

Insights For Each Day

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HORIZONS UNLIMITED

Insights For Each Day

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

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

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

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

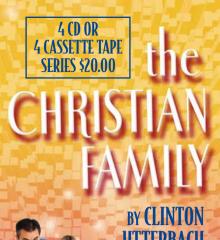
Precious Father, please take these words and seal them in the hearts of each reader desiring to have You reveal Yourself to them. May You, precious Holy Spirit, take each entry and expand it and increase it in the hearts of the hungry ones.

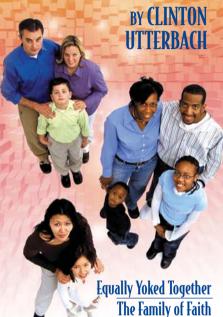
I sow this book into the lives of millions to be encouraged long after I am gone, for them to experience You in a very personal way, on a daily basis.

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

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

His Joint Heir, Sarah W. Utterbach





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FROM TAPPAN ZEE BRIDGE WESTCHESTER COUNTY

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TRAIN INFORMATION

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Schedule Services

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

SUNDAY

Worship Service	2
Communion	
(1st Sunday o	of
each month)	10:30 a.m.

Sunday Church School 9:00 a.m.

WEDNESDAY

School of the Bible7:30 p.m.

FRIDAY

- control - cont
Prayer Service
Baptismal Service
(1st Friday of
each month)

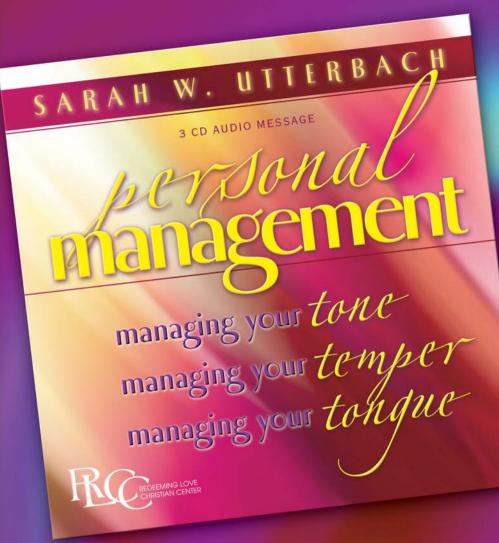
Youth Fellowship 7:30 p.m.

Nursery facilities are available for most activities and services. Infants must be at least 6 weeks old.

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ow This Devotional Came To Be

Dear Reader.

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

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

God speaks to people? I thought.

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

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

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



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

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

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

as His words written in the Scriptures.

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

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

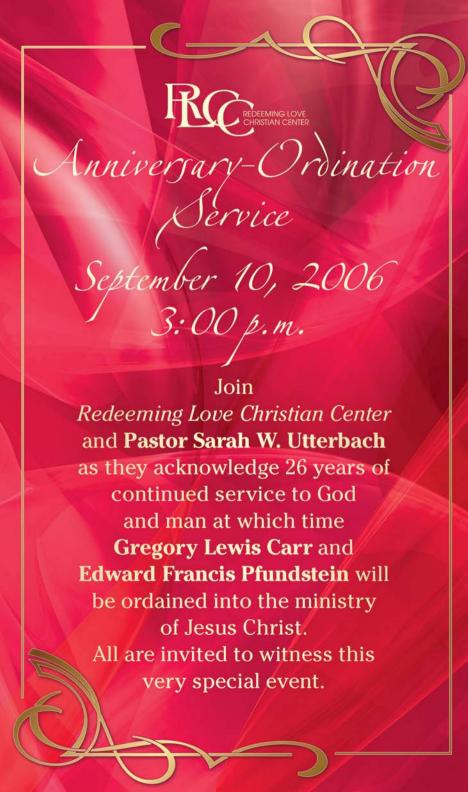
I encourage you to open your heart and allow the Spirit of God to speak to you about your own life and needs. And as you read the following devotional passages and excerpts of what He has spoken to my heart, I pray that you do more than merely read the words I have written on the page. I pray that you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

Keep looking up; Jesus is expected!

His Joint Heir,

Sarah W. Htterhach





A Horrible Pit

ith Your eyes, You will guide me. With Your hand of righteousness, You will lift me from this horrible pit.

This happening should not be strange and foreign to me. You spoke to my heart more than 25 years ago that Your plan for me did not include the ordinary or the easy. But, whatever You have called me to do, would not be impossible for me because of the grace that will accompany the gift. My path will not be the same as others. You and You alone will decide the way I must go;

and You alone will select the ones who are to travel with me. I can no longer limit my thinking and concern to this world. Preparation is in progress to move me to a higher level.

Do not fret or fear that you will not make the journey to the end. You were selected because you will make it to the end.

The pit is part of the preparation. For once I

am taken from it, it will become my marker in determining the future ministry and goals You have for me to help lead others into a closer walk with You. Prayer shrouded in tears will keep the channel lubricated so that the power of the Holy Ghost will flow freely to bring us to be the glorious church, worthy of the love and sacrifice of the Son of God.

"Do not fret or fear that you will not make the journey to the end. You were selected because you will make it to the end. Years have gone by when it appeared that you were hard on yourself and on others. That was not of your choosing. I made you that way so that the mundane and the superficial would quickly lose their appeal for you. You have always required the best of the first because you would present nothing less to me. You were not born to settle for the available. Your search from a child has led you to Jesus, My first and My best. Others around you will not understand who you are or what you are about. Pray for them, then walk away to join the others on this road where few will ever trod."

What Are the Other Gods in Your Life?

Jeremiah 7:22,23 (NLT)—When I led your ancestors out of Egypt, it was not burnt offerings and sacrifices I wanted from them. This is what I told them: "Obey me, and I will be your God, and you will be my people. Only do as I say, and all will be well!"

or the Israelites, Egypt was a place from which they longed to be delivered. They sought Jehovah for their deliverance. He provided a deliverer, equipped him with boldness, and, after much affliction, they were able to walk away from their enemy.

We who call ourselves Christians were also given an opportunity to walk away from a type of Egypt which we know as sin. Our

The only way I know to put God in charge of all I do is through prayer and praise.

deliverer's name is Jesus. God's love for us caused Him to provide our Redeemer when we didn't know to ask for Him. We simply have to accept Him which is evidenced by loving and obeying Him. We often

substitute other gods for Him. We submit our wills regarding work, money, education, and achievement only to find that God, the One who made us free, is on the back burner of our lives.

Until we make the Lord first in all we do, we will be living beneath our privilege. The only way I know to put Him in charge of all I do is through prayer and praise. I have attempted to do what pleases Him only to find that what He wants for His people is to get so close to Him that He can benefit others through them.

God is looking for worshippers. People that have discovered that worship of the Father is not the songs we sing, but it is what we say to Him between the songs. He is looking for our words to express our love to Him. There is nothing wrong with education and friendships as long as we spend time with the Almighty to discover what His plan is for our lives; without knowing that, we can never be successful.

What occupies your attention? What dominates your affection?

Abandon Yourself to God's Purpose

Philippians 2:13 (Everyday Bible)—Yes, God is working in you to help you want to do what is pleasing to Him. Then He gives you the power to do it.

ithout the help of the Lord energizing us with the desire to please Him, we would never want to do things His way. But, after He creates in us a willingness to make Him happy, He then provides us with the power to accomplish it.

For me, and perhaps for you also, there were certain things I thought I wanted in life, only to discover that where I am is almost the total opposite of what I thought was best for me. I became weary of bumping my head against the many walls God allowed to deter me from going in the direction opposite from where He had planned for me. One day I simply threw up my hands, and submitted myself to His will and His deeds for my life. I abandoned my will and purpose to His because "Father Knows Best."

You may have thought that God was going to use your gifts for His glory. In my case, He took nothing and created gifts for

me which I would have never thought to ask for. This magazine you are presently reading was God's idea. Without a formal education, I didn't even consider writing a

I abandoned my will and purpose to God's because "Father Knows Best."

daily devotional. "The Choice Is Yours" live, call-in radio broadcast that I do weekly was God's idea. Yet, thirteen years later, I still do it with no advance script, notes, or ideas about the format. I just show up, turn on the equipment, and introduce myself. Two hours later, only God can get the glory for the souls saved, the lives changed by the Holy Spirit, and the spiritual answers shared. I sometimes don't know the questions, so how can I know the answers unless I abandon myself to His purpose, spending time with Him. God yields as He prepares me.

What Does It Matter if Others Know?

Psalm 32:7 (NLT)—For you are my hiding place; you protect me from trouble. You surround me with songs of victory.

ow many times are we guilty of covering up for others as well as for ourselves? We hear we are not to "rock the boat." "You share too much information." "No one needs to be that transparent." The Lord God is the only one able to hide you and protect you when trouble is barreling down on you full speed.

I recently needed to acknowledge some things that had to be addressed before I could move further in the things of God. I thank God that they were not moral failures. I had not committed adultery, lied, or cheated anyone; but I had allowed some little foxes to enter and attempt to spoil my vine. God is so merciful to help us find our way back to fellowship with Him.

Verses 10 and 11 are very comforting, "Many sorrows come to the wicked, but unfailing love surrounds those who trust in the

Jesus is your hiding place. He is your protection from trouble of any kind; He will surround you with songs of victory.

Lord. So rejoice in the Lord and be glad, all you who obey him! Shout for joy all you whose hearts are pure!"

We can hide nothing from the Lord. He already knows everything we are about anyway. So, let it all hang out to Him. He loves you. When you find yourself in pain, look to

see why. Acknowledge when and where you missed it so that the healing can begin. Jesus is your hiding place. He is your protection from trouble of any kind; He will surround you with songs of victory. You can't have a victory until you are honest with yourself and the Lord. "Oh, what joy for those whose rebellion is forgiven, whose sin is put out of sight! Yes, what joy for those whose record the Lord has cleared of sin, whose lives are lived in complete honesty" (Ps. 32:1,2 NLT).

Don't just sing an already recorded song; sing from your heart what the Lord is giving you to shout about.

Aliens in a Foreign Land

1 Peter 2:11 (NLT)—Dear brothers and sisters, you are foreigners and aliens here. So I warn you to keep away from evil desires because they fight against your very souls.

t needs to sink in that we are strangers where we presently reside. As pilgrims here, we are to remember that our homeland is nearby, but it's still elsewhere. We sojourn on the planet for just a short period of time. We are here to show the citizens and residents of this place that we can live here without becoming contaminated by appeals to our lower nature. Jesus did.

Physical cravings or indulgences of this world exist. However, just as we are taught to abstain from sexual sins, we can learn to refrain

from any and every fleshly lust and earthly appetite that may war against our souls. What does that mean? We must contend for our freedom. See yourself in a military campaign with duties to be exercised to protect you from becoming a captive of the enemy.

