time. Everything that the Lord directed me to do, I did. I didn't go to the hospital praying over him every day. I went to the hospital because he's my assignment. I wanted to make sure that what the doctors were doing concerning my assignment was right. When the doctors called Thursday wanting to do yet another risky test on his esophagus that could puncture it, I said to them, "No new medicines." The medicines he was given restricted his blood vessels so much that his fingers were starting to turn purple—not blue, purple! I said, "You've done everything that you know to do. God is taking over from here. My husband and God have been in conversation, and evidently they're in agreement about whatever it is because I haven't received any further information or instruction from the Lord. So just leave him alone and let Jesus either deliver him or heal him. Those are the options right now. He's going to walk in manifested victory as being delivered or healed. Either way, he wins."

They actually agreed with me that they had nothing else to try. I said, "Now I know why you're called practitioners because you all keep practicing. But you can't practice on my husband anymore."

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QUESTION: Thank you. I needed that. My question is this: I believe that I was led to pray and say certain Scriptures over a relative for her healing and yet she died. I believed I was led to put Pastor Clinton's name in my praying of the Scriptures for healing but now he's gone. Did I miss it?

SWU: No, because you don't know what you were praying about regarding his situation. You think you were praying about him being healed and coming back down these aisles in a white suit. You don't know what the Lord had you praying about, because we're limited in our understanding. At times we think our prayers are about one thing, yet the Holy Spirit is directing us to say His Word over a situation for an entirely different purpose. You may have been praying for the perfect will of God to be done in his life. Well, sleeping in Christ is the perfect will of God. You can't get any more perfect than being able to stand one day in the presence of Jesus.

QUESTION: Is it safe to say that God knew that Pastor Clinton was not going to take the Spanish lessons, even if He had healed him and that's why he's not here with us now?

SWU: Yes, I think it's very safe to say that. I'm convinced of it. The reason that I say that is because He had given him three or four different opportunities to take the Spanish lessons after being healed before and he did not do it. Also, when the attacks would come on his body, he did not take a firm stand and say, "God, in You I put my trust. I'm going to stand on Your Word." He would go and get the doctor's medicine. He would go for the operation. He'd do these things. Well, the more you ignore God in your midst, the more callous you become.

Please understand me: In my opinion, Clinton fell asleep in Christ before he needed to. Unless you're willing to do things God's way here in the earth, you lose your effectiveness. And those of you listening to me today, I'm telling you, if you don't get busy doing what God has told you to do—instead of praying about what you already know is the will of God for you to do—and just get on with doing it, your presence will not necessarily be here with us either if you don't obey the Lord.

QUESTION: Thank you for being so transparent. It has certainly helped me. I once heard a woman who was a widow say, "Jesus is my husband." That has been running through my mind since you had declared for years that you would never be a widow. You aren't one now. Jesus is your husband.

SWU: You got it, honey. I am married to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Do you know what the Scripture says in 1 Corinthians 7? It talks about those who are married having to divide their time between the Lord and their companion. But those who remain single are able to devote their time to the Lord because they don't have any of the natural distraction or normal demands on their time that go along with being married

I have more time with the Lord than I have ever had before. You haven't seen anything yet as far as I'm concerned. I'm not talking about any special anointing. I don't know what God's going to do. All I know is that I'm going to have the time to find out from God what I need to do. It was not His best for me to go to the hospital twice a day to see His son. That was my assignment but my assignment is now complete. I'm telling you, Jesus would have to show me the nail prints in His hands, let me put my fist in His side, and then command me to marry somebody. That's not because I had a bad marriage. It's because I love the Lord more than I love anything and anybody in this world.

QUESTION: This morning while I was praying, as I've been doing every morning, I just said, "Father, I thank You for Pastor Clinton's manifested victory and that he's coming out in glory." And this morning there was a check in my spirit that said, "His coming out in glory could mean coming home to heaven."

SWU: He was already asleep in Christ. But you didn't know that. Clinton now has his manifested victory. His manifested victory was Jesus as the deliverer and not the healer. We want him healed; God wants to be glorified. Pastor Clinton has stepped over into the glory of God in this whole situation. When I say that I don't have any regret, my only regret is that he left here sooner than he needed to. I spent most of the years of my marriage believing that I was going to depart this life first. That's why I wasn't prepared with a mortician. I believed that I was going to go first because I would never sit as a widow and neither would I know the loss of children. That was my belief and my confession. So any regret I have this morning is because he departed before I did. Yes, of course I'm going to miss him. We had a wonderful relationship, a lot of fun. The latter years got better than the former ones. But, he's gone now and I'm going on with Jesus.

QUESTION: Pastor Clinton was working on a book on end-time prophecy. Did he ever finish it?

SWU: He finished it. It will be published only if the Lord tells me to publish it because it wasn't my book. It's Pastor Clinton's book. Whether or not God wants it published is entirely up to God. The manuscript is ready to go to press. But I'm not going to do one thing to make it happen because it's not my book. It's entirely up to the Lord.

QUESTION: Can you tell me, Pastor Sarah, why the Lord kept this from you?

SWU: He didn't keep Pastor Clinton's death from me.

I knew since he was born he was going to die. Folks, you have to understand, I didn't have a need to know that he was going to leave this life when he did. I had a need to know how to stay strong once he was gone. Do you understand the difference?

continued

I pray every morning for the wisdom of God, for the grace of God, for His understanding, for my bread, for the fruit of the Spirit in an unlimited way, and the gifts only as needed. I only needed the gift of the word of knowledge if I wasn't going to be strong enough to handle the whole thing.

But God has been making me stronger for these past two months. He was preparing me for whatever. Who are you going to serve? Is it Clinton? Are you a Christian because of your relationship with Clinton, or are you a Christian because of Jesus Christ? I had to keep my husband in his proper place in my life just as you must. Our lives are to be built upon Jesus Christ, not upon Clinton Utterbach or any other human. I received my husband as an assignment from the Lord and I did everything God told me to do. I was at the hospital often twice a day. And, when he was home, I waited on him hand and foot.

But evidently there is another dimension that God wants me to function in now and I'm trying my best to draw nearer to Him. I wasn't trying to get closer to my husband. I couldn't get any closer to him. He couldn't love me any more. If what he was doing or not doing was going to hinder what God wants to do with me next, wouldn't it be better to let him come home? You know, God hasn't kept some deep dark secret from me. God's perfect will was done in the situation in light of the choices Clinton had made.

QUESTION: Pastor Sarah, I wanted to just share a little bit about the vision that the Holy Spirit gave me during prayer in the leadership meeting last month. Once I shared it I realized there was another piece to it. I thought originally it was just to be shared with leadership, then the Holy Spirit said, "No, the people need to hear it also." Now I better understand.

SWU: We know in part, and we prophesy in part.

In a vision, I saw an arm and I understood it to be the arm of Pastor Clinton. I saw a nurse bathing his arm, and as she rubbed down his arms, his skin was coming off, just like a snake moving out of his skin. It didn't hurt him. Big pieces, not flakes, but big pieces were coming off Pastor Clinton's arms. Then I could see this new skin, and it was smooth. And I believe I heard the Lord say, "I'm making him new. I'm renewing him. I'm giving him a new body."

Then the next part of the vision was, I saw Pastor Clinton standing at the top of the aisle in his white suit, and he was just behind the last pew because the church was packed all the way around with no space to squeeze in anyone.

When he stepped to the side of that last pew, Pastor Clinton lit up. Just the middle of him lit up. I understood that to be Christ in him. As he started to walk, what I also understood by the Spirit is if he never understood his purpose before that point, he did now. It was a message he had to teach us. I understood there was something he was going to share.

But as he stepped to each pew, the light of Christ inside him moved to and affected every person. It was just like when you get a chill and shiver a bit.

When that happened, then every person understood their purpose. They not only understood their individual purpose, they also understood their purpose for being at RLCC. There was a message he had to teach, yet he never opened his mouth.

SWU: How many times have we heard Pastor Clinton say that he saw a vision of many people coming to the classrooms upstairs? Dressed in their native clothing, he said they just sat in the presence of the Lord as they were taught. One by one, each person got up to go out and obey what God was telling them to do.

When I left the hospital that Friday night, I knew that it was only going to be a matter of hours or at best a day and he wasn't going to be here. He was too cold, and this was not normal. He was definitely alive because he was moving his arms and his head and all. But I could tell that the spirit was ebbing out of him.

So I went home and went to sleep. I slept like a baby not because I won't miss my husband in the bed beside me, but because I have Jesus with me all the time. I can't fall apart because I don't have the physical part of Pastor Clinton. I do have the spirit of Pastor Clinton because Pastor Clinton left here with the Spirit of Christ in him. And the Spirit of Christ is in me. Besides, Clinton and I were connected in the Spirit not just by the flesh.

QUESTION: As he walked, the light in him went all around to the people in every row. He never spoke the message. He didn't have to speak it. By the time he reached the floor, we knew what the message was. He stood in the pulpit, and the place erupted. Then he took his fist and just pounded on the podium, and the people stood up. Then, they went out because the sanctuary was filled with light. And this light moved out to the parking lot and to Route 59 and to Middletown Road and out into the world. He was no longer there. That's what I realize now. He was not there.

QUESTION: I'm not a member of RLCC but I have a question. I was given the opportunity to listen to ten years of ministry tapes from Clinton Utterbach. Through my job I'm able to listen about eight hours a day. So for the last two years, I've listened to his teaching for about eight hours a day. Pastor Clinton has done so much to help my understanding of the Word. I'm just in tears inside. I remember on one of his tapes he talked about when his mother passed. He said he was coming down Palisades Parkway, and the Lord spoke to him and told him, "You know, when you get to the hospital, your mother won't be there." He said, "Yes, I know." He said he hadn't shed a tear since. I'm trying to embrace that ability. Even though I don't know him, I feel like I do because for two years now this has been in my head every day, eight hours a day.

SWU: If you feel the need to shed a tear or two or three, go right ahead. Tears are healthy. They're cleansing. But after you're through crying, then go and apply what you have heard eight hours a day for the last ten years, okay?

continued

Living your life according to the truth of God's Word that Pastor Clinton taught you will cause him to live on even though his physical body is not here. The man is not gone. I mean, he's not dead. His physical body ceased to exist, but through people like you and others, he is going to live on because it's the spirit of what he was assigned to teach you that will remain with you.

All of us are going to leave here physically one day. That's why we need to be obedient to God so we don't leave before our time is up. As for the tears, I have not shed one tear about Dr. Kenneth E. Hagin since he fell asleep in Jesus. I loved that man for 25 years and still love him. But I'm living what he taught me, and to me that is honoring him more than if I'd shown up at his funeral or sent flowers or done any of those things. Living what he taught me brings glory and honor to his name. I honor him as my spiritual father by living my life according to what he taught me through the Word of God.

QUESTION: Not to get into idolism, but I would love to do something.

SWU: Do what the Lord tells you to do and in whatever form He tells you to do it. I'm not going to use Clinton's departure from this life as an opportunity to try to extract anything from anybody, because I don't have to. God knows what He has assigned this church to do, and He's going to speak to the individuals about what they should do. And they will obey and do it, or they'll be in trouble. I don't have to play on the fact that my husband has gone to stir up people's emotions to give to me or this church based on their sentiments toward him. I just want everyone to live what he taught. That is the greatest gift you could give.

QUESTION: Do you remember the last words that the pastor said to you for the congregation of the church?

SWU: No, sir, because it's not Pastor Clinton's last words that will feed and direct the congregation of this church. It's Jesus' present words and His future words that I'm going to be teaching you. I don't need to remember what my husband said. I need to pay attention to what Jesus is still saying.

QUESTION: I don't have a question; I want to make a statement. Pastor Clinton always emphasized our authority in Christ, whereas you emphasize our responsibility. What God has for this congregation will continue and, I believe, go to a deeper depth and a higher height. God's grace is more than sufficient for this hour. But as we look beyond this hour into the next, I believe that "responsibility" has to mature in us. I believe there is a shaking for those who have settled into complacency thinking that that you and Pastor Clinton will always be here. Now it's time for each of us to draw nearer to God and to continue with what He has for us to do. I know that your assignment is over with Pastor Clinton. But thank God that you're here still because you have an assignment. And we're all staying right here.

SWU: I'm going the distance.

Conditional Blessings

1 Kings 8:23 (NKJV)—*And he said; "Lord God of Israel, there is no God in heaven above or on earth below like You, who keep Your covenant and mercy with Your servants who walk before You with all their hearts."*

God has no favorites and He withholds no good thing from those who walk upright before Him. Evidently, walking upright before Him is the same as walking before Him with all your heart. Going to church, reading your Bible, and praying are all good things to do, but God is far more pleased to bless us when we simply obey His voice and His Word.

"Walking upright" before Him is our practical application of His Word to daily living. How we treat others, not just how we

respond to God, is a clear revealer of our heart. "With all your heart" is an expansive statement that explains why some walk in the blessings of God and why others are constantly struggling. God keeps His covenant toward His servants who walk before Him without reservation or trepidation in their hearts. This "walking before Him" with all your heart guarantees His mercy in your behalf. And, His mercy is always greater than your challenge.

Mercy may not be needed every minute of the day, but it certainly is reassuring to know that mercy is available when we need it. My Mother used to say, "Mercy suits your situation." In other words, whatever you may encounter, the Father's mercy will fit perfectly like a handmade garment. If you walk before Him, single minded in your heart, then you can expect His mercy to manifest whenever it is needed.

At the close of a prayer meeting, one of our deacons made the statement, "Walking in the wisdom of God ensures living in His victory." I believe that. Seeking the wisdom of God is to be the primary pursuit of our lives. But while we are seeking wisdom, we must seek understanding also. Understanding teaches us how to apply wisdom to every situation in life. Without question, you will live in victory when you approach every situation with godly wisdom and understanding.

**Understanding teaches us
how to apply wisdom
to every situation in life.**

The Day Will Declare It

Jeremiah 32:18-19 (NIV)—...O great and powerful God, whose name is the Lord Almighty, great are your purposes and mighty are your deeds. Your eyes are open to all the ways of men; you reward everyone according to his conduct and as his deeds deserve.

I recently had to repent for allowing my mouth to utter words concerning someone else's deeds. What I said was not wrong. What was wrong was that I said it. The Lord reminded me that He would give me power and authority in the earth over everything but another human being. He also reminded me that I did not qualify to judge anyone except myself.