We are on assignment to live honestly among the pagans or the inhabitants of this world.

This world follows the dictates

of the apostate church. The Judeo-Christian principles are no longer the way the world's inhabitants want to go. They have renounced their first loyalty to Christ and have gone to war against everything Christians stand for. They have defected to the dictates of the world rather than remain loyal to the requirements of heaven.

We are permitted a period of time here to affect the citizens of this world. We are on assignment to live honestly among the pagans or the inhabitants of this world. They will speak of us as evildoers, and they will malign us as criminals. But, our lifestyle among them is to speak for us so that on the day Christ comes to inspect everything, we will be found innocent of contributing in any way to their judgment.

Remember: This is not our homeland, we draw close to the world only to show them Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

What Would You Do?

2 Samuel 12:20 (KJV)—Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the Lord, and worshipped; then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him and he did eat.

avid had done evil and heard the prophet say his child would die (2 Sam.12:14). He should have been the one put to death; he was the one who sinned. Verse 14 says, "Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born of thee shall surely die." Verse 9 reads, "Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord to do evil in his sight?"

God spared David's life because God had a plan for an entire nation to be executed through him. Many of us have been chosen

Never forget your Father's call on your life. Repent and fix it now.

of the Lord to do mighty things and we give in to our flesh, allowing momentary satisfaction to interfere with our God-ordained assignment. I've been there, and I only knew to do what David did. I confessed my error.

The question is, "What would you do?"

It's easier to seek God's help before we miss it, in order not to miss it. God is still your Father, and loves you in spite of what you've done.

David's actions are a good rule of thumb. Once he accepted the child's death, he got up from the filth, washed himself, anointed himself, and resumed his role as king and a child of the Most High God. Before anything else, he went to the Lord's house to worship. Would you have gone to your house first, or would you have felt too guilty to show yourself in the house of the Lord?

You may have messed up royally, but never forget who you are in Christ Jesus. A way has been provided for you to come home. Never forget your Father's call on your life. Repent and fix it now.

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."

oo 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.

THE Choice

Pastor Sarah, I am incarcerated but I have recently rededicated my life to the Lord. When I was first saved, I believed I had a call on my life but somewhere along the way I got sidetracked and stopped following the Lord. I've made such a mess of my life and I've done some things I really regret but I can't reverse it. I know God can't do much with me but I still want to serve Him somehow but I can't even imagine how.

First of all, I congratulate you on making the choice to recommit your life to the One who loved you and washed you from your sins in His own blood, the Lord Jesus Christ. Second of all, I must point out that you are indeed mistaken in believing that God can't do much with you. You are limited only by your own beliefs. Your circumstances do not determine what God can and will do with your life.

I'd like to point out to you that the Apostle Paul was a prisoner when he wrote nearly three-fourths of the New Testament. By the way, Paul was a murderer and while he was on a rampage to commit violence, Jesus Himself appeared to Paul. In that instant, Jesus changed Paul's heart and redirected the course of his life.

Paul couldn't reverse the consequences of the

A Hours

past, but he could reframe his future by changing his choices. The same is true for you. You can't change what you've done, but what matters is what you do now. God isn't surprised by the choices you made in life.

When God called you, He knew precisely what you would do in life but He called you anyway. That lets you know that He has a plan for you that cannot be derailed by satan or sin. Yes, you can significantly hinder and affect some things, but ultimately what God desires of you can still come to pass if you will just cooperate with Him.

The first responsibility of every believer is to know God and to grow in fellowship with Him. Prison bars can't prevent you from doing that.

YOU MAY BE LOCKED IN BUT YOU ARE NOT LOCKED OUT OF THE WILL OF GOD.

Ask God to teach you by His Spirit and then expect Him to lead you, step by step, day by day. Yes, you may not have certain natural freedoms but your spirit is free. Change your thinking and your choices to line up with God's Word and you will be able to fulfill His plan for your life, no matter where you are. And, if it becomes necessary to change your location to satisfy His plan, God is well able to open prison doors. But right now, focus on knowing Him and becoming like Him. Where He decides to use you is up to Him. But His willingness to use you will be up to you.

You Can Prolong Your Days

Proverbs 28:16 (NKJV)—A ruler who lacks understanding is a great oppressor. But he who hates covetousness will prolong his days.

Onversely, he who loves and deals in dishonesty and bribes shortens his life. The same verse in the New Living Translation reads, "Only a stupid prince will oppress his people..." I will

... I do not want to leave here with the Lord's work for me still undone.

add that only a stupid pastor will allow money-grubbing people to come in and rob his sheep with emotional hype and futile promises that never come to pass.

I truly believe that any pastor who allows visiting ministers or

artists to take advantage of those they have watch over are shortening their lives. Shepherds are called to train and protect their sheep, not expose them to the spirit of greed. When is enough, enough?

The only reason I want to prolong my days on the earth is that I do not want to leave here with the Lord's work for me still undone. Even so, I dislike seeing people taken for financial rides in the name of a promise God has not made.

I recently wrote and spoke on the "Tragedy of Tradition." While I did not address finances, I did tell the people of RLCC that our traditions versus God's traditions and requirements have left us without both His power and His presence in our assemblies.

When we acknowledged the 25th Anniversary of both RLCC and the Pastor, I broke tradition. Instead of seeing how much the church could take in and I personally could benefit, I was impressed to give the largest gift I have ever given to the ministry in appreciation for what the Lord has done for me and in me. I believe RLCC is good soil for me to sow into because I am the fruit of it and though God is still completing what He has begun in me, I am more like Him than I've ever been, and I'm pursuing Him more frequently than ever before.

Pastor, teacher, apostle, prophet, and evangelist, stop oppressing your people. Repent and ask for understanding of your role and position. God is watching and recording.

Because of Thy Promise

Psalm 119:65 (NKJV)—You have dealt well with Your servant, O Lord, according to Your word.

very word that our Father God speaks concerning us must come to pass. God never threatens us or exaggerates about us. He knows what we are made of and how much we can endure.

Often, I have found myself in what appeared to be a black pit. The pain was so severe that I did not know what part of me hurt and was under attack. There is no way to describe this agony.

You have either been through it or you haven't. I look forward to the day when I am so free in Jesus Christ that His joy will well up in me to rejoice regardless of circumstances. Because of His promise to me,

I look forward to the day when I am so free in Jesus Christ that His joy will well up in me to rejoice regardless of circumstances.

I was able to quote His words back to Him and He held me steady in the palm of His hand. The purging better prepared me to do His will, so I could ultimately produce more and better fruit.

Before I submitted to God's way, often, in my ignorance, I was led astray into sin. I deceived myself to think that there was an alternative to what God had decided for me. It was for my good that I was afflicted because until then I had not grasped who He is or His love for me (Ps. 119:67).

Until you have been afflicted or been led to a pit stop that was not on *your* schedule, you really don't know how to handle the challenges of life—yours or anyone else's.

You Cannot Exhaust Me

hink about this, you cannot explain Me, you cannot ignore Me, and My love and strength are incapable of being fatigued. Why do you go about trying to execute that which is in your heart and mind?

I have always reserved the right to do things My way. Why My way? Because I have the whole picture; and, like a coach on the football field, I see the entire field. My play is not just to cover a man. I must cover every man because it is about more than just the game being played. I want everyone to win. Not win because you compete with one another, but win because you help to complete one another.

All of My children are complete in Christ, but how many of them know this? And who are the ones telling them this truth?

All of My children are complete in Christ, but how many of them know this? And who are the ones telling them this truth? How old were you when you discovered you were complete in Christ? Were you not in church a great deal of your life? What preacher did you hear

preach this important message? Competition falls by the wayside when My people see that they are not on opposite sides, but My strength is meted out to them in their unity.

Stop concerning yourselves with how often you call on Me in your weakness. I made you to depend upon Me. The only power you have to perform is found in Me. You cannot exhaust Me. It is in Me that you will find your authority over everything the devil throws your way. You can never defeat nor resist him in your own strength; don't even try. As you come to Me, not as servants, but as sons and daughters of the Most High God, you will be energized to overcome whatever arises. You, My child, have the mind of Christ, the wisdom of God, and My Holy Spirit, who never loses His power.

My strength is made perfect in your weakness.

Being Built

1 Peter 2:5 (KJV)—Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

hat a mistake it is to think that we have arrived with no need to continually improve.

Moses, at the command of the Lord, built a tabernacle in the wilderness that was a portable "house" in which the children of God could worship Him.

Solomon was used to build a temple for the same purpose. It was the exact copy of the tabernacle. He used only the finest stones. Yet, in time, it was destroyed because anything made by man is subject to change and destruction.

God's desire was always to live with and in people and Peter reminded us that we, the people of God, are being built into a spiritual house. Spiritual houses cannot be destroyed because they are not subject to the elements and effects of this world. Spiritual

things are immune to carnal behavior.

Once obedience to the things of God starts, our spiritual houses are built. It begins with our acceptance of Jesus Christ as the primary focus of our lives. Solomon required all of the stones in the temple be quarried at the quarry so that no hammer or

Once obedience to the things of God starts, our spiritual houses are built. It begins with our acceptance of Jesus Christ as the primary focus of our lives.

chisel was heard in the temple (1 Kings 6:7). This was done with such precision that, once the stones were brought to Jerusalem for the building, only a mallet was used to put each stone in place.

Jesus and the Holy Ghost are the hammer and chisel for us, His lively stones. We are worked on daily as we allow ourselves to be built into spiritual houses. When we reach the assembly, their work allows us to tell others what they have done to make us holy priests, able to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. The church building is not where we come to get fixed; it is where we share how we were built and who the architect is.

Set Your Heart

Daniel 10:12 (NKJV)—Then he said to me, "Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words."

hose of us who are cooks find it occasionally necessary to use oven timers to make sure we neither undercook nor overcook certain foods. We say we "set the clock." When Daniel "set his heart" to understand, then humbled himself before God, he was told that his words were heard.

Each of us must set our hearts to understand whatever God is speaking to us, regardless of the time it takes. God will not be

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rushed or crushed. We have to humble ourselves and wait on God for His ways to be fulfilled. Otherwise we will insert our actions and thoughts with unfavorable results.

Understanding, for me, seems only to occur when I have a "need to know"; often it is at the 11th hour and the 59th minute. My spirit man is willing to wait because it trusts the Father to send help according to the words I prayed. My flesh seldom wants to pray and never wants to wait. My flesh believes that it knows all the answers for what's best for me.

Folks, it's not about the number of things you do. It is about how well you do what you undertake. Learn to wait on the Lord. Rather than act rashly without prayer, believe that because He has seen what we've done with our hearts and has observed our humility in approaching Him, He will provide the right help: the help that comes according to the God-inspired words we utter.

One of the most difficult things to do is train ourselves to trust the Lord. We must also train ourselves to speak out only as He inspires us.