Paul says in Romans 14:10-12, "You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. It is written: 'As surely as I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.' So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God."

One of the great temptations in being a parent or a shepherd is to take on the role of the protector of the children or sheep assigned to us. We forget that the Lord's eyes are open to all the ways of human beings, and He rewards everyone according to one's conduct and as one's deeds deserve.

"Each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is" (1 Corinthians 3:13, NKJV). If anyone's work survives, that person shall receive one's reward. If anyone's works are burned, that person shall suffer—but he or she shall be saved.

Lord, You are the only righteous judge. Forgive me for wanting You to punish others for their conduct and as their deeds deserve. Your Word here does not mention punishment but reward. Who but You knows what that means? And, furthermore, what is that to me (John 21:22)? My responsibility is to follow You, not to judge my brother or my sister. Because of Your words written in our hearts, our consciences will bear witness and our thoughts will accuse or excuse one another (Romans 2:15-16). But You, O God, will judge the secrets of humankind by Jesus Christ in that Day. Help me to mind my own business until that time.

Dealing with Satanic Rage

1 Samuel 19:15 (NKJV)—*Then Saul sent the messenger back to see David, saying, "Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may kill him."*

Saul's feelings toward David went far beyond a mere dislike. Saul was enraged against David with a hatred fueled by jealousy, envy, and fear. Saul wanted to kill David for primarily three reasons: (1) God was no longer with Saul (1 Samuel 18:12), (2) God was with David, and he was highly favored by the people (1 Samuel 18:14,16), and (3) Saul's daughter loved David although her father intended for her to be a snare or entrapment to him (1 Samuel 18:21).

The people and Saul's servants loved David. Even Saul's son Jonathan knew that God had appointed David to be king, and he relinquished his own succession to the throne by giving David his garments and weapons, symbols that represented Jonathan's right to be king.

David behaved wisely in all the dealings of life, for the Lord was with him. David proved himself to be skillful in many ways. He was qualified to lead any army and, as a musician, he was skillful enough to play music so anointed that it comforted the king whenever Saul would yield to a depressing spirit. Saul was so angry with David's progress that Saul wanted David killed and removed to prevent him from ascending to what was his God-ordained position. That is a joke; and not a very funny one.

Anyone who is called and anointed of God can ignore the attacks and lies of the enemy. God will protect His people, especially His called-out ones. God needed to be with David. Saul was out of the will of God and would often yield to satanic rage where David was concerned. The fact that God is with you and has called you to His service may be the very cause of satanic rage against you from those you love because the Spirit of God is no longer with them. Go on with the Lord and trust Him to help those you love to play "catch up" and get in line with the will of God. Wait for no one except the Lord. You may find you are carrying weight that was not assigned to you. Trust me that that is too heavy a load for anyone.



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

For more information, please call the church office at

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FROM GEORGE WASHINGTON BRIDGE

Take Route 80 West. (Follow the directions above from Route 80 West to RLCV.)

FROM THE TAPPAN ZEE BRIDGE — WESTCHESTER COUNTY

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

FROM SOUTH NEW JERSEY

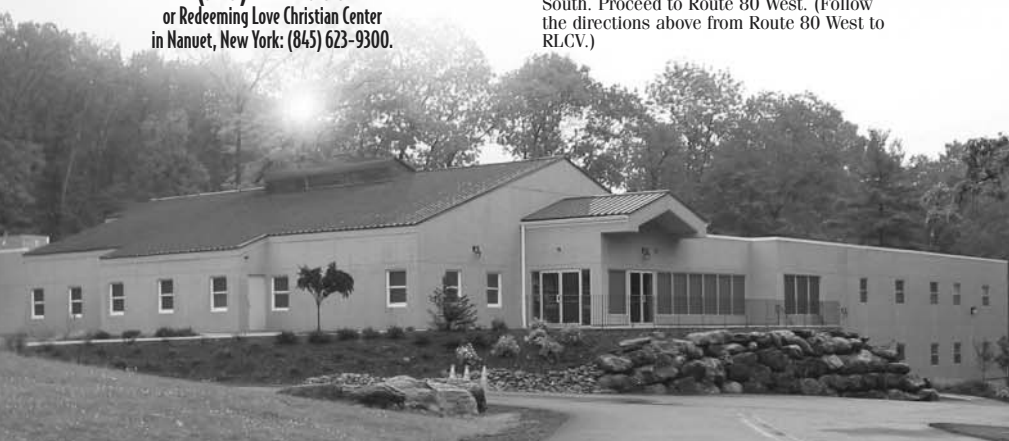
Take the Garden State Parkway North to Route 80 West. (Follow the directions above from Route 80 West to RLCV.)

FROM NORTH NEW JERSEY

Take the Garden State Parkway South to Route 80 West. (Follow the directions above from Route 80 West to RLCV.)

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.)



Divine Response

Romans 11:14 (NAS)—*But what is the divine response to him? "I have kept for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal."*

Paul sought to reassure the people that although Israel had repeatedly rejected the Lord and His ultimate plan for them, it was not a total rejection. Elijah said, "Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life."

Anytime we think we are walking this walk alone, we are probably observing the circumstances around us which most likely will not be the most encouraging of conditions.

God has and always will have a people who would rather die than to abandon Him.

Try to imagine what it would be like to live in the world today without the Lord in your life.

Try to imagine what it would be like to live in the world today without the Lord in your life. It terrifies me to think about it. What is going on in the world does not disturb me; I see it as the Bible being fulfilled in my lifetime. But the thought of being left here void of His presence, His Spirit, and His Word is frightening. Whenever you find yourself questioning the Lord's presence, think about the "Divine Response," which will only emanate from the "Divine One." In fact, it is His guaranteed presence with us that should cause us to declare boldly that we are not abandoned.

As a little girl, when others would attempt to intimidate me, I may have felt my knees knocking but if my mother was present I took on a totally different attitude. I knew that my mother would not allow anyone to hurt "her baby." If I could feel that confident because of a human who loved me, how much more can I trust in the Father to provide for and to protect me?

Today when faced with life's unique moments, I believe for the grace of God to remind me of His "Divine Response." What peace, what comfort I experience when what He has already said comes to mind. We are servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. It is required of us as stewards to be found faithful. Let your faithfulness be your reply to God's "Divine Response" to you.

Do God's Desire and My Dream Mix?

Psalm 132:3-5 (NLT)—*"I will not go home; I will not let myself rest. I will not let my eyes sleep nor close my eyelids in slumber until I find a place to build a house for the Lord, a sanctuary for the Mighty One of Israel."*

David made a noble vow with good intentions, but it did not become reality because it wasn't God's plan. God has something to say about our dreams for Him. At times, our dreams are simply a glimpse into what can be done. We are not always the ones chosen to bring the dreams to pass. That should not matter as long as what God wants is accomplished.

When my husband and I attended the first homecoming following our graduation from Bible school, the head of the school made a statement that lodged in our hearts: "Get out of debt in the next three years and stay out of debt."

We did not borrow money to purchase our church's facilities, though we tried to in the beginning. We thank God that He allowed every attempt to fall through. My husband's dream was on hold until God worked out a plan for us that was so good that the owners held the mortgage with a no-prepayment-penalty clause. They thought that we were going to forfeit the contract and they could reclaim the property, but God gave us wisdom and strategy to pay it off in two years and three months. We have added 20 million dollars' worth of renovations onto the original building debt-free since 1987.

I am not saying that it is wrong to borrow. That is between God and His children. I am saying that we have been able to obey His desires and follow our dreams without paying interest for many years.

Never build or purchase based on anticipated growth to accommodate the people. If you have too many in attendance for the space you have now, have them give toward their future facility. If they are uncomfortable in too little space, then they will give to increase the size. When you borrow to make them physically comfortable, circumstances may change in their lives which could cause them to be more uncomfortable with the ministry's debt.

What has God spoken to you? Ask His advice before you make your next move.

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Do Your Own Praying

Psalm 34:4 (KJV)—*I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.*

Most Christians are shocked to hear that they have a personal line to God and it's never busy. Some denominations and ministers are guilty of keeping the people in their congregations infants. They are afraid they'll be out of work if the people learn to pray and hear from God for themselves. Those ministers are hirelings. They are people pleasers. They never rock the boat because of fear.

Fearing the people you are sent to lead will forfeit your right to lead them. Stop asking others to pray for you. When the Bible says, "Pray one for another" (James 5:16), it does not mean you're to ask others to do it. It means that the Spirit will prompt them or lead them to pray for you, and you for them.

Prayer is not about the eloquence of speech.

David said, "I sought the Lord..." (that's the first step) "...and He heard me" (that's God's part). My part is to believe He heard me when I sought Him and delivered me from all my fears.

The reason God delivers you from all your fears is that anyone truly seeking the Lord must do so in faith. Faith and fear cannot exist in the same heart at the same time. He does not deliver us from all our fears because we're perfect. He delivers us because we sought Him and believed He heard us.

Grow up and begin to trust the One who loves you more than your own parents, companions, and children do. It's okay to ask others to get in agreement with you for what you have sought and believed for, but do your own praying.

Prayer is not about the eloquence of speech. It is about a sincere heart moving toward God with His Word as the vehicle doing the transporting. Failure to rock boats will hinder you from walking on water.

Don't Concern Yourself

Matthew 6:33 (KJV)—*Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

Don't concern yourself with the things of this world. God has abundantly provided for your every need. He has even made available to you the very desires of your heart. When your heart is divided by the cares of this life, and anxiety and concern for other things, it is a stench in His nostrils. God desires that you trust Him with your whole heart. You are no longer your own. He paid a high price for you with the blood of Jesus. Come to Him often, for His wisdom is at your beck and call. God knows the beginning from the end. Why waste time trying to comprehend and to solve dilemmas in your life which God has already resolved?

Seek Him early. Seek Him late. Seek Him often. God's promises to you are always yes and amen. Inquire of Him before you make any move. You are His beloved. He will never become weary of your inquiring. That is your old nature trying to limit your accomplishments by telling you to not bother the Lord with your requests. But coming to Him with frequency will further develop your ability to recognize His voice.

Commit to completing those things He has assigned for you to do. I believe the Lord is saying: "Do not doubt My will for your life. You may lack education, but never wisdom, for you have My supply. I have work for you that you know not of. I have thoughts for you that come only from above, so do not hesitate to go forth. Never wait unless I say, 'Halt.' The time is too short to ponder the next move. I am coming so quickly, and there is still much to be done. Seek Me early and often, and do not concern yourself with things that have no place in My master plan for your life.

"You are loved. You are blessed. You are set apart from all the rest to do that which I have called you to do. Give Me the glory and the praise for all things, and together we will soon accomplish the task and rejoice together. Keep looking up. I am coming—soon."

Don't Exalt Human Love Above Truth

Proverbs 15:12 (NIV)—*A mocker resents correction; he will not consult the wise.*

Have you ever heard someone scoff even at his teachers and take on a know-it-all or superior attitude? In many instances, they think that popularity and prosperity are all they need to make it in life.

The Bible calls such mockers foolish because they will not seek the counsel of the wise. Wisdom is still the principal thing. These people need understanding to prevent satan from stealing the very words that were once sown in their hearts (Matthew 13:18-25).

My mother used to tell my brother and me, "Be very cautious how you treat people on your way up because you may meet those same people on your way down."

I agree that listening to a human opinion about what you are saying or doing is of little value. However, we should listen to someone sharing Scripture with us, because all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness, that we may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

We can't just accept the inspirational Scriptures and avoid the ones that reprove, correct, and instruct us in righteousness. Wise people love correction. They receive it as another profitable tool for them to live by. On the other hand, scorners or mockers will not like you if you offer scriptural correction. They will not call on the wise for advice.

If we turn from the right way, we will be punished. If we refuse correction, we will die. God inspires correction to put us back on the right track. When we reject it, we face deadly consequences.

Father of grace and mercy, help us not be concerned about who loves us. When we exalt human love above truth, we cross a very dangerous line. If what we share with each other only tickles the ear and fails to move us on to the next level with you, perfection is still just a word for us. Help us understand that receiving your Word is for our benefit. It will help keep us on the path of right thoughts, words, and deeds. This kind of wisdom protects us from being vulnerable to the destroying forces of this world's influences.

Fine-Tuned and Focused

Following after your five physical senses will cause you to operate in a limited way. Submitting to the leading of the Spirit, however, will enable you to see clearly and in focus.

Just as a jeweler's loop reveals in a diamond the carbon and defects that would not be perceptible to the naked eye, the re-created human spirit has the ability to focus and make clear godly wisdom and truth in any given situation—truth that would not be perceptible to your physical senses alone.

Never purchase a diamond based on its appearance to the naked eye or simply because you like it. Diamonds, like people, are not always as they appear. Quality, both in diamonds and in life, is not superficial; it is discovered beneath the surface. Value and worth are determined by what you cannot see, not by what initially appears. Your re-created spirit, much like a jeweler's loop, provides discernment and focus.

Do everything necessary to clear away any debris (wrong thinking and sin) that would produce static in your life and hinder the reception of your spiritual antenna. See to it that your spiritual antenna is fine-tuned and in focus enough to receive the signal from heaven to your spirit. This is accomplished by allowing your spirit to tune in to God's Spirit and to stay focused on His ways. Staying focused will keep you on the right path because your attention will be on the One who knows the plan from beginning to end.

Focused saints know what is required of them and others and never adjust the rules for either side. No one benefits from not playing by the rules or working according to guidelines already written. Changing the rules is unlawful and God does not wink at that which is not honest. Be faithful to require of others what He requires of all; otherwise you will be enabling people in their wrongdoing. Unless and until you establish your identity in Christ who strengthens you, unless and until you see yourself as more than a conqueror through Him and not through other means, you have not become focused and you will flounder. God wants to equip you with His Word and with His power to gather in the harvest. Get focused.

For His Mercies Are Great

2 Samuel 24:14 (NKJV)—*And David said to Gad, "I am in great distress. Please let us fall into the hand of the Lord, for His mercies are great; but do not let me fall into the hand of man."*

All sin and iniquity are punishable, and rightfully so. To receive your lumps from the Lord is a far, far better thing than to be dealt with by a human. I would rather be judged, punished, and rewarded by God the Father than to fall into the hand of a man any day. God tempers His correction and rebuke with His love and His mercies. We as humans, on the other hand, seem not to have arrived, yet, at the place of compassion as unto the Lord.

When someone does something that offends us, we may forgive them with our mouths and even to a degree in our hearts. Unfortunately, we may then cut them off or avoid them as though they are carriers of a disease. John Mason shared once that "we can't get ahead for trying to get even." The body of Christ needs to mature and pray for the necessary strength to move beyond our hurts and disappointments.

Failing to include the Holy Ghost in your choices will result in limited and erroneous outcomes.

David was smart enough to recognize and admit that he had "done very foolishly" in numbering the children of Israel (2 Samuel 24:10). What difference did the number make? David understood that the battle was not his but the Lord's. When David was about to face Goliath, he stated that the battle was the Lord's (1 Samuel 17:47).

God said in Jeremiah 17:5, "Thus saith the Lord: Cursed is the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his strength, and whose heart departs from the Lord." God is not happy when we look to anyone but Him for anything, including our punishment. Foolishness on our part carries with it a price tag that we must pay even though we confess our wrongdoing. I would rather fall into the hand of my merciful Father any day than to have any person, even if born-again, Spirit-filled, to mete out my punishment. Today as you go to your Lord, tell Him your heart. He will work with you. Never think that any person has or is the solution to your problem, except Jesus Christ.

Frustrated Enterprises

Job 5:12 (KJV)—*He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise.*

While we are expected to do those things our hands find to do, it's always a good idea to make sure God is in agreement with it.

God will frustrate, cast off, defeat, dissolve, divide, utterly make void, break up, bring to naught, and cause to cease anything that is not pleasing to Him and is potentially damaging to His plan for mankind.

God wants His people to succeed, and He wants us to increase and prosper.

The bottom line is that God will clean house of the crafty, negatively cunning people. They may have busy hands, but the things that these cunning people say that are for the support and intellectual gain of others are actually for personal gain. Such people will lack permanent or lasting success.

God is not against our being creative and enterprising. He is against our using those abilities for selfish reasons. God wants His people to succeed, and He wants us to increase and prosper. He just does not want us doing it on the backs of others, especially members of His Son's body.

I used to think that life was about accumulating and acquiring. "The one with the most toys wins" summed up my beliefs. Now I say, "The one with the most toys is probably playing too much," and that is not the goal and purpose of a believer.

Jesus was not concerned with time to play. He had a purpose and a plan. It was to do the will of the One who sent Him and to be pleasing in His sight.

If what you are attempting to do is not happening as you had hoped, it may be that God, knowing the end from the beginning, has frustrated your efforts. Check out your motives. The devil may not be the one hindering your progress. It may be that he wanted you to succeed at it but God knew what was best for you, and He lovingly frustrated the enterprises that would not produce for your good.

Give God His Dime and You'll Have Plenty to Spare

2 Chronicles 31:10 (NIV)—*"Since the people began to bring their contributions to the temple of the Lord, we have had enough to eat and plenty to spare, because the Lord has blessed his people, and this great amount is left over."*

I often share with people who are challenged with tithing that it would be foolish to walk up to me, stick a gun in my ribs, rob me, and then ask me to bless them. Yet people do this to God all the time. Most of the time the reason these people come to me for advice is that they want God to wave some magic wand and make their poverty go away.

I explain to them that failure to give God His dime on every dollar (not just salary), is equivalent to robbing God. Most of them see what I am saying and recognize that the lack in their lives is not God's will, but unless they sow what already belongs to God, their harvest is blocked. The measure we sow is the measure we will reap.

God does not even extract our seed: He gives us seed to sow, then gives us bread to eat (2 Corinthians 9:10). Too many of God's children are eating the seed along with the bread. Never eat your seed, especially the last of your seed. When God's children bring their contribution to the temple, these verses say there will be enough to eat with plenty—not just a little, but plenty—to spare. Why? Because God blesses seed brought to the temple as well as the carrier of the seed. In fact, He blesses them to such a degree that great amounts will be left over.

Join me today in a commitment to obey what God requires of His children. Then watch Him do what He loves to do most, which is to manifest Himself to us in the form of continued blessings to us. Every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father above (James 1:17).

Make a choice to stop robbing God. Give Him His dime, and watch your ninety cents go further and last longer. It works, but it starts with a commitment. I encourage you to make that commitment today so you can cross the line of having enough and move over into the position of having plenty to spare. Give God His dime and you'll get there.

Glad-Hearted Givers

2 Chronicles 24:10 (NIV)—*All the officials and all the people brought their contributions gladly, dropping them into the chest until it was full.*

The only way the financing of the work of the Lord will take place is, first, through joyful, happy people who willingly bring or send in their gifts to the Lord. Both the leaders and the laymen alike must give with glad hearts.

If you are concerned about how much you are giving, you are delighting in your gift. When you compare your giving to others', you will lose your joy.

A glad-hearted giver never focuses on the gift. A glad-hearted giver rejoices that God has abundantly blessed him to be in a position to be a blessing to others. A glad-hearted giver is willing to give until the chest is full, until there is no more room to receive additional gifts. A glad-hearted giver does not even focus on the return for the gift. The glad-hearted giver may have a desired harvest for the seed but is more focused on sowing than on reaping. A glad-hearted giver rests in the truth that the One who provided the gift already knows what the harvest should be.

I do not personally believe that people should give until it hurts. I believe that the Spirit of God should inspire giving, and each glad-hearted giver should respond in obedience to that inspiration which causes one's heart to be glad.

When I suspect that I have done something that the Spirit has inspired me to do, there are no regrets, concerns, or doubts about it. The joy of pleasing my Father God far outweighs any thought of loss from the separation of my seed. In fact, when I gladly give, the necessary forces are put in motion to ensure that my seed and I are never going to be separated. When I cheerfully lay my treasure up in heaven, I rejoice that moth, rust, and corruption can never contaminate it.

So today, Father, I thank You that You have taught me the thrill of giving with a glad heart. I commit to keep on bringing Your blessings to the chest, until it is full and overflowing. Even then, my gifts will never compare with Your gift to me at Calvary.

God Establishes Who Is in Charge

1 Kings 2:15 (KJV)—*Then he said, "You know that the kingdom was mine, and all Israel had set their expectations on me, that I should reign. However, the kingdom has been turned over, and has become my brother's; for it was his from the Lord."*

This verse explains why I never concern myself with promoting myself or trying to protect my interest in anything that the Lord has given to me. God told us certain houses and buildings were ours, so we judged Him faithful who promised and simply watched and waited until the occupants sought us out to see if we still wanted to possess the house or building.

Adonijah, one of David's sons, had attempted to make himself king while his father was still alive. His father had never rebuked him; therefore, rebellion remained rooted in Adonijah. It is a curse not to rebuke your offspring when they are wrong. Love is two-sided. Love them when they obey and love them enough to tell them when they have missed it.

God had already told David that Solomon was His choice. Therefore, the kingdom was "his from the Lord." People may attempt to take what God has given to you by His decree. If it appears that they have taken it, do not be moved by what you see. Begin to praise God that they are keeping it for you until you are ready or able to possess it yourself.

I don't know when Adonijah knew that the kingdom was Solomon's from the Lord; Solomon did not attempt to tell him or to take it from him. God used Bathsheba, the prophet Nathan, and Zadok the priest to set things straight. Although Joab, David's close companion, did not side with Absalom when he tried to usurp the kingdom from David, his father, Joab did side with Adonijah. Neither Joab nor Abiathar the priest was in God's will in following Adonijah in this coup. Do not concern yourself with who abandons you to follow after another, though they were once with you. When personal power becomes more of an influence than loyalty to serve as directed by the Lord, let them go. They are sowing the seed of their own demise. What is yours from the Lord is yours, and another will enjoy it but for a moment. Trust the One who has spoken to you, then turn the possession of your promise over to the Lord.

God Is Not Hiding from You

2 Chronicles 15:4 (KJV)—*But when they in their trouble did turn unto the Lord God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them.*

No matter what trouble we may face, we can find God when we look for Him. To me, it is even more exciting to know that the One who delivers can also keep or prevent me from trouble if I elect to confer with Him first.

The Hebrew word translated “trouble” in this verse means a tight place. We’ve all been in a few of those, but notice that any turn towards God to search out His presence in prayer or worship will allow Him to appear on the scene. You may not see Him with your physical eyes when you turn to Him, but your eyes of faith will know that He is present. And, any time God shows up, He shows up to show Himself strong on your behalf.

Trouble may be where you are today. This verse does not say, “They turned from their trouble.” It says that they turned to God in their trouble and sought Him. Picture this: In the middle of a major attack from the enemy, you start to pray and worship God. When you turn to Him, searching out His presence in the middle of a tight spot, you’ll find that no place is ever so tight that we cannot search for God in it.

Times of trouble come to everyone. At times, trouble comes to oppose us because we are walking upright. Other times, trouble finds us because we have stepped outside the will of God onto enemy territory. But for whatever reason we find ourselves facing trouble, when we cry unto the Lord, He will hear and answer.

Precious heavenly Father, forgive us for waiting until we are in the middle of our tight places to seek You. Help us learn that praying and worshipping You as a way of life will decrease the number of tight places we find ourselves in. During these times of prayer and worship, You come forth to show us what to avoid and what to adjust in order to walk in the victory that Calvary provided for us. I thank You for caring enough to manifest Yourself to me as I seek You, not just what You can and will do for me. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

God Is Not Restrained

1 Samuel 14:6 (KJV)—*And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the Lord will work for us: for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few.*

When we accept the truth that salvation, deliverance, and total victory in life always come from the Lord, it is easy to not focus on human size, quantity, and might. When we are impressed to attack the enemy in his own territory, we can know that God has placed that desire in our hearts so that He can be glorified by working His plan through us.

We are expected to resist the enemy and watch him flee from us. However, occasionally for the good of many, we may be asked to take an aggressive position against the enemy. When this happens, we need to accept the challenge and the anointing to accomplish the task and move out with confidence that God will work with us and that He has no limitations or restraints. His salvation and deliverance for others through us is not measured in numbers large or small.

Each one of us must go in obedience so that God will never regret selecting us to head up His battle. Think back to who you were when God selected you. You were little in your own eyes. Yet He made you the leader and anointed you for the job. Therefore, go on your Spirit-led mission.

We must never see Jesus' being crucified as a type of defeat. On the contrary, it became the greatest victory humankind enjoyed since the fall of man. God, not Jesus' persecutors, delivered Jesus up so that you and I could walk in liberty (Romans 8:32). God could have sent legions of angelic forces to do the job, but He selected one sinless man to save the world.

God is not restrained by anything. He could have saved the world by many, but He saved by One.

Dear Father in heaven, help me today to see that Your anointing on even one person is more than sufficient to perform supernaturally any assignment You give. My job with You is to reach others with the message. I accept Your Word to me to move on and move out as Your Spirit directs my steps. Thank You for deciding on me to work with You. May I never cause You to regret Your selection, in Jesus' name. Amen.

God Needs No Defending

Isaiah 37:6 (NLT)—*The prophet replied, "Say to your master, 'This is what the Lord says: Do not be disturbed by this blasphemous speech against me from the Assyrian king's messengers.'"*

Hezekiah had received an evil report. Isaiah 37:3 says he was troubled, insulted, and disgraced by the Assyrian king's words about the limitation of his God. This boastful king had said, "What god of any nation has ever been able to save its people from my power? Name just one! So what makes you think that the Lord can rescue Jerusalem?"

Heathens, sinners, and unsaved people could say anything about your God. So what? Their words do not change who He is and what He has planned for His people. Our God never fails, and He never changes. God does not want us disturbed or reacting to blasphemous words against Him. He is not moved at all by those words. However, He is moved by the words of His children when we speak forth what is already written about Him in His Word.

Never forget your history with the one, true, living God. He loves you, He is for you, and nothing can separate you from Him. There will always be people around you attempting to get you to doubt your God. That is because they don't know and experience Him in all of His fullness, but you do—and that is enough to sustain you.

What does it matter what others say about your God? They are comparing Him with their gods who have been defeated. Our God has never been, nor will He ever be, defeated. He was challenged for position by the master of other gods, the devil himself, who found himself falling like lightning from the glory he once enjoyed.

Our God needs no defending. What He is looking for is His people's continual praise for who He is. So ignore the blasphemous words uninformed and limited humans speak about Him.

In case you have forgotten, He is the One who defends us. He provides for us and shuts the mockers' mouths.

We often need defending. He never does. Please don't attempt to reverse the roles. We can't defend Him. He is unaffected by insults, criticism, and trouble. In fact, He delights to see His people continue in His plan for them, unimpressed with the presence of enemy forces.

Don't be distracted. God has it all under control.

Got Fruit?

Galatians 5:22-23 (KJV)—*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*

Friends, family, and even complete strangers can place a strong demand on the fruit of the Spirit in your life. With every selfish attitude you encounter from others, you are faced with a test: will you retaliate or release the fruit of the Spirit?

Every day I pray and ask the Father to develop and release all the fruit of the Spirit in my life—not for my benefit only but for the benefit of others and for the glory of God. When others see you being pushed, pressed, and potentially stressed in a situation, yet refusing to respond negatively as they would under the same circumstances, you glorify God in that situation. You are reflecting Him to the world as you demonstrate a power that the world does not possess. The ungodly may act tolerant for a time, but push them hard and far enough and you'll soon see that they know nothing of longsuffering, patience, and gentleness from a pure heart. But the fruit of the Spirit, especially the fruit of love, are what you and I are all about.

We aren't told to walk in the fruit of the Spirit simply to improve our personalities or make life pleasant for those around us. The fruit of the Spirit in our life release the force of God in and through us to master any situation. Walking in the fruit of the Spirit makes you dangerous to the devil. When you walk in love, you cannot fail. When you walk in patience, you cannot be stopped until you reach your determined destination. When you walk in temperance, your own flesh can't hinder you and the ship of your life will stay afloat while others around you sink into oblivion.

When life deals you a blow, rejoice that you've been counted worthy to be tested. When the world gives you a lemon (the only fruit it can offer), don't get sour. Let them taste *your* fruit. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you turn their lemons into cool lemonade or rich lemon pie. Then when others see you remain unaffected by the negatives that happen to all, they will want a drink from your glass and a slice of your pie.