Believe me, there will be less mess to clean up when we wait on the word and actions of the Lord every time, all the time.

Companions With Compassion

Hebrews 10:34 (NKJV)—For you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourself in heaven.

t is important to remember our early days when we first learned of Christ, and how we committed to remain faithful even though there might be unpleasant things in our future.

No one wants to experience adversity. But, learning what Christ endured for us to escape the fires of hell and experience a life of liberty for all eternity caused us to pray that we would walk worthy of what He did for us. Not only did we go through seasons of difficulty, we also aligned ourselves with and became companions of those also ill-treated.

One of the most exciting days of my life was when I was made free from trying to protect the possessions provided for me here in

the earth. I got a revelation that God's promises to me for heaven were better and more enduring than material possessions. Once you

What is the point of abounding if you can't share what you have with others?

understand the world's limitations, you are free to identify with the people of God and not your earthly achievements and possessions.

I have been blessed to enjoy many benefits. Yet, some of the happiest days of my life were as a child who was introduced to Jesus early while my life was abased. Though I have abased and abounded through the grace of God, He taught me that either state requires His help and grace.

Nothing matters if you do not show compassion for companions who may not be where you are. What is the point of abounding if you can't share what you have with others? The way to release what you have now is to know that it does not compare with what you will have in heaven. I am thrilled that Jesus Christ is my companion, and He has compassion toward me.

A Turned Face and Closed Ears

Isaiah 59:1,2 (KJV)—Behold the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.

od has not lost His power or His love for you, but, Isaiah said, "There is a problem" (Isaiah 59:2 NLT). It is not that God is too weak to save you or that He has become deaf. He hears us when we call. The problem is that we stop acting like Christians. We allow the sun to go down on our wrath and we are offended, while at the same time saying we love God and His Word.

There are some things we are expected to do as maturing believers. The main thing is to grow up, show respect for one another, and do whatever is necessary to prevent our credibility from being damaged. One way to accomplish this is to examine our motives and our methods, and let no evil be spoken of the good that we are and the good that we do.

We may have a heart to do what is right and good. However, if we don't do what it takes to ensure that our actions line up with our godly heart, we slip into iniquities. These sins are not immorality or one of the so-called "biggies." This is anything that separates us from hearing from God because He hid Himself. Our sins cause God to hide His face from us. He hears us all right, but He will not respond until we fix some things that only we can fix. What is the point for God to respond to us when we talk to Him when we neglect to do what He has already taught us in His Word?

A good deal of Jesus' teaching was to religious leaders. He said, "How terrible it will be for you teachers of religious law" (Matthew 23:23 NLT). I say, How much more terrible will it be for us teachers of grace to not show justice, mercy, and faith?

Yes, we should tithe our increase, but we should not leave undone the more important things. One of the most important things in this life to me is to have the assurance that I can get in God's face and He can get in mine. The last thing I want is to have God hide His face from me because I neglected to do what is right.

Disfigured, Flawed, and Marred

eavenly Father,
How often have we been guilty of disfiguring ourselves,
forgetting that it is Your Son's beauty in us that You wish to
behold? You did not create us to keep Your company; You created
us to run Your company. As Your children, we are expected to follow in the footsteps of our parent.

The food that is good for my soul and my heart can only be found in Jesus. In order for me to dispense what You are all about, I first must be filled with it. I have no need for the applause of men. I simply want them to live a life of praise to You with grati-

tude for the revelation of You. For it is truly You at work finishing that which You have begun.

Father, it should not have taken this long to bring me to where I am. It was not Your

I thank You for letting me see that with You it's never too late to make things right.

fault. I allowed far too many things to distract me, while all the time I was under the impression that I was pleasing in Your sight. I know that You have forgiven me everything that I humbly asked for in Jesus' name. Your generous love and mercy toward me will not allow me to leave here without ever discovering Your original plan for me. I thank You for letting me see that with You it's never too late to make things right. I love You, Lord; and I know You love me. I thank You for looking past this disfigured, flawed, and marred child to see only the beauty of Your Son and His completed work at Calvary.

Abilities and Skills Both Gone

Amos 2:13,14 (NLT)—So I will make you groan as a wagon groans when it is loaded down with grain. Your fastest runners will not get away. The strongest among you will become weak. Even the mightiest warriors will be unable to save themselves.

here are several gyms in the area where I live. There is even a well-equipped one in our building. People go there to develop their muscles and tone their bodies, sometimes accompanied by their professional trainers. This is a daily process and, at times, for extended periods of time.

When I see them, I always have the same question in my heart, "How much time do they give to developing their spirit man and

Nothing should be done to the neglect of your time with the Lord and in His Word.

their relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ?" I find nothing wrong with bodily exercise. I walk as much as possible without always jumping in the car to drive to everything. But nothing

should be done to the neglect of your time with the Lord and in His Word.

In the movie *John Dillinger* that I saw as a child, John Derek said, "Live fast, die young, and have a pretty corpse." As an eightyear-old, that did not set well with me. Who cares about having a pretty corpse? It is about leaving a legacy of life for people to remember long after you are gone.

Amos was not a prophet by training or by family ties making that position available to him. He knew, however, that he was divinely called by God to move in the prophetic office to share the message about Jehovah.

Judah and Israel were sinning without any regard for the God who had delivered them, protected, and provided for them. God was sharing with them through Amos, that because they did not honor Him, He wanted them to know that what and who they had begun to rely on would be no more.

Look around you, what you once relied on is crumbling and failing, and the only One who has been, is, and will be reliable is the Lord Himself.

Don't Shipwreck Your Prayers

1 Peter 3:7 (NLT)—In the same way, you husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat her with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God's gift of new life. If you don't treat her as you should, your prayers will not be heard.

t is time Christian men use their faith to believe God to understand their godly wives. Previous verses teach godly women the

Limportance of doing right by their husbands, even when their husband has not yet sold out to the Lord. In other words, ladies, your husband's relationship with the Lord should have no effect on your godly behavior.

... ladies, your husband's relationship with the Lord should have no effect on your godly behavior.

I believe that if a woman is committed to living a holy and

set-apart life for the Lord, she should believe God for wisdom on how to please her man without violating her position with God. He will show her how to attract him to Christ without making him feel that she thinks she is superior to him. Godly women can, and often do, win their ungodly spouses to Jesus.

A man who is a professing Christian has a responsibility to reciprocate to his wife what is necessary to have a full life with her. Though she may be physically weaker, God sees her as his equal. Therefore, she should be treated accordingly. They are heirs together of God's grace. Failure to see that, mister, will cut off your prayers.

As the spiritual head of the home, a man cannot mistreat the Father's daughter and expect her Father to reward him. What would your response be to your son-in-law not doing right by your daughter? If your prayers are not getting answered and you seemingly are doing everything according to the book, you may want to look at how you are behaving toward your wife.

Shipwrecked prayers are not God's will for you, but neither is His daughter being ill-treated because you have neglected to learn the science of doing right by His child. Fix it now.

An Increase of Love

1 Thessalonians 3:12 (KJV)—And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you.

challenge you today to walk in love, not just for the saints, but towards all people. Why? Because there is not one single person born or to come, whom the Father has refused to love. "For God so loved the world!" (John 3:16).

I am not suggesting that loving all people means that we condone, excuse, or justify any behavior that is contrary to the Word of God. We are not trying to give a license to wrongdoing. However, the compassion of God must replace the superior attitude that some Christians have.

If you can stand to see anyone go to hell . . .

If you cannot pray for someone whose life is on a fast road to destruction . . . then you should begin to pray this prayer of 1 Thessalonians for yourself.

We think the other person's demise or defeat should have no effect on us, but it does. Every person who ends up in hell is a failure on our part. Somewhere we did not do what we were supposed to do or pray when we should have prayed. This is not to put anyone in condemnation. It is to wake us up to the fact that our good is just not good enough when we are after His best for us.

There is a great deal of teaching on personal increase and I do not know if it has a purpose above having more "stuff and things." But, when you ask God to cause you to increase in love toward one another and toward non-believers, He will do this and at the same time provide you with the most unique ways to increase in finances, because He knows you will use the financial increase to bring people closer to Him.

Without God's love, having all the world's wealth isn't enough. You will still feel empty inside and the devil will show you ways to hurt the helpless and use the seemingly hopeless. What you have will decrease and the joy you once knew will escape you. Pray with me: Lord, I need to increase in love. Please help me to love others as You have loved me. Allow me endless opportunities to demonstrate that sure love to those without help or hope. In Jesus' name.

SONG POEM

OH THE WONDER OF IT ALL

by Clinton H. Utterbach

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h love, that moved the Father-heart of God. The pain as He in the garden trod. How would He redeem this fallen race?

Restore, them to their rightful place.

Sons, and heirs they all were meant to be Beguiled, doomed alas, eternally But wait, compassion rules and wins the day Yes, praise God, there is a way.

A plan, conceived before the dawn of time.

Begins, to unfold through a royal line
A prophecy, a Priest-king will be born of men
And lo, the Star of Bethlehem
The Son, in whom the Father is well pleased
This offering of sacrifice is what man needs
To put a final end to death and sin
So all may, anew begin again.

Oh the wonder of it all
That He on the Lamb would call
To come down and be a substitute for me.
Saints and angels all will sing
Glory, honor to the King
As we gather all round the throne above.

Are You Ready to Be Filled?

Acts 2:4 (KJV)—And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost....

hen the tabernacle in the wilderness was ready for worship, the shekinah glory of God came and filled the place. When the Temple was built and the priest and the singers were in harmony with each other, singing praises to God, His presence filled the place. Those in the Upper Room who were in one accord were filled to overflowing. Notice that everyone in the area was not filled. Rather, only those who were in one accord and waiting in the place they were told to be were filled.

In order for us to stay filled with His Spirit, we must make sure that everything about us is harmonizing with His plan, purpose, and promise for us.

First Corinthians 6:19 says that we are the temple of His Holy Spirit. In order for us to stay filled with His Spirit, we must make sure that everything about us is harmonizing with His plan, purpose, and promise for us.

Speaking in tongues is a sign that we have the Holy Spirit, but the manifested fruit of His Spirit in us is joy in the midst of sadness, love when surrounded by hate, peace when chaos is the order of the day, patience when everyone wants everything yesterday. When you allow the fruit of the Holy Spirit to operate in you when contrary conditions prevail, you can stay full of the Holy Ghost. You can enjoy His presence in you as you represent Him among others.

Heavenly Father, help us to see that You always inhabit our praises. You always manifest Yourself when we are in agreement with Your words, not just in mental assent but in our deeds towards others. We bless You for teaching us how to experience and enjoy You as a way of life, not an occasional high. May Your love, joy, peace, patience, meekness, kindness, temperance, faithfulness, and all the qualities of Your nature be forever ours as we submit ourselves to be Your permanent place of residence, in Jesus' name, for we are ready to stay full of Your Spirit.