Guard Your Spirit Above All Else

Proverbs 18:14 (KJV)—*The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?*

Sickness and disease are a reality in life, regardless of what anyone says. However, you and I do not have to be negatively affected by them. We do not have to be defeated by them.

You may be asking at this moment, "How can this be?" What you have deposited in your spirit will determine victory or defeat in your body when it comes under attack. This verse says that the spirit, not a miraculous move of God, will sustain, keep, maintain, nourish, and make provision for your infirmity.

Specific sicknesses, diseases, and negative forces are on assignment to me personally. They will try to deceive me and attempt to stop God's plan for my life and service to Him. I have always known this and have never tried to deny it, but I have purposed in my heart that I will win.

Though I may not be able to prevent the devil's attack, the demon he puts in charge of me for what he thinks will be a piece of cake will always come back defeated. Yes, they may launch their missiles at me, but my spirit is so fortified with the truth of God's promise that I will simply make a choice to stand on the promises and refuse to focus on the missiles headed my way.

How frustrating I must be to the devil! One of the ways that I win over him is not just to study the Word of God and obey it; I also refuse to remain in the presence of people who are negative in both their behavior and their conversation.

While I am known to correct, chastise, and discipline those in need of it, I also make sure that I don't deliberately put people down or shatter their esteem. I always look for the best in every person, but I cannot find what has not been developed within a person.

Make a choice today to get over what has happened to you. You are not the first person who has been dealt a few blows or given a couple of lemons. What has God said about you? What are you saying about yourself? Are you encouraging yourself, or are you waiting for others to highlight your positives? If you are, then you will be disappointed because others will never think more of you than you think of yourself.

He Who Restrains His Lips Is Wise

Matthew 27:14 (NKJV)—*But He answered him not one word, so that the governor marveled greatly.*

Pilate asked Jesus whether He had heard the many things testified against Him. Jesus responded as most of us still need to learn to do in the middle of difficult situations: He said nothing.

Proverbs 10:19 says, “In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise.” When Jesus stood

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before Pilate, He took the position that He was innocent and therefore didn’t need to declare it. He also recognized that, in

order for Scripture to be fulfilled, He had to leave some things alone, though He had the ability and the right to change them (Matthew 25:53-54).

Like many other people, I used to always be ready to confront and to challenge anything someone else said or did to me. I kept my boxing gloves on and my tongue fine-tuned to straighten others out—actually, to devastate and humiliate them. I could always justify it by saying the other person started it.

But praise God, I’ve matured somewhat spiritually and I am now fully convinced that as a part of the body of Christ, I must go through some things so that Scripture can be fulfilled in my life. That, to me, is so exciting that I often choose not to pray against these things. Instead, I simply say, “Father, Your grace is sufficient for me. I count it all joy. Let Your will be done.” Then the devil sees in his most violent assaults against me that I’m still standing when the dust clears.

Father God, thank You for teaching me that silence is more powerful than a prolific statement not inspired by You. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.

He's the One

Deuteronomy 31:8 (NLT)—*"Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord is the one who goes before you. He will be with you; he will neither fail you nor forsake you."*

What a promise we find in this verse! Moses knew that his time of service was over. He understood that he was no longer able to lead. Instead of feeling that he was being cast aside or abandoned after many years of obedience to the Lord and service to the Israelites, he accepted the fact that his season had come to an end.

At this transitional stage in his life, Moses was even willing to encourage the hearts of others about the days to come. He spoke for God because he had heard from Him. He shared what the Lord would do concerning the land and also what God expected them to do in order to possess it.

God laid out a specific list of "If you's" to be followed before He said, "I will." We can relate this to a will. An heir does not automatically gain an inheritance upon a person's death. Rather, the heir must check out the "If you's" before spending or borrowing against the inheritance. Too often, uninformed people think it is just a matter of someone writing out a check free and clear to them and off they go to the mall, Las Vegas, or Atlantic City. Unfortunately, they forget about inheritance tax and satisfying debts and liens against the property of the deceased.

Moses clarified to Joshua what God said to expect in His "will." Then Moses encouraged him to stay with it and hang in there because the Lord was going before him. God was Joshua's constant companion; He was the victor; and He was totally committed to His people.

You are facing a lot right now. God did not design your calling and your specific path to overwhelm you or defeat you. God's gifts carry no grief with them. You are who you are and can be what God had in mind for you to be before you were born. However, He will not address fear in you; neither will He eliminate the spirit of discouragement that seeks to torment you. You are a winner, an overcomer, and a victor in His Word, which abides in you. Now get up and go to possess what He has promised you, because He's the One on your side.

Hearing They Will Not Hear

Proverbs 23:9 (NKJV)—*Do not speak in the hearing of a fool for he will despise the wisdom of your words.*

We would like to believe that the truth from God's Word and the wisdom He imparts through us will be received by everyone who hears, but we have learned that this is not so. Do you stop sharing? Decidedly not! Like panning for gold, you deal with a lot of dirt before the first nugget appears. But are you looking for dirt or are you looking for gold? Never allow yourself to become discouraged because it appears that what you are saying or doing is not bearing fruit. Remember that your responsibility is to sow, and sow you must. The condition of the soil and the intention of God will determine the fruit, not you.

Once in a while, it is good for you not to see instant success with what you are doing. If everything you attempted came to pass without a glitch or a delay, you'd never cultivate the strong character that comes from developing in perseverance or growing in patience. Life is filled with people full of potential but because they lack stamina of character, they remain trapped in mediocrity and they don't realize their potential. They may have started out well, but when opposition or difficulties came (and it will come), they faltered and failed because they didn't find the easy success and instant answers they expected. My husband calls it the "Victims of Instant Answers" syndrome.

I will only get credit for doing what is asked of me and for fulfilling my assignment—that is all. At times, that will require me to persevere in the face of great obstacles or disappointments. I must proclaim God's truth if no one listens. I must declare His wisdom if no one receives it and many walk away. No one belongs to us, not even the children we give birth to. All fruit belongs to God; therefore, He is the One who must convince people. He does it by His Word and His power according to what He has already decided. How wonderfully reassuring to know that God doesn't need to "go back to the drawing board" to change anything He has already said and planned. His will is established, and the wise will receive and rejoice; and fools will be foolish until they choose God's way.

His Goodness and Wonderful Works Deserve Thanks

Psalm 107:8 (KJV)—*Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!*

I recognized back in 1977 that if I would just think about Who God is, thoughts of what He had done for me would push to the forefront of my mind past any dark clouds of despair, doom, and doubt. Suddenly, in place of a “dry spot,” a bubbling up of His Spirit within me would bring fresh revelation of His goodness and His wonderful works. I would begin to just say, “Thank You, Lord; thank You.” This would be followed by a song—either one I already knew or a tune with lyrics never before heard.

I learned that my heart knew how to write songs that would pierce through any heaviness or dark clouds over me. Around the same time I began to practice saying thank you to other people. I was overwhelmed by their response to a simple thank you.

God does not need your “thank you,” but it certainly does get a rise out of Him. The more you say thank you to Him, the more He does for you to thank Him for. You’ll soon recall things of the past that He delivered you from and brought you through. This song from my childhood would begin in my heart and proceed from my mouth:

*Lord, I thank You, thank You, thank You
Lord, I thank You, thank You, thank You
Lord, I thank You for all the days of my life.*

Then we would enumerate what we were grateful for and say:

*When I was lost, Lord, You found me
When I was lost, Lord, You found me
When I was lost, Lord, You found me
I just thank You for all the days of my life.*

Then we would add on and on with whatever we thought to thank Him for. The next thing we knew, such a breakthrough erupted, it took effort not to run around the building. I challenge you to begin to hum this simple song and watch the devil flee as if in terror. If you can’t sing it, say it and see what God will do.

His People Are Covered

Romans 14:9 (NLT)—*Christ died and rose again for this very purpose, so that he might be Lord of those who are alive and of those who have died.*

Most of us like to believe that what we are doing is pleasing to God and “If you are not doing what I am doing, then one of us is wrong.” What narrow thinking! Our concern about what others are doing should never result in our criticizing them. The place of power and victory for us is to make sure we are doing what we have heard Him speak to us.

We all have to work at not being critical of others. Paul said, “Accept Christians who are weak in faith, and don’t argue with them about what they think is right or wrong” (Romans 14:1). We have been taught to have great faith, strong faith, and mountain-moving faith, and there is nothing wrong with that. But we are also taught to increase our faith, which implies that everyone’s faith is not at the same level.

Some of us have selective faith. We can effectively use our faith to believe God will raise the dead and give life and wholeness, but please don’t ask us to fly or to cruise on a luxury liner! Some have knocked the devil in the head when it comes to believing for finances, but don’t even suggest that they go up in a New York City high-rise building! Some have faith for building huge edifices and properties, but healing is a subject to be avoided.

Christ died and rose again to be the Lord over those who died in Him as well as those living for Him. When I discovered this, it was a shock. I always thought that He, like His Father, was the God of the living and not the God of the dead. If you are His, you are covered.

Father, I desire to develop more concern and interest in knowing what I am supposed to be doing. Then I want to do it all to Your glory. I ask for understanding of what others are involved in that is uniquely different from what is required of me. I repent for comparing myself to others, and I move forward in a deeper commitment and conviction of what was made available for me as a result of Christ’s dying and rising again for both the living and the dead. In Jesus’ name I pray.

His Will, His Time, His Way

Numbers 9:18 (NLT)—*In this way, they traveled at the Lord's command and stopped wherever he told them to. Then they remained where they were as long as the cloud stayed over the Tabernacle.*

Who inspires God? What motivates Him? These may sound like silly questions, but hopefully they will lead you to the realization that the One who needs no encouragement to do what is already designated to be done is a sound Person to follow.

Anxiety and impetuosity are not traits that God exudes. He has a fullness of time for everything. He has a scheduled appointment for all things to come to pass. His clock is never off, and He has never been late for what He has planned.

He knows just what He has in mind to do. He does the unusual, the unique, and the extraordinary. He selects people, tools, and avenues often ignored by others. After all, would you have thought to use a cloud that appeared to be a pillar of fire by night and reverted to just being a cloud covering by day? Yet God established a pattern using this cloud. As long as the cloud stayed above the tabernacle, the people stayed put. The length of time was never the issue with the people. Day or night, when the clouds moved the people broke camp and moved with it.

Most of us take weeks and months to pack and unpack when it is time to move because we have accumulated and become attached to far too many things that we find unbearable to leave behind. While we do not follow a cloud today, when we follow the move of God for our lives, we are to be led by His Holy Spirit—and He moves according to the Father's will. He always cooperates with the Father's season for fruit-bearing and harvest, though the direction He sends us in often seems strange and out of step with others around us.

If Israel could move with and obey God's command by observing an external cloud, how much more should we find ourselves in His perfect will, at His perfect time, performing according to His perfect way as we follow His Spirit within us?

Trust the uniqueness of His whole plan for your life. While He may not confer with you about what is to take place, He will communicate to you that it is He who is prompting you to stay or move as it pleases Him. Trust Him.

If He Promised It, He Remembers It

Psalm 111:5 (KJV)—*He hath given meat unto them that fear him: he will ever be mindful of his covenant.*

God's Word charges us to give to the poor. What are we to give them? For one thing, we can give them a meal. However, only the Word contains enough revenue to change the status of the poor. Like Jesus, we are to preach the Gospel to the poor (Luke 4:18). We should give them the message of Psalm 111:5, which says God gives food to those who fear Him; He remembers to keep His ancient promises.

We should ask the poor, "Who is God to you? Do you have a personal relationship with His Son?" If they answer the second question with a "no" or uncertainty, then they do not yet fear God. But if they reverence Him and have accepted Him, they are in position to receive based on God's covenant promise to supply their needs.

Charities all over the world try to feed and care for the poor. That is good, but it can only cause long-term benefits if the recipients learn to reverence God and accept His Son. As long as people will worship idols, animals, statues, trees, and material possessions, the poor will be among us.

Jesus told Peter that if he loved Him, he would feed His sheep. I certainly believe that Jesus had more than a fish dinner in mind. Unless and until we prepare spiritual meals to take to the destitute of the world, we will continue to have burn-outs and breakdowns among the troops. Give them Jesus and all the provisions of Calvary, and they will be eligible for the Living Bread.

The Father remembers to keep His Word, but His promises are only to His children. We can see this principle at work in the natural. I am not required to take care of the neighbor's children, though I may offer them an occasional meal. However, I am responsible for providing for my dependent offspring. Would our Heavenly Father do less for us?

Father, enlighten our eyes to see that giving must be according to Your prescribed teaching. We'll do whatever You ask us to do, for then we can look to You for the necessary resources to perform the task. You are our wisdom and understanding in all things. We will work with You to accomplish what pleases You, in Jesus' name.

Ingredients for Great Gain

1 Timothy 6:6 (KJV)—*But godliness with contentment is great gain.*

God did not save us through the shed blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, for our focus to be on the world's wealth.

I used to think that my personal wealth was going to finance the furtherance of the kingdom. I have since discovered that God is going to fulfill His promise to humankind whether I have money to support it or not. He may use money, but He's not limited to material wealth.

Holy living with an attitude of sufficiency translates into a devout life, which certainly does bring wealth. But it also makes us ready to be just before God. That makes us rich. God is not impressed with our personal wealth. He's not giving out any special awards for oaths of poverty either. He is looking for obedient people to cooperate with Him when His Spirit prompts them to do something.

The wealth of this world found in the hands of His people is not just for their personal pleasure. He allows them to be blessed with wealth so they can give as He speaks to them.

Leaders who see the ministry as only a means to get rich will be self-destroyed. Money is useful, but lust for it is an avenue for trouble. Some who take this lustful path lose their footing in faith completely and live to regret it bitterly ever after.

My Father and my God, inspire me to keep my trust in You and not in uncertain riches. You did not say that without wealth it is impossible to please You; You said that without faith, You would never be pleased.

I am grateful for all the finances that You provide for me to do the things that are necessary to do, but keep from me anything that could interfere with my dependency on You. I came into this world penniless, and I'll take none of this world's finances with me when I leave. Help me to appreciate the value of living a holy life in the midst of this corrupt and immoral world. I choose to be content with what You provide as I love and worship You and am used by You to serve others. I thank You for this, in Jesus' name.