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And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved,

Begging or Bragging?

Ezra 8:22 (NIV)—I was ashamed to ask the king for soldiers and horsemen to protect us from enemies on the road, because we had told the king, "The gracious hand of our God is on everyone who looks to him, but his anger is against all who forsake him."

hen our deliverance comes, how quickly we forget to continue to rely on the One who brought about our liberty. When we have decreed, declared, shouted about, and rejoiced over what God has just done for us, we should not ask of another human the means to continue what God has begun.

Too often, we suddenly begin to consider how our employer, parents, companions, or children can be our source of success. God has not brought us out of darkness into His will only to abandon us. Rather, He has rescued us from darkness and brought us into the kingdom of His Son (Col. 1:13) so that we accurately assess that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6).

The welfare system in the United States was intended to aid the elderly, infirm, and dependent children without family. It was never to be used to the point of abuse. The problem is that the abusers of the system have become the abused because of the system. God wants His people to fare well, but welfare has robbed people of their initiative, creativity, self-respect, and pride of authorship.

Someone told me of a young man who expressed interest in his daughter, stating that God showed her to him. After meeting her, the young man proceeded to arrive at Sunday school early to set up chairs in the class they both attended. He would set up four chairs on one side and three on the side where the lady sat. He said that this was to ensure that no one else would sit next to her. Though he bragged about God showing him this lady, his actions were the true indicator of his perception of how big God was. He could believe God sent her, but he did not trust God to keep her for him.

We should be ashamed when we do things that fail to promote the good hand of our God. Are you a beggar or a bragger?

Father, forgive my lack of confidence in You to establish all things that concern me, in Jesus' name.

For My Purpose You Took Shape

Jeremiah 1:5 (My paraphrase)—I claimed thee for my own before ever I fashioned thee in thy mother's womb.

ur arrival was not the first time God was aware of us. God told the prophet Jeremiah that He knew him before he took on a human body. To that He added, "I set you apart and appointed you the assignment of being my spokesperson to the world."

Most of us look at our new little bundle of joy and say, "How cute," and proceed to chart a course we think would be best for him or her. God already has set them apart as His own and for His purpose. How different it could be for our children and our grand-children if we acknowledged that God knew them before they took on the form of a baby.

Have you ever looked at a new arrival and acknowledged that he belongs to God for His purpose, and we were merely the vehicles He used to usher him into the world to speak what God gives to be spoken on His behalf? Our relationship with God did not start

with our first breath here in the earth. He knew us before we became the product of a seed and an egg.

What did God know about us back before time? He knew that apart from Him we would be nothing. He also knew Our relationship with God did not start with our first breath here in the earth. He knew us before we became the product of a seed and an egg.

that because of Him we were capable of the best and the greatest in every area. He did not just make us good at speaking on His behalf; He made us to be co-creators with Him. Our lack of understanding our role has limited us in what we say and do.

In Jeremiah 1:7, the Father said, "For you must go wherever I send you and say whatever I tell you. Don't be afraid of the people, for I will be with you and take care of you." The One who knew us before has spoken. We have to trust and believe Him.

But for Thy Great Mercies

Daniel 9:18 (KJV)—O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousness, but for thy great mercies.

aniel's confession of his sins and the sins of the people of Israel is an example for us today that very little has changed as far as sin, iniquity, wickedness, rebellion, and departure from His precepts and His judgments. People are still challenged in hearing the teaching of God's assigned messengers, leaders and officials, parents, and even God-anointed people.

However, Daniel knew that God kept covenant and mercy to them that love Him and keep His commandments. The people first of all prayed and made a confession of who God is. Then they confessed their sins. Too often we confess our wrongdoing without first acknowledging who God is. My faith to believe that God's love and mercy are available to forgive me is there when I place it out before me in the form of prayer.

Some people may be foolish enough to think that God owes them something. But for the most part, New Testament believers understand that our righteousness is as filthy rags. Apart from God's endless love and mercy, we would not fare any better than a swatted bug on a picnic table.

I am all for prayer and confession, but there is a time to hush and listen to the Lord's response. The angel Gabriel touched Daniel while praying and informed him that "he had personally come to give Daniel skill and understanding."

Sarah, my granddaughter, recently explained to everyone at the dinner table the difference between ability and skill. She said, "Ability is what you are capable of doing; skill is what you do with your God-given ability."

The angel assured Daniel that because of his sincere heart to make things right with God that "thou art greatly beloved." I do not recall an angelic visitation, but Clinton received several. However, there is no doubt at all that I truly am loved by the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. How about you?

Further Clothed

2 Corinthians 5:4 (NKJV)—For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life.

e want to change outfits. The garment we have had from birth, our earth suit, is not good enough anymore. We have a promise of something far greater after our time here in the earth. For some of us, the anticipation of departing is far more appealing than staying here. We're living in a tent here on the earth. Once we depart, we will have a building to live in made by God Himself.

Because the human side of us grows weary we seek the day when we are changed permanently. We don't want to just shed our old bodies; we want to slip into our new residence so the old tent will be swallowed up by the life that never dies. We're not looking to escape; we are desirous of the new things God has for us.

Since Clinton fell asleep in Jesus, I have struggled with anger

and envy. My flesh gets mad that I had to remain while he got to be totally free. My spirit has to control a spirit of jealousy because living in this tent never allows you to experience that kind of liberty. I am still not clear what it is like for departed saints

We're living in a tent here on the earth. Once we depart, we will have a building to live in made by God Himself.

while they await the appearance of Jesus; but I do know that their burdens are over, and that can't be all bad.

We don't want to be found naked. How exciting to anticipate being clothed in His glory which is what the "further clothing" is all about. When mortality is swallowed up in life, it means being "drowned" in the glory of God forever! His Spirit is going to gulp us completely like a thirsty person gulps water.

How a believer can be morbid about the passing of another believer is beyond me. For me, it's the beginning of new life which carries with it none of the limitations of this one.

Obedience: Parents' Legacy to Children

Genesis 26:4-5 (KJV)—And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.

n this scripture we see that Abraham's obedience to God's voice greatly impacted Abraham's children. Because a parent heard and did God's bidding, his heirs benefited, though they had done nothing to create their inheritance.

Parents, we have a responsibility to ensure our children's future blessing. We cannot do this by our physical labors or our intellect but simply by tuning in to God's frequency and consistently doing what He shares with us. Therefore, when God shares His plan with us, we must make it a requirement for our lives.

As parents, we are disciples. As disciples, we are not mere pupils or learners. We must adhere to and accept the instruction given to us and then make it our rule of conduct. As parents, then, we influence our children by our conduct; and because of our obedience, our offspring will be blessed.

Commit to a life of obedience and action that is pleasing to God. Then, you can expect to have your children hear from God, as Abraham's son Isaac did (Genesis 26:2). Accept that God will direct their steps (verse 3). Acknowledge that, just as God blessed Abraham for his obedience and as He has blessed you for your obedience, God blessed Isaac and his children and He will bless your children and their children for the purpose of being a blessing to others. Recognize God's capability to establish His promises in your children's lives, and look for the increase in them and the call to be channels for God.

All because a parent (Abraham) obeyed what he heard from God and kept God's charge, commands, statutes, and laws, all the nations of the earth are blessed. Bless your family: obey God's Word.

Dear Father God, make us to know that parenting is more than giving birth and serving. It is more than providing for the flesh and the mind. Obedience to Your voice and keeping Your charge, commandments, statutes, and laws guarantee future provisions and blessing that cannot be counted, calculated, or cut off.

PSALM 119

¹Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD.

²Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.

³They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways.

⁴Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently.

⁵O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!

⁶Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.

⁷I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.

⁸I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly.

"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.

¹⁰With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.

¹¹Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

¹²Blessed art thou, O LORD: teach me thy statutes.

¹³With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth.

¹⁴I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches.

¹⁵I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.

¹⁶I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.

¹⁷Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy word.

¹⁸Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.

Being Afraid Is Not Reverence

2 Kings 17:33 (KJV)—They feared the Lord, and served their own gods....

o serve the Lord is a choice each individual must make. Many religions dictate that the children automatically share their parents' religion. That is not the case with Christianity. We get to choose Christ regardless of the various religions our earthly ancestors have ascribed to.

If I were to trace my roots back far enough, I could possibly find a witch doctor on one side and totem pole worshippers on the other side. Your ancestors may have been idol makers, or they may have been found bowing down to cows or birds. Regardless, you can still choose Jesus as your Lord and Savior and experience all the benefits of His shed blood at Calvary.

In 2 Kings 17, the Israelites were a confused group of people. They were afraid of God, but they did not serve Him. Though the king of Assyria brought in men from five different nations to possess the cities of Samaria, the children of Israel did not turn to God. Though God provided a priest to teach them the manner of the God of the land and taught them how they should fear God, they still served their gods (verses 28-29).

If your religious instruction is human-taught and not Holy Spirit-inspired, you may be afraid of God, but not prepared to worship Him and Him alone. Allow God to teach you who He is through His written Word and through His spoken words to your heart. He is the only loving God, and He wants to be your God.

Holy Father, though I have made many mistakes in life and have done things I wish I had never done, there is one thing that I did that was right, and that was to receive Your Son and be filled with Your Holy Spirit. Everything else in my past is now a blur because of Your faithfulness to accept me as Your child.

I thank You for loving me so much that You did not spare Jesus or anything else that I would need to walk in victory in this life (Romans 8:32). May Your Holy Spirit continue to lead me and guide me into all truth as I share with others Your love and Your purpose for humankind.

Go High and Fast

he world's plans for your life will slow you down and bring you down. They change often; I never do. I am the same God that created you and laid out a perfect plan for you to follow. I have spent your lifetime weaving you in and out of life's maze in order to get you on the path that will lead you to Me. I am both the Author and Finisher of your faith. It is your faith that will take you along the way I want you to go.

You can depend on Me. I expect to depend on you to follow your heart when your head says otherwise. The world will dictate a change each year in food, fashion, cars, and even the way I am to be worshipped. What do they know? You must fly like an eagle far above what is around you because you are unlimited in where I plan to take you. You have the Holy Spirit and a Godordained view.

Because the time is short and so many years have been wasted, you must now run with the speed of the fastest deer on foot. Don't worry. I'll be with you in the midst of all of this.

Ask the Holy Spirit to help erase the limitations that you have allowed others to place on you.

Ask the Holy Spirit to help erase the limitations that you have allowed others to place on you. Did I not say that nothing would be impossible to those who believe in My name? Never be concerned with where you're going. Rest in knowing that I am not only going with you, but it is I who will lead you. I am aware that you would like to take everyone with you, but I will select those to march to the same drumbeat.

Foolishness seems to be the order of the day. You can no longer go there and be pleasing to Me. Most are unwilling to sacrifice what is readily available for what seems to them to be unattainable. I am searching the whole earth for leaders who are submitted to Me and willing to follow My Spirit.

God Decides the Fast Part 1

Isaiah 58:6 (NKJV)—"Is not this the fast I have chosen to loose the bands of the wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke?"

very once in a while, believers, or an assembly of people, will call a fast for various reasons. There is no question that missing a few meals for spiritual reasons often does a lot of good. However, failing to do it God's way will not obtain the desired results.

Our fasting must please God. I have found that whenever the Lord has asked me to give up something or to do without, it is not to extract from me. He's trying to get more to me, not just to increase me, but also to place me in a better position to be used by Him on behalf of others.

Though this fast was intended for Israel, the principles also work for the Church.

Believers, are to carefully examine ourselves and our motives to make sure that we are not using our power and our wealth to oppress the poor. We are to unstop and free those wrongly imprisoned, treat employees fairly, and give them what they have earned. Share your good with those who are hungry, and open the doors of your house to those who are poor wanderers. Provide clothing to the needy, and make yourself available to family in need of your help.

God is not talking about helping every stray Tom, Dick, and Harry in need who refuse to draw near to Him. Our wealth, increase, and abundance are simply God's resources deposited in His vessels to be withdrawn for the needs of His people.

When we operate the principle of seedtime and harvest, it always finds the harvest following the seedtime. We get the additional seed to sow from the harvest we reap so that we have more to sow. Of course, the farmer is expected to eat of his harvest first, but never forget that God will supply his need according to His riches.

God Decides the Fast Part 2

ll of the verses in Isaiah 58:6-14, will benefit the church if we grasp the principles and operate in them.

Look at the rewards for fasting. Isaiah 58:8 says, "Your light [or your salvation] shall break forth like the dawn." It matters not how dark your night was, day causes everything to be seen from a different perspective.

Needed healing will come quickly. How many of us delay our healing because we hoard what belongs to God. The New Living Translation says, "Your godliness will lead you forward and the glory of God will protect you from behind." There is no reverse in God's righteousness.

The very essence of the Lord will be our reward. Think about how He protected the children of Israel from the Egyptian army when He allowed His glory to come between them. Exodus 14:19,20 (NLT) read, "Then the angel of God, who had been leading the people of Israel, moved to a position behind them, and the pillar of cloud also moved around behind them. The cloud settled between the Israelite and the Egyptian camps. As night came, the pillar of cloud turned into a pillar of fire, lighting the Israelite camp. But the cloud became darkness to the Egyptians, and they couldn't find the Israelites."

Think about it. They were a chosen nation with a covenant through Abraham. We are a chosen generation with our covenant in Christ Jesus. When we do things God's way, He not only manifests Himself as provider, He becomes our protection. When we cease to oppress the hungry and begin to clothe the naked, the light comes on, and our darkness dissipates. Imagine the Lord guiding us continually, watering our lives when we feel dry, and keeping us healthy!

When we fast God's way, we will be able to discard man's medicine and watch God strengthen our bones. He will cause everything we are involved in to blossom like a well-watered garden whose moisture proceeds from a spring that fails not.



Recently, I took a week-long train ride. On the excursion, we encountered a group of stalled cars blocking the track we needed to utilize in order to complete our trip. The train master on our train, which was running just fine, assessed his role and his responsibility.

He concluded that his primary function at this point was to get the pas-

sengers on his train to their destination in a safe and timely manner. Although the stalled freight train had a crew attempting to resolve the problem, our train master used his crew to help fix the problem of the other car. He went above and beyond his job description, which was to oversee the operation of his own train, and assisted at the site of the problem.

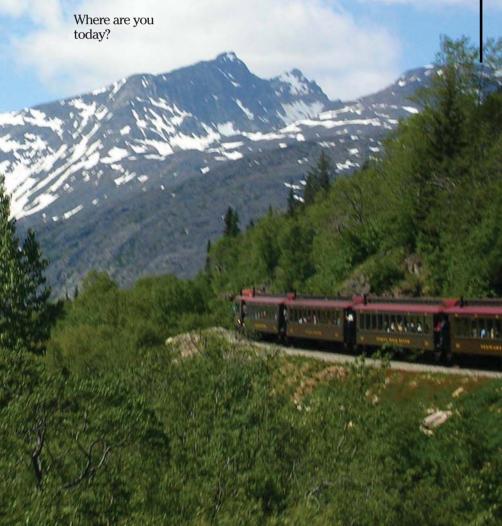
Sometimes it is necessary for us to go the extra mile to assist another before we can continue on our journey.

When you

TRAIN MASTER

only do what you get paid to do, you miss opportunities to be used of the Lord to complete the task before you. Had he taken the position, "That's not my problem! I'm not going to put my staff at risk," only God knows how long we would have sat there. Most likely, we would have missed our schedule. We needed that track, so it was necessary to get involved.

Is your progress being hindered because you won't step in to take a lead role? Thanks to this train master's choice, we ended up where we were supposed to be. We arrived later then anticipated, but we were on time for what was scheduled. Jesus is our train master needing our assistance to deal with problems so we can keep His schedule.



Being Transparent Is My Responsibility

Psalm 119:9 (KJV)—Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.

any believers, because of our culture, tradition, and past experiences, have spent much of our Christian lives trying to rid ourselves of excuses for failing to be innocent. Try as we may, we can't unscramble the eggs of our past, but innocence begins when we start taking heed to the Word.

From now on, let's make our choices based on what is already written in the Word. We are not authorized to rewrite the Bible to

From now on, let's make our choices based on what is already written in the Word.

suit our passions, our appetites, or our emotions. God already knows you and He already knows me, and His loving kindness and mercy provide clear, transparent instruction that shows us how to be innocent before Him. When we take

heed to His Word, our ways become transparent to others because all the cloudiness of wrong motives and wrong actions is removed.

The days of our youth are not a curse. We are to rejoice in them. We should walk transparently and innocently in the ways of our hearts and in the sight of our eyes because, having chosen to take heed according to God's Word, we are transparent and innocent in His eyes. "For all these things, God will bring thee into judgment" (Eccl. 11:9).

Let's not throw away culture, tradition, and past experiences, for they are a bedrock to build upon. Let's just bring them in line with God's Word as an inheritance for our children.

Father, I thank You that I am responsible for cleaning up my act. You have provided me with what I need to do the job, but it is my job to do it and keep it squeaky clean. Thank You for Your Word; I will take heed to it. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

God, Your God, Is God Indeed

Deuteronomy 7:9 (The Message)—Know this: God, your God, is God indeed, a God you can depend upon. He keeps His covenant of loyal love, with those who love him and observe his commands for a thousand generations.

Ince God was committed to keeping His agreement to love Israel for a thousand lifetimes through what He spoke in His promise to Abraham, how much more faithful can we expect Him to be to those who are His through Jesus? He has only these requirements of us—that first we love Him, and then we obey Him

Often I hear people who profess to be Christians attempt to justify their sin by labeling their wrongdoing as a weakness in their

flesh while still declaring their love for Jesus. I have had as much access to the fruit of the flesh as anyone, and participated in much of it. But I realized that I was making a mockery of His love and His grace toward me. Therefore, I needed to put up or shut up.

He has only these requirements of us—that first we love Him, and then we obey Him.

I wanted to abide in His love, not just vacation once in a while when I wanted something. I wanted Him also to find me dependable so that when He decided to use me, He didn't have to reject me because my actions did not line up with my confession. Since my God is God indeed, why was I acting as though something or someone else could occupy first place in my life? He wanted and was worthy of all of me. How could I expect Him to keep His covenant to me when I did not meet His qualifications? He asked very little in exchange for a thousand lifetimes of His faithfulness.

Love and obedience qualify us to expect of Him. These are more than nice words and occasional good behavior. They require effort and commitment. But, thank God, He gives us the grace to make them a reality. Sadly, often the desire is manifested only after we have sought everything else and He becomes our last resort.

Christ Opened the Sacred Curtain

Romans 3:30 (KJV)—Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.

omans 3:30 points out that whether it be by the faith of Abraham with circumcision or through the faith of Jesus Christ without circumcision, only the true and living God justifies us. This scripture also identifies the two ways that God provided for people to have access to Him after the fall of Adam. Today, however, because the veil in the temple was torn in two, the only way to the Father God is through Jesus Christ.

Before Jesus came to the earth, God instructed the Jews to follow Abraham in circumcision, which is the ceremonial cutting of the foreskin on a man's genitals. A woman could only be in covenant with God through her relationship to a circumcised man of the covenant, such as her father or her husband.

In our day, every man, woman, boy, and girl can establish a personal covenant with God through faith in Jesus Christ. Scripture says, "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom. 2:28-29).

Just as circumcision must be of the heart, so must worship be of the heart. Unfortunately, I have been told that some so-called Christian leaders are encouraging ignorant baby Christians to once again stand behind the veil. In other words, they are teaching that Old Testament ceremonial worship is the pattern for the church today. They are even hanging veils across church platforms with a replica of the ark and other symbols.

Yet the Bible clearly tells us that the veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom. Hebrews 10:20 in the *New Living Translation* reads: "This is the new, life-giving way that Christ has opened up for us through the sacred curtain, by means of his death for us."

Please do not be deceived by false teaching. Our doorway to God is wide open through Jesus, and we no longer need Old Testament symbols to get us there. Jesus is the only way.



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Cool Courage

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

ickness, disease, weakness, and frailties are all designed and assigned to us to test how cool our courage is in the attack. We spend a lot of time and expense dealing with the attacks. We even try to prevent them, but they still come. We need to view our response in another light. Instead of focusing on trying to avoid or eliminate the problems, we need to make sure our spirits are

Instead of focusing on trying to avoid or eliminate the problems, we need to make sure our spirits are strong enough to endure despite them.

strong enough to endure despite them.

Proverbs 18:14 says, "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity...." However, the kind of nourishment we provide to our infirmity is not intended to cause it to

flourish and remain. No, it is designed to nourish it with the greatest weapon we have, and that is cool courage. If we demonstrate courage that is cool, calm, and collected when the devil has unleashed his arsenal of infirmity, then the devil, the infirmity, and all demonic forces are thrown into a tailspin.

When the forces of hell started their war against our bodies and minds, they saw so many believers cowering in the face of fear. However, they now realize that they have lost the battle because we really believe our spirits are always ready, not for battle but to endure hardship to the end.

To ensure the devil's defeat in your life, whatever you do, avoid things and people (especially preachers) who extract from you what faith you have. If they do not add to your faith, please do not let them kill what you do have. A crushed or broken spirit is robbed of all hope. Calvary gave us hope. Hold fast to it by protecting your spirit and consciously selecting what you feed it.