Is It by Lineage or the Anointing of God?

1 Samuel 10:12 (NKJV)—*Then a man from there answered and said, "But who is their father?" Therefore it became a proverb: "Is Saul also among the prophets?"*

Evaluating a person's qualifications for leadership based on natural lineage instead of according to divine authorization does more harm than good. The fivefold ministry gifts are given by the Head of the church, the Lord Jesus, as it suits Him. They are not passed down to generations through one's natural parents, as some would believe.

People questioned Saul's background to stand in the ministry when the hand of God was upon him. God had given Saul another heart. It had nothing to do with who his natural parents were.

It is time for parents to stop selecting the office or position their grown children should function in. It is time for children to stop looking at the ministry of the parent and choosing that they would rather be the heir apparent than trust the Lord to position them where He wants them. When Jesus makes the selection and anoints you in an office, it is beneficial to the body of Christ "for the equipping of the saints, for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12).

God will allow modern-day dynasties to fail and their leaders to fall so He can bring them into alignment with His plan for their lives. It matters not what family you were born into. What matters most is the anointing, as given by the Anointed One.

I know of a sister in Christ who can teach and preach circles around her father and her brother but because she is female "the board" is not ready to allow her to be the leader of the ministry. I am so glad that God does not make His selections according to "the board." When Clinton and I were still working secular jobs, we were doing the work of the ministry and seeing miracles. God never considered our lineage when He anointed and called us.

Are you being used of the Lord where you are? Then you have all you need to continue. Don't be concerned about your lineage. When it is time for you to take the lead, opposition will either agree or be removed. What God has assigned to you cannot belong to another.

Is Your Gift 'Keeper of the Ass'?

Genesis 22:5 (KJV)—*And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.*

Years ago, the Lord revealed to me that Abraham was operating in faith and confession when he said, "The lad and I will go yonder and worship and come again to you." Remember, he had been told to make a burnt offering of his "only son whom he loved." But recently, I noticed for the first time that the only purpose of the two young men was to keep the ass while Abraham obeyed God.

Why were two young men needed when only one ass was present? It appears that the ass carried the wood while Abraham, Isaac, and the two young men walked. It was only when they were in view of the place of sacrifice that Abraham placed the wood on Isaac while he carried the fire and the knife. Perhaps the two took shifts in keeping the ass, maybe one watched while the other rested; otherwise, only one was needed. God often sent people out in two's.

The object here was to keep the ass for their master since it was his personal property. If a predator came or a villain showed up, one could keep the ass while the other dealt with the intruder. Each of us has a gift but too often we covet another's gift and miss the reward of our labor. These young men were not the sacrifice; Isaac was. They were not to perform the sacrifice; Abraham was. This journey was an act of faith and worship, involving only Abraham, Isaac, and their God. The only responsibility of the two young men was to obey their master by taking care of his animal.

Since the Bible tells us that it was counted unto Abraham as righteousness to operate in this kind of faith, I suspect that keeping the donkey was accounted to these two young men for righteousness also because they obeyed and remained faithful to their call. What is God saying to you? You will only be rewarded for that. So cease from envying another. Just be faithful and obedient to that which is required of you.

Judgment without Regret

2 Corinthians 5:10 (KJV)—*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*

Either I have a different Bible than many Christians, or they don't believe what they read. First Peter 4:17 says that judgment will begin with the family of God.

"Judgment" is a ruling, or the function, or the effect, against crime.

The time is coming soon when God will say, "Enough! It is time." At that moment, Jesus will return for His church, and judgment will begin. God will not judge the wickedness and the sins of those outside His Son's body until His Son has judged His body.

We, the body of Christ, must stand before the judgment seat of Christ to receive what is due for everything done while in the body—whether good or bad. None of us will be exempt from this appointment.

Jesus is the Judge, and the day of judgment is when He comes for us. Some of us will be embarrassed when He comes. Some will experience a consuming fire of our whole life's work.

Nothing will remain hidden during that judgment. We will be accountable for our faithfulness or our unfaithfulness. Our actions, our opportunities, and our use of God's gift of understanding to us will be judged. What did we do with what we had to work with?

We are absolutely forgiven for our sins when we confess them, but according to the Bible Jesus is coming with rewards and repayment for both the good and the bad that we do while in the body of Christ. Because of this, it is high time for us to choose to get it right, do it right, and live it right.

As long as we listen to our flesh and obey its impulses, we risk condemnation. We have our example in Jesus, so we have no excuse. If He could live right as a man in the earth, we His body can do the same thing.

The judgment seat of Christ can be a place of joy, or it can be a place of regret. Since we know we're going there, let's begin to prepare for it to be the happiest event of our lives.

The Language of Love

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.*

Love is a language that is more seen than heard. When my husband takes the time to do the things that make me happy, I know he loves me even 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? The first one did, of course.

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. Though I may never understand God's love for me, 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 His love, then I must be worthy. He does not make mistakes and He does not lie. Rather than try to comprehend His love, I have determined that the best way to say "thank You" to Him is to imitate His love 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 manifestations to provide. He gave His first and His best (Jesus) for His least and His last (us) 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 must do it.

Love is the language that articulates the secrets of God's plan for man. That plan began in love, it grew in love, and love is what will reveal its glorious fulfillment throughout eternity.

Love is the language that articulates the secrets of God's plan for man.

Mistaken and Uninformed

Mark 12:24 (NKJV)—*Jesus answered and said to them, "Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the scriptures nor the power of God?"*

Without the truth and knowledge of God's power, we are a mistake going somewhere to happen.

Many people in the body of Christ are always talking about what the devil is doing in their lives as if they believe suffering is some special badge of spirituality. However, we need to know that if the devil is doing anything in our lives, either one of two things is happening: (1) we are permitting it, or (2) he has become an unsuspecting agent of God to cause us to rise up to the level of the Word of God already decreed in heaven so we can respond in kind here in the earth.

A dear brother or sister in the Lord may do some ungodly, unscriptural things to hurt others in the body. He or she may not believe the deed is wrong and not of God. The person may even quote Scripture to support one's actions. However, if we in the body are knowledgeable of the Scriptures, we will realize that such a person has become an agent of the enemy. We will not be fooled by the Scriptures this person uses when we can observe that his or her actions are contrary to Scripture.

You may wonder how a believer could become an agent of the enemy. Jesus answered that question in John 8:31-32, in which He said, "If you continue in My word, then you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

If we believers do not continue in the Word, we will not walk in truth. While we can know about the Scripture, we may not truly know the Scripture and the power of God. If this is the case—if we do not know the truth—then we will cause hurt rather than deliver freedom.

However, when we continue in the Word, our speech and our deeds are pleasing in God's sight. A step out of love is a step into sin.

Father, I thank You for Your mercy, which is another form of Your power. May each of us who have ears to hear respond to what the Scripture is saying so that Your power is truly manifested in us, in Jesus' name.

The Music of My Life

Psalm 119:54 (NLT)—*Your principles have been the music of my life throughout the years of my pilgrimage.*

Many years ago, before I completely sold out to the things of God and to His ways, I was considered a good dancer.

I enjoyed dancing and I did it well. But through the years, I have discovered that no musical sound is as stirring to me as the sound of the principles and the promises of God's Word.

The Psalmist said, "Your promise revives me; it comforts me in all my troubles" (Psalm 119:50). It is so foolish to expect to avoid troubles. What a waste of time. The more you serve God and the closer you draw to Him, the more inclined you are to attract trouble because we have an enemy who is out to prevent or at least to impede our progress. But for God's children who know and understand His Word, trouble is no more than an annoyance.

Keep the principles of God's promises as the music of your life.

It seems that God's people have no problems dancing to His promises when all is going well in their lives. But at the first sign of what could be considered a negative change, they suddenly no longer hear the music of His promises. Their dance ceases and their words speak of what appears to be for the moment. No amount of reading the Bible, confessing the Scriptures, and making melody in your heart to the Lord during times of peace matter if His principles are not the music of your life throughout the years of your pilgrimage.

Someone once said, "I only dance with the One that brung me." What about you? Were you dancing with God, singing the praises of His faithfulness in your life until that recent report—but now you're dancing with the wrong partner, moving to the enemy's negative tune? Are you staring at the statistics before your eyes, or are you looking beyond the facts to behold the truth of what God has spoken?

Throughout the years of your pilgrimage, keep the principles of God's promises as the music of your life. When you do, you'll defeat the enemy's strategy against you while you dance all the way home.

Don't Take Mercy for Granted

1 Kings 2:36 (NKJV)—*Then the king sent and called for Shemei, and said to him, "Build yourself a house in Jerusalem and dwell there, and do not go out from there anywhere."*

Some people find it hard to stay focused on what is ultimately best for them. Shemei had cursed David and David agreed not to kill him by the sword. He did, however, assign his son Solomon to deal with the situation in his own way and in his own time. King Solomon's wisdom extended mercy to Shemei, giving him explicit instructions not to ever leave town or he would die. For three years, Shemei complied. But when two of his slaves ran away, Shemei pursued them and lost his life because he failed to hold to the agreement that would have preserved his life if he continued to abide by its guidelines.

Is anything or anyone so important to you that you'd risk losing your life to retain or retrieve them? Why are you running after things God has asked you to give up or leave behind?

God is so gracious that He shares with us the consequences of disobedience. That is nothing but mercy. The devil never tells us the price we will pay when we allow ourselves to be enticed by him. Then, when we bite his bait, he'll gloat over our fall and failure.

Shemei should have been grateful not only that the king was merciful enough not to execute him, but also that he was in a position to have slaves instead of being one himself. Instead of staying focused, grateful, and obedient, Shemei gambled with his life and lost.

Again I ask you: Is anything or anyone worth losing your life to retain? Your answer should be no. You may be at a crossroad, waffling in your commitment and about to falter in your obedience. Don't take God's mercy and longsuffering for granted. Are you willing to risk losing everything because of that person or thing you want to pursue? Think about it. Life is all you have. Obedience to the Word of God and to the voice of the Spirit will extend your life and give you peace. Pay close attention to what is spoken to you in the Word and by the Spirit. Everything you have can be replaced, but not your life. Choose wisely. Your life depends on it.

Nevertheless the People Refused To Obey

1 Samuel 8:19 (NKJV)—*Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, "No, but we will have a king over us."*

Imagine being told all of the negative behavior of a man and his evil intentions concerning you and you still go to the polls to elect him president. That is concentrated stupidity yet this is what Israel did. Samuel told the people everything God said concerning the behavior of the king they wanted to reign over them. It was not to their advantage to have him, but they said "Nevertheless...."

"Nevertheless" means it matters not what you say, I want what I want regardless; and I want it now. How much pain could have been avoided in our lives if we had chosen to listen, rather than to run headlong after that which we thought we had to have?

At the age of 12, I thought my mother was the meanest person in the world when she told a young man my true age after I had told him that I was 14. Not only was he 16 years old, but he was cute and blew a mean trumpet in the high school band. Mother knew best and was not affected by what I wanted at age 12. Years later I saw him during a visit home and I am still singing the praises of God that my mother made my choices at 12 and didn't care whether I hated her or not.

Perhaps I would have made better choices if I had known more of the Lord and His Word, or if I had some godly role models to teach me what was pleasing to God—as well as the consequences of not pleasing Him. Instead, I saw the ungodly actions of so-called Christians and other authority figures. The few saints I knew were ridiculed by the people around me, and they seemed not to have the power and strength to stand up for their convictions.

Unfortunately, today I still see in the church much failure to uphold and require godly standards and convictions. Pastors and parents, we must reflect God's standard before we can expect our youth to hear us. We will stand at the judgment seat of Christ and give an account for the quality of our influence upon their lives. Nevertheless.

No Masterpiece Is Incomplete

Philippians 1:6 (NLT)—*And I am sure that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on that day when Christ Jesus comes back again.*

During my travels throughout Europe and many other countries, I have seen what the world calls “masterpieces”—sculptures, paintings, and edifices. They are truly amazing works of art, but the greatest masterpiece I have ever observed is the Lord’s work in my own life.

Most creative people have one work they consider their masterpiece, and they are best known for that work. God, however, is not limited to just one special work. We can each be His masterpiece by accepting His Son, Jesus Christ, as Lord, Savior, and soon-coming King.

When I think of the goodness of the Lord and His wonders to perform—clothing Himself in flesh, living a sinless life in the earth, dying on Calvary’s tree, going into hell with all of the sins and sickness of humankind, rising up from the dead by the power of the Spirit, ascending to the throne of God to take His rightful place, and awaiting the command to return to earth for you and me—I then understand what a true masterpiece is.

How dare we consider quitting our God-given assignments? Sure, it isn’t always easy to lead others and live holy lives, but we don’t have to do it in our own strength.

Paul’s petition for the people he ministered to was that the Father God and the Lord Jesus Christ would give them grace and peace (verse 2). He was always thanking God for them with a full heart because they partnered with him in spreading the Good News about Christ from the first day they heard it. Paul then declared that the One who began this work in them would continue and complete it on the day of Jesus’ return.

You can’t quit today, tomorrow, or ever. You have become a partner with Jesus in spreading the Gospel, and God is not through with you. You are a part of His masterpiece for humankind. God needs you, Jesus needs you, I need you, and so does the rest of the world.

Stand against the spirit of discouragement, in the name of Jesus. Decree and declare that you will allow the Lord to continue and complete in you what He has already begun.

No One Knows Automatically

Psalm 143:10 (NKJV)—*Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God; Your Spirit is good. Lead me in the land of uprightness.*

A great deal of emphasis and money is given annually toward educating children. Some parents sacrifice for years to store up funds for their children's college education. People politic, maneuver, and manipulate to be next in line for their children to attend the most prestigious kindergarten. Somehow, they think that the right school ensures their little one's success.

Oh, they may make the right contacts and network with and become connected with the "who's whos" in this world, but look at their lives. The best words to truly describe some of them are shallow, insecure, and morally bankrupt.

Many think that wealth and the right address somehow represent power. Then, when they're faced with adversity—sickness, substance abuse, tragedy, a turn in the world's economy, their children whose weddings were society's events of the year waking up married to a pervert or a psychologically challenged person—it makes their lives a living hell, and they have no answers and nowhere to turn.