Father, our hope is in You because You promised that those who trust in You will never be ashamed (Romans 9:33). We rest in Your Word, which gives us cool courage. Thank You for loving us so much, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Desire + Diligence = Satisfaction

Proverbs 13:4 (NIV)—The sluggard craves and gets nothing, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied.

y background and culture are of a colorful, basic, down-toearth people, and I am grateful because they contributed to my being the very practical person that I am. My mother, in imitating our ancestors, often made the statement, "Laziness gonna get you yet!" When I married Clinton, I discovered that his mother said the same thing.

Because she understood that laziness was not a benefit, nor would it ever be profitable to us, my mother required both my brother and me to help from the time we were toddler-aged. Consequently, we may have done a few things that needed some correction, but being lazy was not one of them.

Clinton, sitting in a dialysis chair next to another patient, began a discussion about the youth of today. This other man said, "If I were not concerned about going to jail for it, I would line my sons up and shoot them dead." Apparently, his sons had allowed laziness to wreak havoc in their lives and in the lives of others. He also said that his sons were the total opposite of their sisters.

I have often wondered how children of the same parents and upbringing could be so different. For example, one may be lazy and one may be productive. I now understand that laziness is a spirit, and we have a choice to either yield to it or resist it. I learned these two things early in life, even as a child: When I worked, I got paid; then I had money to play the way I wanted to, I did not have to settle for others' toys or games. Desires plus laziness equal zero. Desires plus diligence equal complete satisfaction.

Father, I renounce and reject the spirit of laziness from me and anyone closely associated with me. I refuse to be a sluggard. Laziness does not exist in my life or vocabulary. I am diligent in everything I do, especially in all my effort for You. I expect to have something to show for my life, including souls won to Your kingdom because I cannot be satisfied with unsaved people going to hell. Strengthen me and support me in the work of Your kingdom, in Jesus' name. Amen.

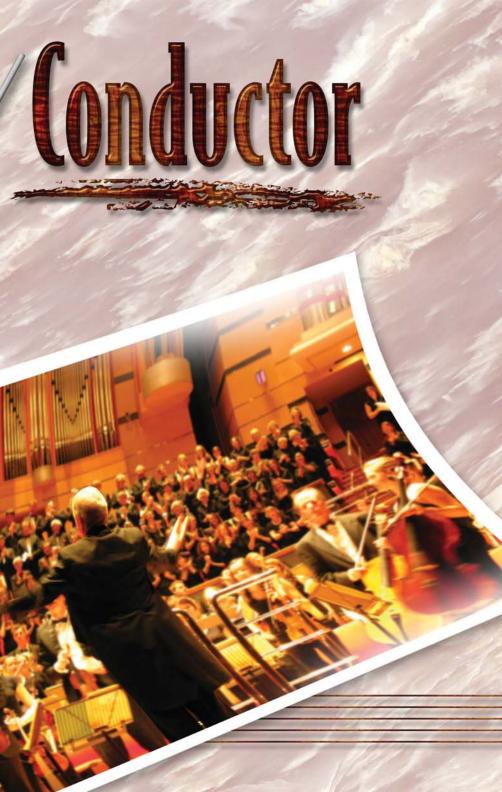


You are the conductor.

You do not need to know how to play every instrument. Your role is to interpret what is written and then draw out the music from the orchestra, by directing the various instruments how to harmonize together as they play their individual parts in relationship to one another and to the written score.

The conductor has a disciplined ear.

He has trained his ear to become so disciplined to hear and distinguish the right intonation, the perfect sound, that when any instrument is even slightly off key, or not playing the music as it is written, he knows precisely which instrument it is and how to direct it back into harmony with the score and the other instruments.



Diligence Brings Favor

Proverbs 11:27 (KJV)—He that diligently seeketh good procureth favour; but he that seeketh mischief, it shall come unto him.

hen we look at the people around us, occasionally we see people who seem to always have it all together. Heaven seems to be smiling on them continually, and we are absolutely convinced that they are God's all-time favorite children. But this is not so. It's just that these few have grasped a principle that will

The reward for seeking to do good from the moment we open our eyes until the moment we drift to sleep is to rest knowing that we have become God's delight, acceptable to Him, and His good pleasure.

work for all, but all have not understood the principle and how to work it.

The principle I am referring to is found in Proverbs 11:27, which says, "He that diligently seeketh good procureth favour..." The phrase "diligently seeketh good" here in Hebrew means "to be about doing good early in the morning." If

we want to make this our lifestyle, we must make a priority out of the task of doing good in our thoughts, words, and actions.

You and I have chosen to be diligent. I assure you that following through on this choice is not automatic. Numerous opportunities present themselves to justify our doing and being less. However, the reward for seeking to do good from the moment we open our eyes until the moment we drift to sleep is to rest knowing that we have become God's delight, acceptable to Him, and His good pleasure. That, folks, is favor.

Father, help me to resist the temptation to retaliate when the situation present is actually an opportunity to demonstrate Your love and Your light once more. Help me to remember at the dawn of each new day that I have a new slate on which to record the best of all You are and all You have for Your creation, in Jesus' name. Amen.

God's Approval But Not His Promises

Hebrews 11:40 (NLT)—For God had far better things in mind for us that would also benefit them, for they can't receive the prize at the end of the race until we finish the race.

t is quite clear to me that the Old Testament saints, apart from us, should not be made perfect. In fact, the NEB says, "That only in company with us should they reach their perfection."

Everyone listed in Hebrews 11 had God's approval because of their faith, yet none of them received all that God promised (Hebrews 11:39 NLT). Yet His approval never allowed them access to His promises; it was always on God's mind for us to obtain the

promises with them. The promises could only be had through Jesus Christ, though the promises were made to Abraham. Until Jesus declares that the race is over for all, no one gets the prize or the promise.

The approval has been given, and the promises have been made. Let's get the show on the road or in the sky.

Jesus has not yet appeared, although it won't be as long

as it has been. Why do I say that? Because some of the things that still must occur before He appears in the sky for us are just starting to take form. Oh, happy days! It was a happy day when He washed my sins away. But that won't hold a candle to what we'll experience when He appears to take us to be with Him forever.

Like the Lord, I desire all people to be saved and come into the knowledge of the truth. Once I was able to grasp that this earth is not my home and my citizenship is that of a heavenly country, the things of this world began to lose their appeal. Jesus did not die just so I could live better here. He left here to prepare a better place for me to live eternally with Him. The approval has been given, and the promises have been made. Let's get the show on the road or in the sky. I'm ready, how about you?

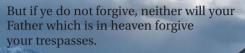


And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.

For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.

Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.

And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.



Mark 11:22-26

Follow Truth and Be Proven Right

Romans 3:4 (NLT)—Though everyone else in the world is a liar, God is true. As the Scriptures say, "He will be proved right in what he says, and he will win his case in court."

personally haven't experienced a court case where I was concerned about a verdict. Nevertheless, I have watched other people agonize over the outcome of pending court cases. I have spoken with people involved in lawsuits who have been gripped with fear because they almost could not live with an unfavorable rendering.

Since the Bible says every man is a liar and limited to the available facts, we know that people are bound to the court system to settle their affairs. However, God knows all truth, and He will always be proven right. God has never been guilty of anything but loving His enemies, doing right, and being kind to the unthankful and the evil (Luke 6:35). We can rest in the truth that as judge, juror, and defense attorney, God will always win His case in court.

Once I observed a man not likely to have a promising day in court. Clinton and I had flown to Miami to board a cruise ship and begin our vacation. But when it was time to deplane, the flight attendant announced, "We've had an incident on board. Passengers must remain seated until authorities remove the offenders." Everyone wondered what had happened.

As it turned out, a man had been caught smoking while airborne. He had jeopardized all the passengers and embarrassed the lady with him, who was also marched to the front of the plane and met by authorities. Certainly, being caught committing a federal offense was not the best way to begin a vacation.

If you are summoned to court, the way to win is to be innocent and truthful in all you say and to allow the righteous judge to hear and act on your case. Ask God for grace to refrain from exaggeration so you are never accused of lying. Remember: Being a follower of truth ensures that you will be made free and proven right often in the courts of man, and always in the courts of God.

God's Words Penetrate Prisons of Any Kind

Jeremiah 33:1 (KJV)—Moreover the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the second time, while he was yet shut up in the court of the prison.

his is one of the most awesome scriptures in the Bible. When you think that you have messed up to the point that you are unable to hear the voice of God clearly, rebuke and renounce that thought. If God has something He wants to say to you or through you, His voice will penetrate prison doors like a laser.

Jeremiah had been selected by God to be a prophet going forth to proclaim what "thus saith the Lord." How much more will He continue to speak to those of us with a covenant with Him through His Son, Jesus Christ?

I have had to retrain my thinking and refuse to hear the voices that keep saying, "You're too old, your season is over, you are a

dinosaur in your approach to spiritual things"; and begin to declare that He who has begun a good work in me will perform or perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ (Phil.1:6).

Pay no attention to where you

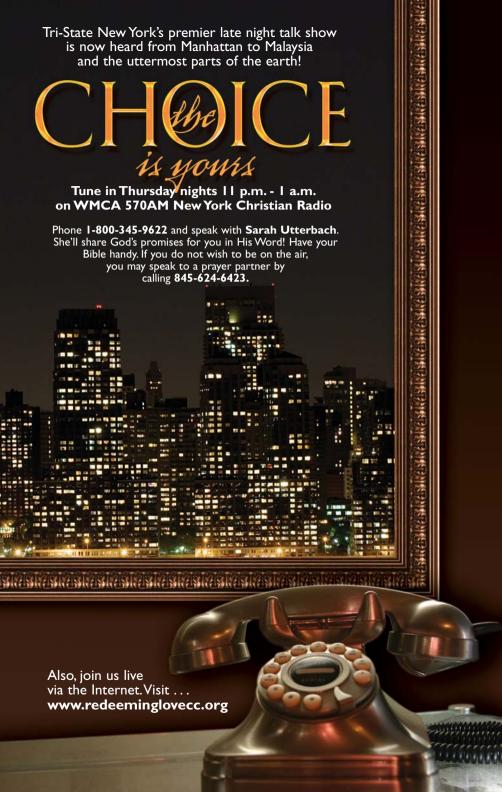
God wants us to relax, submit, and trust Him to finish what He started.

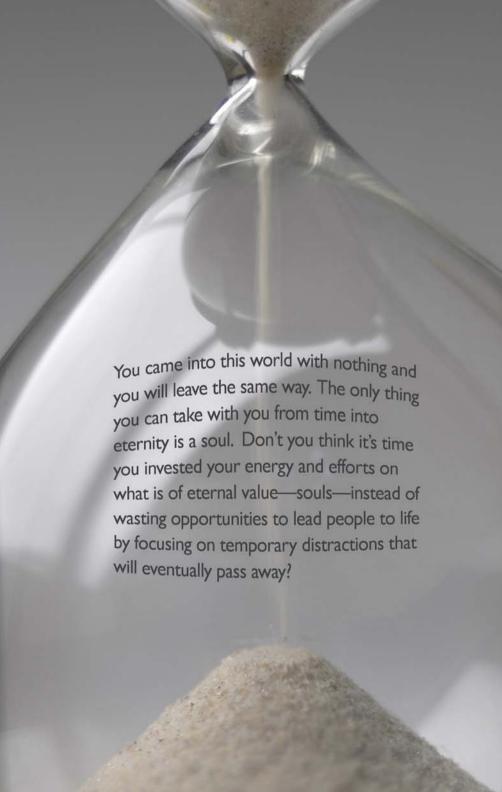
are at the moment. Be confident that He who never makes a mistake will complete to perfection what He started. Knowing that you did not ask to be selected for His tasks, He counted you worthy; and He does not change His mind when you mess up. He is more confident of what we can do than we are. We focus on our ability

Stop trying to figure out what you can do for God. He is not impressed. God wants us to relax, submit, and trust Him to finish what He started.

and gifts. God is focusing on His ability which is without limit.

What makes us think that we qualify to complete any of God's projects? Let the supernatural in you keep doing what He began regardless of where you are right now. Where you are is not your final destination.





Foolishness Stinks

Ecclesiastes 10:1 (NLT)—Dead flies will cause even a bottle of perfume to stink! Yes, an ounce of foolishness can outweigh a pound of wisdom and honor.

uch wisdom is found in Ecclesiastes, but there is also much that does not apply to the life of the New Testament believer. Only our spirits in partnership with the Holy Ghost can discern the useful and practical. This verse, for example, is very useful. Truly, as this verse says, we can own the most expensive perfume in the world, but if we allow dead flies in the bottle, our perfume will cease to offer its sweet-smelling aroma.

This is a perfect analogy for a person who has been given wisdom and honor yet walks alongside foolishness. One can be known for great wisdom and rightfully deserved honor, but it will all become history if the person allows even a small amount of foolishness to occur. I am not suggesting that you should always be in a serious mood, but I am suggesting that you should not oppose godly wisdom in word or deed in order to pursue the dictates of the flesh.

Large ministries have toppled because of a foolish moment. Governments have been overthrown because of "dead flies in the ointment." Is it fair? I will let God be the judge. But consider this: Regardless of all the future good a person does or how hard one works to make a difference in people's lives, when history is written about that person it will always include a little tag about his or her folly.

Everyone makes mistakes sometimes. The important thing is what will a person do in response to those mistakes. Therefore, where are the ministers who are willing to preach holy living, the compassion of Christ—and that divorce can be right? While divorce is never God's best for a couple, it is not the unpardonable sin. When is divorce correct? The short list includes the following scenarios: when a partner commits adultery, when a spouse is physically abusive, and when the head of the home refuses to come home or provide for his family.

Indeed, it is never right when one or the other allows dead flies in the apothecary. It is not foolish to kill the flies, but it is foolish to allow them to disrupt your life and God-ordained relationship. Return to wisdom, and God will again bring you honor.

Godly Sorrow Leads to Repentance

2 Corinthians 7:10 (KJV)—For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of.

o many times we believers quickly rebuke the devil when sorrow, pain, or grief enters our lives. We fail to perceive that, at times, sin in the camp requires some rather harsh words to get things back on track.

Paul did not mean to hurt the church at Corinth by his letter. He even regretted sending it when he realized the pain he had caused them. But, his love for them helped him to see that there was another kind of sorrow which was of the world, and it would lead to their death or, at least, the death of this new young church.

You do have a responsibility to help turn around a brother or sister. In fact, it is love that causes you to get involved. It's not just the individual with whom we are to be concerned. God requires the leadership to do what is right for the church. We can't allow any individual to be exempt from godly correction.

Paul said, "But now I am happy, not that your feelings were wounded, but that the wound led to a change of heart" (v.9 NEB). When my mother said, "I beat you because I love you," my feeling was don't love me so much. I am so grateful now that she executed what she believed was best for me even though, at times, it was painful.

Wherever you are, regardless of how ugly you've been, or how wrong you were, Jesus loves you; therefore, His Father loves you. Jesus did not come into the world to condemn it, but that through Him the world might be saved (John 3:17).

Jesus did not come for the righteous, but for the heathen. His precious Holy Spirit was given to aid us in being restored to the Father through the Son.

Today, harden not your heart, but repent, forsake all and follow Him. Godly sorrow leads to repentance. Repentance leads to salvation.







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God Alone Can Make You Forget

Genesis 41:51 (NLT)—Joseph named his older son Manasseh, for he said, "God has made me forget all my troubles and the family of my father."

piritual families choose to move in the same direction. Fleshly relatives often have individuals interested in doing only what is profitable to them. Spiritual families always seek the will of God for the benefit of humankind and the glory of God.

Jesus said in Matthew 10:21 that He came to divide relatives. At the same time, His Spirit unites God's family as one strong force in the kingdom. However, so many people in the body of Christ are trying to maintain unity and harmony with relatives who are serving the devil, choosing to be on the opposite side from God. It will not work. Light and darkness cannot share the same space at the same time. Believers and unbelievers will always clash because they are on the same track going opposite directions.

I absolutely believe in and practice praying for relatives to become family. I certainly believe in being respectful toward everyone. However, I will not pursue involvement with gasoline when I am water. We just will not mix.

So often, people say to me, "They are my family, and I want to have fellowship with them. But they won't do right." The truth is that they don't know how to do right because they have never received the Son of God, who is the only One to make things right.

Joseph loved his brothers, but love is a mutual experience and in order for it to thrive it must be reciprocated. At some point, Joseph realized that God was prospering him, and his relatives' actions no longer caused him pain. You, too, can forget those who have caused you to weep in your moments of sincere affection towards them.

When told that His relatives, including His mother, were outside, Jesus asked, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" Then He stretched out His hands to the disciples and said, "These are My mother and My brothers, those who do the will of My Father."

I have not severed my relationships with certain relatives; God put us together in that way. However, I have chosen to be a part of a new family without grief. God has also done that, and I am grateful for my new family while He helps me to forget the grief of the old.

He Went Looking for His Source

Acts 3:8 (NLT)—He jumped up, stood on his feet, and began to walk! Then, walking, leaping, and praising God, he went into the Temple with them.

ry to imagine the many times this man longed to enter the Temple, observing others enter while he was left outside to beg. As a child of Abraham, he had a covenant right to Abraham's blessing; but because he had been lame from birth, he was never able to take advantage of what was his. That day was his day! He looked to Jesus as the One who could do for him what others or money could not accomplish.

Peter just did not speak words to him, he got involved. He not only told him what to do; he took him by the hand and helped him up. Telling others that Jesus is their healer may not be

enough. It could be that with just a little assistance from us, faith could attract the necessary strength to catapult to the next stage. This may have been the first time in his life he stood upright on his feet (v.7). Then he did the next thing. He jumped up, and walked. From that point, the thing he desired the most was possible.

Show your gratitude by going where you are likely to find even more of your source.

What is it that your heart desires? Has God already promised it to you? See past the begging and hoping stage. Let God know that you believe Him because of His promise and your status.

Show your gratitude by going where you are likely to find even more of your source. Many have failed to receive all that God has for them because they bypassed going to the temple. This man did not just want to walk; he wanted to enter the temple, perhaps it represented the purpose for him walking.

Where are you today? What is the reason you wanted the promise of God to become a reality in your life? Is it only to benefit you personally, or is it so that you can enter into His presence?

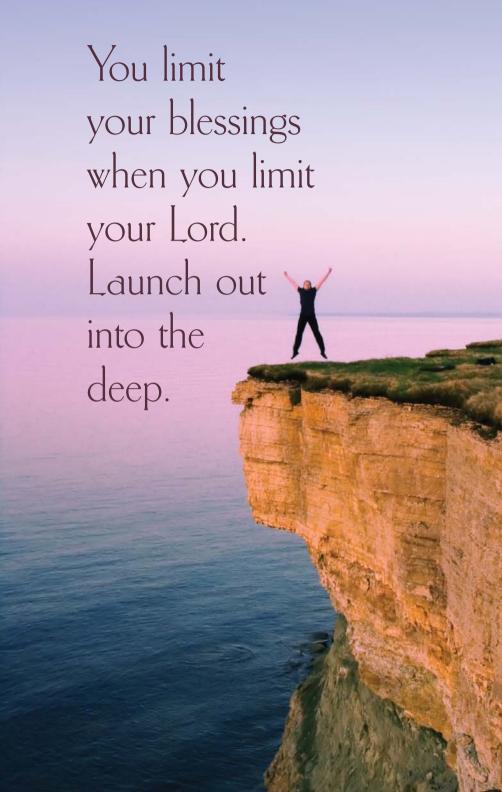
Turn Your Life Around

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

Father in Heaven,

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

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



God's Clock Is Different

Judges 20:18 (NIV)—The Israelites went up to Bethel and inquired of God. They said, "Who of us shall go first to fight against the Benjamites?"

aving learned to trust God, though my understanding is incomplete, I am fascinated by this story of the Israelites fighting against Benjamin. The reason for the fight was that the Benjamites would not surrender the two men who had killed the Levite's concubine because her husband was not turned over to them for them to have sex with her (Judges 19).

Because the Benjamites protected the wicked among them, eventually they lost 25,100 of their 26,000 fighting men. The mystery here is that the Israelites inquired of God three times before fighting with the Benjamites. Each time, God approved them for battle, and yet the Israelites lost 22,000 in the first battle, 18,000 in the second battle, and 30 in the third battle. That was one-tenth of their army.

How would we handle such losses? Would we return a second time? Would we trust that God approved our actions though He appeared to abandon us?

People, we are in a war, and wars produce casualties sometimes—even when God has called us to be involved. Defeat is in our minds first; it only becomes our position if we fail to follow God's Word concerning our inquiry.

I would rather lose 10 percent of what I have trusting God than 90 percent protecting wickedness. Unless we are willing to stick with God and His Word to us regardless, we are not equipped for what life will send our way. Loss is not loss until you view it as such

I may not understand everything that happens in life. I may not even agree with it at first, but I believe that God is on my side. I have elected to believe that He is working all things together for my good, and that I am more than a conqueror through Christ Jesus. I am now an overcomer in life.

Life may change my condition, but it does not affect what I believe. I have chosen not to focus on the number of casualties in the war. Instead, I will look beyond the battle to see the victories that are mine by faith in the One true and living God.

He Will Guide You

John 16:13 (NKJV)—When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth.

hat is a word from the Lord for us today. Did you notice it does not say, "He will guide you into some truth"?