What do we believers do when this happens? We should thank God for an opportunity to demonstrate that the wealth of the righteous is laid up for the heathen. What is our wealth? Love, joy, peace, patience, longsuffering, meekness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, the name of Jesus, the gift of salvation, and on and on.

There is nothing wrong with material wealth, as long as we do not worship or depend on it. It is good to have it and act as channels to let God use it where it is most needed for the good of humankind.

Father, we do not automatically know Your will. After being born again, we must be taught by the Holy Spirit and Your Word what pleases You. The only way to avoid stumbling and pitfalls is to be led by Your Spirit. This is Your desire for us.

We, too, desire to have a firm footing first, so that we can share with others that You are not just a sure "thing": You are the sure One, and a life of real success is moving forward on the foundation of Your Word. Your Word is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our paths, and we thank You.

Nothing Is out of God's Reach

Obadiah 1:4 (NKJV)—*Though you ascend as high as the eagle, and though you set your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down.*

When life is being kind to you, rather than allowing the abundance to pull you away from God, you should see it as an opportunity to draw closer. God is looking for intimacy with us—regardless of our station in life. Whether or not we are at the top or at the bottom of the barrel does not move God. He is neither impressed nor affected in His love and plan for our lives.

If today it appears that God does not know or even care what is

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happening to you, read Jeremiah 29:11-14. You can rest in confident trust that not only does God have a plan and a hope for you, but also He is waiting for you to call upon Him so that He

can answer you. The key is to search for Him with all your heart. God is not hiding. He wants to be found so that He can bring you back to Him from whatever captivity has held you bound.

I believe God is saying, "What you have been going through was allowed by Me to get your attention. It appears that you forgot who I was in the midst of your success. However, if you will humble yourself and return to Me for who I am and not what I can provide for you, then you will enjoy what I have prepared for you before the foundation of the world long before you were formed in your mother's womb. Failure is not a part of My scheduled plan for you. Failing in the eyes of man does not compare with failing to please Me and doing that which is right in My eyes. I never called you to compete with others. I have made you complete in my Son, Christ Jesus. What could be better? Cut your losses and rejoin Me with your heart before the things you have been doing strangle you. Feed My sheep and feed My lambs. That is all I have asked of you, and nothing else will be accounted to you for righteousness." Selah. Pause and calmly think of that.

Offer the Sacrifices of Righteousness

Psalm 4:5 (KJV)—*Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord.*

It appears that the Lord is more interested in our availability than He is our ability. Living right for the Lord is not an automatic thing when you acknowledge Jesus Christ as His Son. Although the Lord has set apart for Himself those who will live godly, living godly and righteous begins with a desire to be pleasing to the Lord God of heaven. And, righteous living does indeed require sacrifices.

One such sacrifice of righteousness is stated in Hebrews 13:17: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." The grief this verse speaks of is experienced not simply as a result of your failure to submit to the Word, but because your disobedience affects your own profitability. When you fail to submit yourself to the Word and to the Spirit of God, the devil is not your problem and God is not the one withholding blessings from you. You have become a hindrance to yourself. Poor choices plus poor planning produces poor results. I like what Vince Lombardi said: "Failing to plan is planning to fail."

Let us not become so comfortable in our daily dealings that we neglect to include the One who wants nothing more than for us to be found in the perfect will of God. The number one sacrifice of righteousness is, therefore, to put all your trust in the Lord. It takes humility to abandon oneself to Him who cannot fail. It takes wisdom to submit what you can do to the One who will take your ability to a level that you could never have imagined.

The sacrifice of righteousness that God is looking for is our trust, as we submit all of our scientific, technical, and academic know-how to the Invisible One who can only be seen through the eyes of faith. God is not looking for us to *give up* anything as much as He is longing for us to *give unto* Him, allowing Him to take the lead in our lives so that life's pitfalls can be avoided. Trust Him today and every day.

Patience Is Not Inactivity

Hebrews 12:1 (NLT)—*Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily hinders our progress. And let us run with endurance the race that God has set before us.*

Patience is not sitting still and just waiting for a certain thing to happen. Patience is knowing that God has entered us in a race. Our challenge as Christians has been our failure to understand that we are already qualified to run, for endurance is part of the fruit of the Spirit. We are not lacking in or void of patience. However, we have not understood how it works.

First, make sure that you have done the will of God or that what you are pursuing is His will for your life. Second, set aside anyone or anything slowing you down. We can run together, but we are not able to carry anyone. That is not a human assignment; that is the task of the Holy Spirit. The sin that hinders our progress is the arrogance to think that we don't need the Lord in and for everything. Nothing will weigh us down or hamper our hope like trying to endure without His help. What qualifies us to run His race is our refusal to surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial.

What is the race we must run? It is mastery over strife, contention, struggles, and any contest that the enemy of our souls presents to challenge us.

Yes, our confidence in our relationship with God encourages us at times to be still, and that certainly suggests strength of character; but that is not the only way to demonstrate this special relationship with God. What about a choice to go on with the show when your tears blur the lights on the stage and the faces of the audience? How about risking loving again when the love of your life has left you for someone else or even in death?

The good news is that others have gone on before, walking in the shoes of faith, and mastered our seemingly impossible moments. They are not so silently cheering us on. Never let the noise of the voice of defeat all around you prevent you from listening for the sound of the victors of the past. They are fulfilling their final assignment to remind us that our present was once theirs also. They won, and so will you.

Perfect Fellowship at Times Is Inarticulate

Romans 8:27 (NLT)—*And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will.*

Have you ever found yourself trying to share your love for God and your gratitude to Jesus, but it stayed locked inside you because your vocabulary was too limited? I have. Thank God that I have learned to pray both in the Spirit and in my understanding. I have also learned to come into His presence in silence as I go about the day's activities.

As a very young child, I would be outside playing and for no particular reason would suddenly run into our apartment and shout, "Mama, where are you?" She would assure me that she was there, and out the door I would go. I did not necessarily want anything, but it seemed I just needed to know that she was there in case I did.

When my husband and I first met, we spent hours on the telephone talking about everything as though we needed to discuss all the years before our meeting. We were getting to know each other. Now some of our most precious times together occur on a long car ride without a word being said. Other times we speak nonstop. Looking across the room at each other without one word uttered is priceless and reassuring because now we know each other. We belong. We are connected.

At times the Lord talks to me more quickly than I can write down His words. Other times, I'll just be staring off into space and one statement from Him will make my day. Sometimes I jabber endlessly to the Lord. Then other times I know that He is reading my heart because articulated words just will not suffice.

Establish *your* perfect fellowship with the Lord. He wants it more than you need it. There is nothing wrong with prayer groups and prayer partners. However, most of the time they have to be scheduled; whereas our personal fellowship with the Father can be anytime, all the time. I consider that "perfect fellowship."

It only takes God and you to make a majority. Why not stop right now and meditate on His goodness and His faithfulness for a few moments? You may discover that, though initially you thought you had nothing to say, suddenly a bubbling up of words in your heart will begin to proceed from your mouth. Try it. It is wonderful.

If They Don't Listen to God, They Won't Listen to You

Proverbs 29:1 (KJV)—*He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.*

The Holy Spirit of God, which is the Spirit of Christ, repeatedly tells us what we need to do to live pleasing lives unto the Father and to be effective witnesses. If we fail to heed the message, at some point our consciences will become seared. This process leads to a path of total destruction.

I used to get upset when I observed others going the wrong way. I'd get downright mad when they seemed to profit in the midst of their wrongdoing. Then one day, I heard this little voice within me say, "You have an obligation to pray for them and a responsibility to live your life being led by My Spirit." I had to make some mental and emotional adjustments in response to that statement because I had been under the impression that I could make a difference in others' lives. The Spirit was saying to me, "Your hands are full just staying on the track of obedience to My plan for your life."

The Holy Spirit is on assignment to lead and guide us into all truth. Anyone who does not listen to Him will only listen to me or you on a temporary basis.

Total submission to God's will, His plan, and His purpose is the way to go. It is the only way to go.

Dear God, how many times have I failed to heed Your Spirit, who was trying to keep me from the immoral and foolish things I thought I would enjoy? How grateful I am that, at some point, You got through to me before my neck became permanently stiff and my heart completely hardened. As I look back over my life, I can recall clearly Your love working to bring me into a relationship with You, in which there is life and not destruction. I pray today that every person who has confessed Jesus Christ of Nazareth as Lord and Savior will wake up before it is too late, for the time is short. May your probing, penetrating Holy Spirit perform laser surgery on Your people in such a way that they will cry out, "I yield; I can't hold out any longer!" in Jesus' name.

The Principal Meal

Revelation 3:20 (KJV)—*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*

I believe the Lord is saying, “My desire is to sup with you—to provide you with nourishment to which no natural food can compare. You simply must invite Me in. While hurts, doubts, or fears may have you opposed to letting anyone else in, I can enter even through an opening as small as a needle’s eye.

“I cannot speak to the world except through you. I only talk to My sheep. What My sheep hear from Me must then be shared with the world. You see, the world cannot hear or understand Me, but you are able to receive from the supernatural and translate it to the natural.

“Think this not strange. Did not My Father send Me to the earth in the form of flesh so that those open to Him would hear about Him through Me? Though I have returned to be at the Father’s side, I am still in the earth in the form of flesh in you, My body.

“Listen, My beloved. I am bringing to you fresh wisdom and understanding so that you can impart to those who are unable to hear My voice. But I must have a portal to enter; and when you allow Me in, your spirit will flourish and burst forth with insight that will alter circumstances and situations in your life and in the lives of those around you. I am waiting with the principal meal for the day when you will partake and share with others. Invite Me in.

“I will also hear what you have to say. Your praise is your supping with Me. My wisdom is My supping with you. Understand, My child, that this is part of your laboring together with Me. I cannot reach the lost without you, and you must not go to them without first hearing from Me. So here I am rapping at the portal of your heart, waiting for your sensitivity to My voice and the invitation to enter with the meal and message for today. Never serve anyone without first having dialogue with Me.

“Be still. Listen. Hear. Obey. For through you, My child, I have so very much to say.”

Prosperity without Wicked Schemes

Psalm 37:7,16-18 (KJV)—Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked. For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the Lord upholdeth the righteous. The Lord knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever.

Wealth can come to a person either from God or from the devil. True prosperity, however, comes to those who really believe in God, to those who wait silently upon Him in obedience and trust.

I know of people both saved and unsaved who have accumulated great wealth not because they trusted in God for prosperity, but because they came up with wicked schemes—some of which are as wicked as the world's way of doing things. When the "prosperity" of a Christian comes to him or her on the backs of insecure, gullible, fragile, and emotionally needy sisters and brothers, in my opinion that Christian is more wicked than the world.

When a minister preaches that the wealth of the wicked is laid up for the just, but every dollar that preacher gets is from weak-minded sisters and brothers, in God's eyes and even in the eyes of the world, that preacher is just another con artist. When you start to merchandise yourself more than you promote and preach Jesus, you are being set up for a fall.

"For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings. His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins" (Proverbs 5:21-22).

"The integrity of the upright shall guide them; but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them. Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death" (Proverbs 11:3-4).

God wants His children to prosper. When we really rest in Him and abandon our wicked schemes, He will prosper us in every area and bring glory to His name.

Putting the Enemy on the Run with Your Tongue

Numbers 10:35 (NKJV)—*So it was, whenever the ark set out, that Moses said: "Rise up, O Lord! Let Your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate You flee before You."*

It appears that God has always had a way of leading His people or speaking to them concerning His rest. The cloud of the Lord showed the children of Israel whether to pitch their tents or continue their journey. Our Father didn't provide more for Israel than He does for the church. He will not just leave us wandering in the dark wondering what is next.

Romans 8:32 says, "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" God personally delivered up Jesus to provide all things for us, and one of the things God freely gives is His wisdom.

Thank God we have a sure way of reaching our destination and determined goals. God Himself, in the person of Jesus, inspired by the Holy Spirit, lives inside each of us who are born again. He is perfectly willing to take the lead when we allow Him to, and He is more than able to fulfill His plan for us.

He knows the plan better than we do. He planned it.

If today you have not been born again, make a choice to change fathers. My Father leads by His Spirit; the other father drives and pushes according to his plan, which will result in your loss of property, life, and maturity (John 10:10). Don't cooperate with a thief and murderer whose whole mission is to destroy you and God's plan for your life.

The Bible says you can't serve two masters (Matthew 6:24). Repent and submit to the Lord by obeying His Word and His Spirit. If you will, you will discover that God can then take every evil, ugly, and wrong thing in your life and work it for your good (Romans 8:28). Hallelujah!

Father, You challenge me to move on in greater works for the kingdom. When I am confronted by the enemy, Your Spirit will rise up within me to declare him defeated and those that hate what You are doing through me must flee because of my faith in You and Your Word. I accept the charge to resist steadfast in the faith (1 Peter 5:9), in Jesus' name.

Recognize When God Speaks

Job 33:14 (NLT)—*But God speaks again and again, though people do not recognize it.*

A wise man will hearken to counsel (Proverbs 12:15), but not all counsel is wise. Most of us, like Job, have friends who think they are the only ones hearing from God and they readily give unsolicited advice. They offer much truth, but that truth is laced with error concerning God and His ways.

Thank God for the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth. He is the

**God uses His Word and
His Spirit to teach, correct,
encourage and change us.**

One who gives us an accurate portrayal and understanding of how God will react and respond to His people. The Holy Spirit lets us know that in this dispensation of grace,

God is not placing sickness on us or giving us pain to teach us anything. God doesn't need to use a single act of the enemy to teach His children anything. He uses His Word and His Spirit to teach, correct, encourage, and change us.

I spent a large part of my life around so-called Christians who vacillated between preaching the goodness of God and teaching their own opinions about His judgmental anger. I was never sure whether God was out to bless me for good behavior or to zap me for the least infraction. Then one day, the Holy Spirit in me began to speak truth to me and illuminate to my understanding the true nature of a loving Father and a concerned Savior.

I was finally able to discern for myself by His Spirit in me what to receive or not to receive from the comments, counsel, and instruction of others. Today I praise God that He loves me enough to chasten and to correct me. But I love Him even more for sending me the Holy Spirit to lead and to guide me into all truth, and to show me things to come. It is the counsel of the Holy Spirit that I prize and esteem above all else. Thank God for friends who love you and offer counsel that is good. But there is a Friend whose counsel is sure because He speaks only the truth. Recognize and hear Him when He speaks. Then, do what He tells you to do.

Recycled Revelation

John 20:25 (KJV)—*The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But [Thomas] said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.*

Like Thomas, you and I should not have to settle for recycled revelation. It is wonderful to hear of what God is doing in the lives of others. I rejoice when I observe lives changed from struggle and defeat to victory. My attitude is this: If God reveals Himself to you through Jesus, I expect to know Him in the same way. I want to be able to say, "I have seen the Lord also." I can say that. For, though my physical eyes have yet to behold Him, His love is evident in so much of my life that I could hardly love Him more if He appeared to me.

It is wonderful to hear of what God is doing in the lives of others.

The difference between Thomas and me is that he refused to believe without seeing physical proof. I have physical proof because I choose to believe. I believe that literature about others' experiences and crusades, conferences, and meetings are provided to whet our appetites for our own personal experiences with God. I don't know about you, but I will not settle for less than knowing by seeing what He is doing in my life personally.

I suggest that you reassess your time—the same twenty-four hours that each of us has each day—and prioritize it to include as much personal time with the Lord as you spend in various Word meetings.

Dear Father God, You did not give us Jesus to conceal Him from us. You sent Him as a revelation of You in Your fullness so that we can quickly discover our inadequacies and our need for His sufficiency. Our desire is to one day see You. But until that day, we believe that You alone are the One who rewards those who diligently seek after You and Your words to live by. I praise You, God, that my revelation of You does not have to be the recycled kind of revelation. I can have an original and the best of the best. Amen and Amen.

Refuse to Be Intimidated

Philippians 1:28 (NLT)—*Don't be intimidated by your enemies. This will be a sign to them that they are going to be destroyed, but that you are going to be saved, even by God himself.*

The devil is a bully. Most bullies deceive others into thinking they are more than they are. But all we have to do is refuse to be intimidated by their blustery words, and then they look for other prey.

I was a tiny little person growing up and, though I never started a fight, I refused to run from one when tempted to do so. At a very young age, I discovered one of the best ways to not have to fight the whole neighborhood was to beat the boots off of the bully or the so-called tough one in the presence of their cronies. Then I could rest until another bully surfaced.

I did not know when I was a child that refusing to be intimidated was a sign to the bullies that they were destroyed and I would be saved. They were not destroyed physically, but their power to bully me was destroyed, which was the same as their being destroyed.

Growing up, my brother was always my champion. Without realizing it, he was the one who taught me this bully-defeating principle. One day four or five girls surrounded me to fight me. Though I stood my ground, I was scared. My brother suddenly appeared, and I knew he was going to help me—only he didn't (Mother would have "killed" him for hitting a girl). Instead, he said, "You can all fight her—one at a time."

I wanted to tackle him! But I opted I could later at home. At that moment I heard inside of me, "Start with the leader." I obeyed, and, interestingly enough, the others had no heart to fight me once I whipped the leader.

Years later, I realized that my brother was used of God to teach me a principle and to show his confidence in me to win over all, doing it one at a time. I don't have to quote the entire Bible. I only need to quote the Word that is written for that event, occurrence, or attack.

Don't concern yourself with the devil's bullies. You can defeat every bully, too, one at a time. Refuse to be intimidated. Your confidence in your God is a sign to them of their defeat and your victory.

Rejoice: God Is at Work

Psalm 69:32 (NLT)—*The humble will see their God at work and be glad. Let all who seek God's help live in joy.*

It is not difficult to find people rejoicing when everything seems to be going their way. But that is not the only time we should be rejoicing. I have learned the importance of being happy when all I have is God's Word to support me, when everything and everyone around me has said to quit—and quickly.

**Your help comes from
the Lord. He said so.**

To know that God never ceases to work is very reassuring. When God is at work, that is really a time to get glad. Why? Because God doesn't just do busy stuff.

When God is working, things that never occurred before happen—and they are always for our profit. We benefit when God is at work.

No, we don't always see what He is doing, and we often do not understand His plan for the moment. But whatever God is up to, we will advance, increase, and experience abundance in the area we most need it.

What activates all of this? First, we need to become humble enough to know we can do nothing of value apart from God. Then we must make a conscious effort to seek God's help. We are in line for His help to be ever present as we seek Him often and regularly.

There is an unspeakable joy in His presence. Watch it, though, because that kind of ecstasy is addictive! Imagine staying so high from hanging around Jesus that you become oblivious to lack in your life. Your help comes from the Lord. He said so. He said that He would never leave you nor forsake you, so that you could boldly say, "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Hebrews 13:5-6, KJV).

When you begin to rejoice at the work of God that you cannot see, the visual part will come soon and the gladness will be a bonus. It's the afterglow of the rejoicing that you already initiated.

Respect for a Parent May Mean Saying No to a Request

1 Kings 2:19 (KJV)—*Bathsheba therefore went to King Solomon to speak to him for Adonijah. And the king rose up to meet her and bowed down to her and sat down on his throne and had a throne set for the king's mother; so she sat at his right hand.*

King Solomon so honored his mother Bathsheba that he not only rose to meet her, but he bowed before her and even established a throne for her next to him. When she approached him with Adonijah's petition, King Solomon said to her, "Ask it, my mother, for I will not refuse you." But refuse he did.

Some people will attempt to get through to you by approaching those who are close to you. They know better than to come to you directly. Watch who befriends you because of your relationship or influence with someone else. It happens all the time. That is not to say you should avoid everyone, but the closer you are to the leader the more you need to be able to discern who is genuinely interested in you and who merely wants to use you to advance his or her personal agenda.

Adonijah knew that Abishag was the lovely young virgin who served to bring warmth to King David in his old age. King David was never sexually intimate with Abishag, although he rested in her bosom. Sex is a good thing, but it is not everything. In his old age, David was cold and needed someone to keep him warm not conceive another child. Abishag belonged to King David and at his death she became part of Solomon's inheritance, which is why Solomon said to his mother, "Now, why do you ask Abishag, the Shunnamite, for Adonijah? Ask for him the kingdom also." Apparently, Bathsheba had forgotten what Solomon remembered: Adonijah treacherously sought to steal the throne from Solomon. If his attempt had been successful, both Solomon and Bathsheba would be counted as offenders and slain.

Who is trying to get close to you today? Ask yourself why they are attempting to acquire what is forbidden to them through the influence of others. Leaders, show proper respect for your parents but never allow them to influence you to give up that which God has given to you.

Restore, Give, and Walk

Ezekiel 33:15—If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die.

Certainly the grace of God is sufficient for us to represent Jesus Christ here in the earth. I cannot argue against the truth that a believer can live holy.

I have lived carnally as a Christian, and I have lived consecrated as a Christian. The latter is better. I firmly believe that God requires more of me now than He did when I was carnal, but I now have His Word, the fruit of His Spirit, and His gifts to keep me moving forward in His grace.

The wicked man, according to the verse above, was on the verge of losing his life, but a change and a commitment made the difference. How much more are we, the children of the Highest, in danger when we claim the name but live as though we never heard of Jesus?

I know beyond a shadow of doubt that Jesus loves us and forgives our weaknesses, but I also believe He requires us to restore what we have pledged and return what we have stolen. I'm sure He wants us to walk in His statutes and cease from iniquity. I have also learned that living is more than breathing. How sad it is to see those who once had the joy of the Lord in them and were on fire for the things of Christ now almost acting like zombies. That is not living; that is barely existing.

Father, You know all that I have done, both pleasing and offensive. I know You have forgiven me, and to the best of my knowledge I have returned and restored all things gained without Your consent. I desire to walk with You in all things and worship You with my whole heart. I have no desire to live here in the earth just to be physically alive. You know I look forward to heaven and to beholding the face of my Savior. But there is a purpose for my being created, and I ask that You keep me alert and alive until I complete Your plan for my life. Help me to live as restored, giving, and walking in Your life before others. I thank You for this, in Jesus' name.

Reversal of Fate

2 Corinthians 5:18 (KJV)—*All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.*

When God reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, a full reversal of the fate of mankind occurred. The original sin of Adam and Eve took mankind in the total opposite direction of God's intended plan for His creation.

Though it looked hopeless and bleak, as things sometimes do in the natural, God decided that because all things are of Him, He would make an exchange. That exchange would adjust what was in the natural so that restoration to His divine favor could occur. God first provided atonement through the law, which was merely a temporary reversal of man's condition. Atonement through the law only covered man's sin; it could not cleanse sin. Therefore, God Himself produced remission or removal of sin at a price that He alone could pay.

God so earnestly desired to bring us back to a complete relationship with Him that He personally did all that was necessary to bridge the gap that existed between us. Through the sacrifice of Himself, Jesus Christ reversed the course of separation, departure, and death that Adam carved out for us to follow. By His own blood, Jesus reversed and removed the curse of sin and its consequences for all who would believe and receive the gift of His reconciliation.

We now have the ministry of reconciliation, which simply means that we are privileged to declare God's gift of reconciliation to others. We are the Father's representatives here in the earth, offering to others on His behalf what He has freely given to us: Jesus Christ and His shed blood for the removal of our sin and reconciliation with God.

Heavenly Father, Your love and care are more evident and more awesome to me each day. The more I follow the prompting of Your Spirit to study, the more I discover the magnitude of Your love for Your creation. Thank You for enabling me to understand that I must seek Your kind of love to flow in and through me. You see the same ugly, evil, unlovely things that we see, yet You remain unaffected by them. You keep following Your purpose and many of us benefit. Help me be as steady in my ministry of reconciliation toward others as You have been toward me.

Safe in Mind, Body, and Estate

Proverbs 25:21-22 (KJV)—*If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee.*

I believe the Lord is saying, “My children, according to the world’s way of thinking it is not normal or natural for you to give bread and water to those who are hateful toward you. The flesh would say when one’s enemies are famished or are suffering, ‘Let them thirst; leave them as they are and rejoice over their predicament.’ But that is not My way.

“My children, You are children of love. You are containers and vessels of My love. Therefore, I charge you to dispense that love—especially to the unlovely. Particularly, I charge you to give My love to those who cause you grief, for only then will they see that you are different. Then, because they know that they would not respond in the same manner if they saw you in their predicament, they become curious as to why you are not against them. They become open to a love that defies what they know to be natural. Remember, as my co-laborers, you are called to attract sinners to Me by being attractive with My love and light reflecting through you.

“I give you this requirement not only for you to draw the lost to Me. I also give you this lesson to show you that if I expect you to provide the basic needs for even your enemy’s survival (bread and water), you can rejoice knowing that I will also provide not only your basic need but that which no human can give.

“When I promised to reward you for your efforts to obey My Word concerning your enemy, I was saying to you that because you obey Me to walk in love and be a light to others, I will make you safe in mind, body, and estate. You will have peace, health, and protection for your property.

“Listen, My child, with the ears of your spirit. For I will speak things that sound strange to your fleshly ears, but your spirit will bear witness to what I say. Never allow yourself to be concerned about what I speak to you to do, for I have unique and unusual ways of establishing you in this life and the life to come.”

Self-Control Is a Powerful Fruit

Galatians 5:22-23 (KJV)—*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*

We can learn a great deal about the various aspects of the fruit of the Spirit. Volumes are written on love, joy, peace, and faith. However, I seldom come across many writings on the fruit of temperance (or self-control), which is crucial for every believer to develop and walk in.

How easy it would be if, when we were born again, the sin nature were removed from us so that all we were left with was our own new, re-created human spirit, which really does not need to be managed at all. But God would not get as much glory in that as He does in leaving us with the human, or sin, nature to reside in the same vessel with His Holy Spirit, who energizes and directs our new re-created human spirit.

The sin nature in our flesh does not die permanently once it is crucified. A daily, moment-by-moment crucifixion must occur. The sin nature in anyone has its own energy. It does not care what it does, even if it destroys the house it lives in.

We are blessed with the gift of God's divine power to equip us for all that life and godliness require or need, as we gain knowledge of Him. He has given us His very great and precious promises to aid us with participating in the divine nature.

His power and His promise are the keys that lock up our old sinful nature when necessary so that we can access and demonstrate His divine nature, which is the only way to escape the corruption, the distortion, the compromise, and the pollution that evil desires cause.

We can't operate in the divine nature as long as we play with or desire the sinful nature. Holy living according to the life of God in us will not be a reality to us until we allow ourselves to take advantage of His divine power and accept His promises, which can help us to become more knowledgeable of Him.

Self-control brings God glory because He understands the war that takes place daily within us. Control of oneself should be every believer's priority. Self-control is a powerful fruit of the Spirit and nothing else will work in our lives without it.

Serve God Regardless

2 Corinthians 6:8 (NLT)—*We serve God whether people honor us or despise us, whether they slander us or praise us. We are honest, but they call us impostors.*

Paul's concern was not to be liked or popular. He wanted to live in such a way that no one would be hindered from finding the Lord Jesus by the way he acted. All of what he did was to show that he was a true minister of God.

The more you serve the Lord and show the true colors of a God-appointed minister of Jesus Christ, the more you will be despised, slandered, beaten, put in jail, sent before angry mobs, worked to exhaustion, made to endure sleepless nights, and starved. It is your purity, understanding, patience, kindness, sincere love, and the power of the Holy Spirit that will prove you.

Life's tests are not always easy and comfortable, but neither are they impossible.

Have you forgotten what you were like before submitting to the Holy Spirit's training? I remember my former state, and I am more grateful than ever for being introduced to Him.

Self-called ministers serve only themselves. A true minister of God will always want to demonstrate the Lord Jesus and please His Father. A self-called minister will never be able to consistently endure hardship such as Paul experienced. Self-called ministers always want the best and the blessed, but they never want to endure the mess to pass the test.

Life's tests are not always easy and comfortable, but neither are they impossible. God allows His children to be tested. He does not test us, because as with Job, He is already confident of what we will do in every situation. He allows the test because sometimes we don't know for certain what our choices will be.

Reflection can be a good thing when we recall how impossible life once seemed. Reflection is a balm to future projections, especially when we recall how easy something was in the past compared to what we feared it would be.

As a true minister of God, you will probably endure a few lumps, bumps, knocks, and stumbling blocks. Don't try to avoid them. They are merely tests to see if you will continue to serve God regardless.

Sin Hinders the Flow of Revelation, Part 1

1 Samuel 3:1 (NKJV)—*Now the boy Samuel ministered to the Lord before Eli. And the Word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no widespread revelation.*

Eli operated as both high priest and judge of Israel. He was called and anointed of God to lead the people of God in the ways of righteousness according to the Law. Eli's sons were also priests unto the Lord. The sons of Eli did not walk worthily of their office and duties as priests. The Bible tells us that Eli's sons stole the offerings of the people (1 Samuel 2:12-17) and committed adultery with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle.

Obviously, Eli was aware of their practices because the Bible tells us that Eli told his sons that he had heard of their evil dealings against the Lord and His people (1 Samuel 2:22-25). Eli offered a mild rebuke to his sons by confronting them about their rebellious ways. Furthermore, he expressed his own displeasure and declared (verse 25), "...if a man sin against the Lord, who shall intreat for him?" However, Eli failed to act decisively with his sons. He did nothing to restrain their actions or to remove them from the roles they had no right to retain due to their sin and unrepentant hearts. Eli's refusal to judge and purge the iniquity of his own house cost him greatly. By choosing to honor his sons above God, Eli dishonored the Lord and disqualified his family before the Lord.

God has always revealed Himself to His people. However, the Word of God is rarely heard and revelation is limited when His leaders openly sin and show no remorse or, as in Eli's case, when good men who love the Lord fail to honor God first where their children are concerned.

At times, Christian leaders seem to have a challenge with keeping a balance between their spiritual and natural roles as leaders and parents. Without question, the call on your life must be obeyed—but not to the neglect of your responsibility to teach and train your children. And, at one time or another, that responsibility includes correction and maybe even rebuke, regardless of their age or station in life. Most children try their parents at some point. How the parent responds in that instance will determine how far the children will go.

Sin Hinders the Flow of Revelation, Part 2

1 Samuel 3:1 (NKJV)—*Now the boy Samuel ministered to the Lord before Eli. And the Word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no widespread revelation.*

Eli's sons found him to be weak in his role as priest and judge although he was strong in his love for them as a parent. Anytime your love for your children interferes with your obedience to the call of God on your life you will lose the respect of your children and others.

Eli did not need to have his sons stoned to death, but he did need to deal with their sinful behavior. If he had stood firmly against sin where they were concerned, God would not have had to pronounce judgment upon Eli's house: "And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever" (1 Samuel 3:14). You cannot remain passive in addressing the sins of those who stand in positions of authority; the price is too high—for them and for you.

Where are you today in your responsibility to the Lord concerning the call on your life?

Folks, forever is a long time. Where are you today in your responsibility to the Lord concerning the call on your life? Are you overlooking the iniquities of your loved ones because you think you owe them something, while you preach and teach others to put God first in everything? Failure to address the sins of your relatives as a leader of God's people could cost you your life as well as the lives of your children.

The same God who called you and gave you your children knows that you love them, but He is looking for men and women like Abraham and Sarah who are so in love with Him that they are willing to offer their child back to the One who provided him/her in the first place. If you are too weak to do this, at least ask the Lord to release you from your call until you are stronger. Please don't play at being a leader; you'll hurt too many people—including yourself.

Stand Still That I May Hear

Numbers 9:8 (NKJV)—*And Moses said to them, "Stand still, that I may hear what the Lord will command concerning you."*

Too often we as leaders, teachers, and parents respond to questions without conferring with the Lord.

In Numbers 9, certain men asked Moses why they couldn't present the offering to the Lord at Passover. Moses, who had never dealt with a similar situation, wisely presented the question to the real leader of the pack: Jehovah. He had no problem saying, "I don't have an answer for you, but I sure know where to get it."

Occasionally I am not inspired with a solution to a question, concern, or challenge, and I'll say so. Then I offer to go to God for the answer. Other times, the answer comes on the spot.

I have lived long enough to understand that people are not my personal property; they belong to God. Therefore, I simply have to keep my lines to Him open and clear and listen to what He wants to speak through me concerning His people. Then, my greater responsibility to the Lord is to train them to get their answers directly from Him.

Matthew 10:19-20 says, "It will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you." This verse is so reassuring. I don't have to know everything in advance. I simply have to know the One who does know and trust Him to share it with me when I need it.

The preparations of the heart and the answer of the tongue are from the Lord. The mental disposition and arrangements in our hearts are many, but there is only one answer, and it is always from the Lord. Therefore, let's discuss our questions with Him and stop going with our own opinions.

Father, I thank You today that I can rely on the fact that You not only know everything but have provided solutions long before I am presented with the problems. Help me to remember that nothing takes You by surprise and Your foundation cannot crumble just because of today's happenings. You are truly faithful in all things, and I can proceed and progress at a pace that is pleasing to You, in Jesus' name.

Take Back Your Life

Jeremiah 17:5 (KJV)—Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.

I believe God is saying, “My dear children, My Son’s shed blood has redeemed you from the curse of the law, so do not walk as those walk who are without liberty. You are neither caged as an animal nor loosed without control, but you are free in Christ. You are one with Me. In order to experience the glorious benefits of this privilege, your trust must always be in Me.

“To trust, rely, and depend on another human and to lean on any arm other than Mine for strength is to say that I am inadequate to sustain you here in the earth. This limited, narrow thinking causes you to forfeit your freedom and legally authorizes your enemy, the devil, to toss you to and fro at his will. I sent My Son to shed His precious blood for you to be free to move in the spirit as directed by My Spirit. Therefore, do not put your confidence in any flesh, for the arm of flesh will fail you—including your own.

**Today, take back your life.
Take back your freedom.
Walk in the liberty with which
Christ has made you free.**

“Israel was cursed when they turned from Me to trust man. You are redeemed from that curse. If, however, you violate that redemption, the enemy will know that you don’t know you are liberated, and he will proceed to treat you like one in captivity.

“Today, take back your life. Take back your freedom. Walk in the liberty with which Christ has made you free. Announce to all concerned that you are taking back your life by trusting only in Me. I am the One who will not fail you, the One who will never disappoint you, the One who can never lie to you. Refuse to live as one who is cursed, because Calvary has covered the cost and cleared away the curse for you. So, rise up and take your life back!”

Temptation and Choices

1 Corinthians 10:13 (KJV)—...*God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able....*

Like everyone else, I am often challenged by temptations, threatenings, and troubles. If it were up to me, I wouldn't have to experience any of these. But if I didn't, what kind of soldier or witness would I be?

Life presents each of us with the three Ts, but the choices we make then will determine our destiny. Nothing is going to stop the three Ts from coming our way, but none of them will be above what I am able to handle.

We are equipped to handle everything that comes our way. However, we must make the right choices. Did you know Paul said that we are troubled on every side? We are perplexed, persecuted, and cast down. But aren't you glad that this is not the end of his statement? He said, "Though there is trouble for me on every side, I am not distressed" (2 Corinthians 4:8).

The Greek word for "distressed" means *to hem in closely; to cramp; to straighten*. The devil will try to box us in and prevent us from fulfilling our assigned mission, but he can't.

I may be at a loss mentally (perplexed) with what seems to be no way out. I may even stand in doubt, but bless God I'm still standing and the devil cannot ever cause me to be at a total loss (despair) because of the "above that I am able" part. He can follow after me (persecute), only to find that I am not left behind in some place (forsaken) or deserted. My Father and my Savior are always with me in the Spirit. I may be cast down (frequently opposed), but never will I perish, die, or lose (be destroyed).

We'll all shed these earth suits one day. But that, for the believer, is not dying. And how can we lose when Jesus has made us overcomers in this life? So I have chosen to enter His rest and by faith ignore the external distractions, because the person on the inside of me is unaffected by trouble, perplexity, persecution, and attacks of the enemy.

Paul encouraged us with the fact that the persecutions and affliction came because of his doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long suffering, charity, and patience. But the Lord delivered him from them all (2 Timothy 3:10-11).

Shout, "Thank God! I am delivered from them all!"

This Turn of Events Was from the Lord, Part I

1 Kings 12:15 (NKJV)—*So the king did not listen to the people: for the turn of events was from the Lord, that He might fulfill His word, which the Lord had spoken....*

I have learned to rest in whatever is taking place in my life. I no longer believe that satan can do anything to affect me negatively when I am walking with the Lord with a “do right” determination in my heart and mind. Yet some turn of events must occur because of what God has already said about His plan for my life.

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In the past, I took some pot shots at Rehoboam for listening to and accepting counsel from his peers instead of giving heed to the counsel of his elders concerning Israel submitting to him. If, in fact, he had listened to the elders, then God’s plan for Jeroboam to rule over ten tribes of Israel would never have come to pass, and that could never be. Like me, you most likely have your own ideas about how certain situations should go especially as they relate to you and those you love. King Rehoboam’s choice to disregard wise counsel reflected the arrogance of his own heart, and was allowed by the Lord so that God could perform what He had already declared to Solomon would take place in Israel.

One thing about becoming familiar with the voice of the Lord is that once you hear Him speak to you, little else matters enough to throw you, because you are confident that God will perform that which He has spoken.

In 1 Kings 11:11, God told Solomon that because He had spoken to him twice yet Solomon still chose to follow his own path and not God’s plan for him, he was going to lose most of the people of Israel. God told Solomon that his servant Jeroboam was going to become the heir after Solomon’s death. Because of this, Solomon tried to kill Jeroboam, which caused him to flee to Egypt until Solomon died. God gave Jeroboam the wisdom to protect himself until it was his season to reign.

This Turn of Events Was from the Lord, Part 2

1 Kings 12:15 (NKJV)—*So the king did not listen to the people: for the turn of events was from the Lord, that He might fulfill His word, which the Lord had spoken....*

Because God would not allow the followers of Jeroboam to fight against their brothers, Jeroboam concluded that those in the northern kingdom would again turn to serve the house of David. Jeroboam made two golden calves; he lied and told the people that these calves were responsible for bringing them up from Egypt, and going to Jerusalem to worship was too far. He made shrines on the high places and selected priests from every class of people who were not the sons of Levi (those whom God had appointed to be His holy priests). Jeroboam either did not understand what the prophet Ahijah had spoken to him or he thought that as a servant and not Solomon's son, he was not worthy of this honor. Therefore, Jeroboam said in his heart that the kingdom would return to David. But that was not God's plan.

Take watch that your heart does not speak words to you contrary to what God has already spoken to and about you. A doubting heart is a deadly heart. You can't outrun what God has said. It matters not if you move to Egypt or the Bronx, God's plan will be fulfilled, even if you only enjoy it and experience it temporarily. Far too many of God's men and women have missed God's plan long term because they failed to believe Him or refused to learn from others before them. When you see someone else miss it because they did not follow after the Lord, what makes you think you will succeed in the same venture unless God has specifically spoken a word to you? Disobedience and following after false gods of any kind made by hand is a "no-no."

Stop where you are, examine what you are doing at this time, and assess how it lines up with God's Word to you. Will what you are doing cause abundant, long-term success to be yours? Or, are you improvising and altering God's command towards your own destruction? Stop resisting the events that God is turning in your life. He must perform what He has promised. Just believe Him and live.

Touch Not God's Anointed

1 Samuel 24:6 (NKJV)—*And he said to his men, "The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord."*

It is not always easy to stay focused on how to separate your respect for God's anointed from wanting to yield to the flesh, which always wants to get even.

Saul was not interested in sparing David's life. Fear of David prompted Saul to see him as an enemy and a threat to what he thought was his. Saul forgot who made him king and why he was selected in the first place. If Saul had stayed focused and conscious of the Lord and His plan for His people, then David would have been of no concern to him. Remember David was God's second choice. God never wanted the people to have a king in the first place and was gracious enough to share with them in advance how the king would treat them.

When we don't allow God to protect us from others, He will attempt to work in the situation for our good. David's heart condemned him for even cutting off the end of Saul's robe. David was surrounded by people who wanted him to take advantage of the opportunity to do away with Saul. I am here to tell you that you will always have opportunities to make wrong choices but when you know God's Word and you have His heart, you will view each opportunity to do wrong as a test to prove your love for the Lord and your honor for His Word.

Luke 6:38 is used often when offerings are received and there is nothing wrong with that. But the Lord has taught me that I can't apply verse 38 until I apply verses 27-37. Loving your enemy and doing what is good toward them can only happen when you want to please the Lord more than you want to receive from Him. Your flesh and mine want to retaliate, fight back, become defensive, and give back word for word when someone curses or criticizes you. Once I learned that no one can curse me because Christ became the curse for me when He died on Calvary's tree, total liberation was mine. You might speak foul words to me or about me, but my obedience to please the Lord insulates me from any ill effects and allows me to release love words over my foes.

Truth Locked Up in Your Heart Blocks Out Sin

Psalm 119:11 (KJV)—*Thy word have I hid in mine heart,
that I might not sin against thee.*

The seedtime and harvest principle is quite evident in this scripture. The Word is the seed. My heart is the soil, or the good ground the seed is sown in. And freedom from sin is the harvest, or desired result.

The only way I know to block sin from operating in me is to lock the truth of God's Word into my heart. The Hebrew word here for "hid" means *to cover over, to hoard or reserve, to deny, to favorably protect*. We are not hiding the Word in our hearts as if it were some deep, dark secret. On the contrary, we are using it as a covering.

We are stockpiling it; we are favorably protecting our hearts and denying the enemy access because out of the abundance of our hearts our mouths will speak and words spoken from our hearts have creative power—power to produce what is said.

Accept Psalm 119:130 as a word inspired by the Lord: "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." Have you ever tried to hide light? You can't without denying or smothering it with darkness. If you really want to keep sin out of your life, allow God's Word to enter into your heart. The light will accompany the Word and cover over and protect your heart so that the darkness of sin cannot enter. Then what proceeds from your heart will bring understanding even to the most simple among us.

God is not going to force His Word on us or in us. We must diligently seek after it for the benefit and value it brings with it.

A sin-free life is a result of a heart full of the Word of God.

Father, help each of us to understand and pursue Your Word. Our desire is to please You and be kept from the evil in this world (John 17:15). The only way to do this is to allow the entrance of Your Word, to lock it in our hearts so that the things flowing from our hearts represent Your life and light in us. The time is short, and we choose a Word-filled, Spirit-filled life with You now and forevermore. Amen and amen.