I recently became aware that the Holy Spirit, whom I once heard so clearly, was still speaking to me, but His messages were not as clear. That became a major concern for me because I knew He had not changed so the fault had to be on my end.

When you have experienced the voice of the Lord and realize that you are living in the last days, you know this is not the time to get filtered messages. When others are looking to you to help point them in the right direction, this is no time for your navigational system to say, "It seems that you are too far from the GPS signal to be reached." My GPS system is not located in my car, it's in my heart. I call it "God's Personal System." If I am too far from it, then I must get back on the main road to hear what He has to say.

When you discover that your fellowship with the Lord is not as it should be (though you are doing all the right religious things) I suggest that you stop what you

... it takes more than your relationship to lead and feed His sheep. You need constant fellowship with Him in order for the Holy Spirit to lead you into all truth.

are doing, and locate where you unhooked. Thank God we do not lose our relationship with Him. But, it takes more than your relationship to lead and feed His sheep. You need constant fellowship with Him in order for the Holy Spirit to lead you into all truth. Shepherds out of fellowship with the Lord only receive some of the truth. In these last days, they need all truth in order to protect the sheep.

I don't know about you, but this is one role I cannot afford to fail in. Therefore, I plan to submit all my plans to Him for His approval so that He can direct my steps.

The Choice Is Yours

LIVE Call-in Radio Talk Program

or more than 13 years, Sarah Utterbach has hosted The Choice Is Yours, a live call-in radio talk show aired each week from Manhattan. Until recently, only the New York Tri-state area could tune in to this consistently popular program. Now, however, via the Internet, listeners around the world can hear and enjoy Sarah's Word-rich, wisdom-filled insights that point them toward a practical application of truth, and a more rewarding relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

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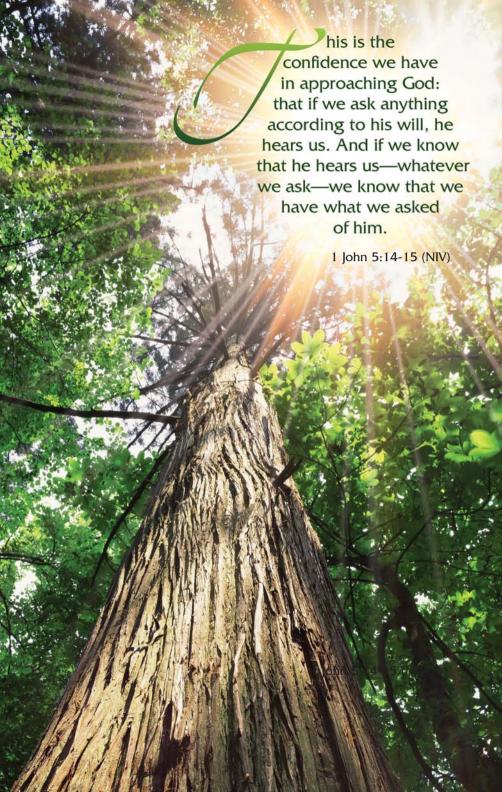


other exciting outreaches of this ministry, log on to our website or contact us at the address and number below. We look forward to hearing from you and to the opportunity to become a vital and uplifting part of your week!

Redeeming Love Christian Center

145 West Route 59 Nanuet, New York 10954-2200 Phone: (845) 623-9300





Have You Given the Enemy Access?

2 Kings 21:14 (NKJV)—So I will forsake the remnant of My inheritance and deliver them into the hand of their enemies; and they shall become victims of plunder to all their enemies.

ren't you glad that God does not become so angry with us that He delivers us into the hands of the adversary, as He did with Israel?

However, although He will not send us to the enemy, our rebellion, disobedience, and lack of reverence can position us where the enemy has more access to our minds, and thus to our lives. God has sent His Son, Jesus, to die for us. He has given His Holy Spirit to lead, guide, and teach us, and to warn us of impending dangers. He will support us and back us in our every effort of obedience to His Word. He has bound Himself to us by what is written, and He cannot violate His own Word.

Whenever I find myself under attack physically, financially, or in any way, I first look to see if I am in obedience to His Word and His Spirit. Then I check to see if I am walking in love, not by others' definitions of love but by God's standard given in His Word. If I fail either of these evaluations and find that I have allowed the enemy's entrance into my life, then I repent and make the necessary adjustments and corrections. However, if I cannot find any doors that I have left open to the enemy, then I continue forward in the midst of adversity with confidence that my Father has not given me over to any enemies. Therefore, I cannot be defeated, and I will not quit.

Dear Father in heaven, I thank You for instructing me in Your Word. Thank You for enlightening me to the truth that there are times I can rejoice for being counted worthy to walk through the fire and the flood, knowing I will neither drown nor be consumed by the forces of evil. Jesus' prayer was that I be kept from the evil in the world, and Your faithfulness to fulfill that prayer is a solid rock on which I can stand. Thank You that even when I can't sense Your presence, I can believe You have not abandoned me because of what is already written. I bless You in Jesus' name. Amen.

He Will Pronounce Me Innocent

Job 23:10 (KJV)—But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

he New Living Translation adds, "He will pronounce me innocent." I sensed as I was writing this, that by the time it is read, a number of people will have been falsely accused, and that God had me to see the one translation which read "He will pronounce me innocent" for your benefit. If you, by faith, take hold of these words they will work on your behalf. The test is not to prevent you from your destination, it is to locate you so that, if need be, corrections will be made to keep you on course. Gold must be tried by fire to reach its true value.

Remember, I order your steps. If I allow adversity to cross your path, never see it as a stumbling block. But see My love and confidence towards you to prove you for service to Me, the King. Unless you allow Me to help you remove all the dross from your life, your useful-

Gold must be tried by fire to reach its true value.

ness is limited, and I have no limits on what I want to use you for. Comments, accusations, and any type of negative words uttered against you are never to be your concern. Protect your ears from hearing and your eyes from reading anything that you have not cleared with Me. I am your judge and your jury. I declare you innocent or guilty, so never respond or react to what others say or do. They have opinions and knowledge without truth.

Continue to take the road you are on. When there is a need to change it, or if there is a need to change it, you'll hear from Me. Otherwise, stay on the course that I have set for you, for no one besides Me knows My plan for your life. You don't even have the full picture yet because I am testing your faith walk. Just know this, faith and obedience to follow Me will prove you're innocent every time.

Hear, Receive, and Bring Forth

Mark 4:20 (KJV)—And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred.

le have often thought of this scripture as the measuring rod for categorizing the people who represent the good ground. Perhaps if we approach it from another angle, we may see that we have accepted this excuse as an explanation for potential failure: "Oh well, everyone is not going to produce a hundredfold crop, so I will just do the best I can, where I am, with what I have to work with."

That is a weak and worn attempt to avoid reaching the highest potential God has for us, and the Father will not accept it.

Take the limits off today: Expect a hundredfold.

I suspect that Jesus is suggesting here that, first, believers must hear the Word of God taught; second, they must receive (accept, admit, and

delight in) what is taught; and finally, they will bring forth fruit. To the degree that you accept in your heart God's Word that is taught on any subject, admit that it is true, and delight in it, you will produce fruit.

If you are not producing a hundredfold in every area you have heard taught, then you might want to consider evaluating whether you have truly accepted it. Examine how often you admit that the Word you have heard is true regardless of others' opinions or experiences. Are you thrilled beyond measure at the thought or mention of it? If you allow any doubt to linger concerning the truth shared in the Word of God, you are limiting your crop. Take the limits off today: Expect a hundredfold.

Dear heavenly Father, create in me a hunger for Your Word that nothing else will satisfy. Illuminate for me areas in Your Word that I may still question, and never allow me to rest until I'm resting on Your Word. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Help Bring Him Back

James 5:19,20 (NKJV)—Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

hese verses have always agitated my spirit because I have since learned that in order to obey them I have to become more involved either letting someone know that he is on a wrong path and away from God's truth, or spending more time praying for someone to return to the Lord.

Wandering from truth is spiritual sickness. When we are attacked in the physical realm, we make demands of the devil to take his hands off our bodies or that of others. What do we quote when we see a believer straying from the truth? The Bible calls a wandering, erring believer a sinner. They have the experience of being born again, but they need to be converted. A Christian who is not doing things

God's way has not yet been converted.
Following his own ways makes him a sinner.
When we get involved in bringing him back to truth, we contribute to saving his soul from death.

We need to stop writing people off and begin to use our faith to snatch them from the influence of the enemy, Now!

This is another form of witnessing. Proverbs 14:25 (NKJV) says, "A true witness delivers souls, but a deceitful witness speaks lies." I am not talking about someone who leaves your church because of policy or doctrine. I am speaking of departure from the godly way of life. That is serious and we are obligated to do everything possible to restore someone into fellowship to the Lord—even at the risk of losing our relationship with that person.

To hide a multitude of his sins is to cover him in forgiveness, not to conceal wrongdoing. Ask the Lord how to witness to a straying believer to get him back to his Father.

We need to stop writing people off and begin to use our faith to snatch them from the influence of the enemy. Now!

Obedience: Parents' Legacy to Children

Genesis 26:4,5 (KJV)—And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.

n this scripture we see that Abraham's obedience to God's voice greatly impacted Abraham's children. Because a parent heard and did God's bidding, his heirs benefited, though they had done nothing to create their inheritance.

Parents, we have a responsibility to ensure our children's future blessing. We cannot do this by our physical labors or our intellect but simply by tuning in to God's frequency and consistently doing what He shares with us. Therefore, when God shares His plan with us, we must make it a requirement for our lives.

As parents, we are disciples. As disciples, we are not mere pupils or learners. We must adhere to and accept the instruction given to us and then make it our rule of conduct. As parents, then, we influence our children by our conduct; and because of our obedience, our offspring will be blessed.

Commit to a life of obedience and action that is pleasing to God. Then, you can expect to have your children hear from God, as Abraham's son Isaac did (Gen. 26:2). Accept that God will direct their steps (verse 3). Acknowledge that, just as God blessed Abraham for his obedience and as He has blessed you for your obedience, God blessed Isaac and his children and He will bless your children and their children for the purpose of being a blessing to others. Recognize God's capability to establish His promises in your children's lives, and look for the increase in them and the call to be channels for God.

All because a parent (Abraham) obeyed what he heard from God and kept God's charge, commands, statutes, and laws, all the nations of the earth are blessed. Bless your family: obey God's Word.

Dear Father God, make us to know that parenting is more than giving birth and serving. It is more than providing for the flesh and the mind. Obedience to Your voice and keeping Your charge, commandments, statutes, and laws guarantee future provisions and blessing that cannot be counted, calculated, or cut off.

High Time

Romans 13:11 (The Message)—But make sure that you don't get so absorbed and exhausted in taking care of all your day-by-day obligations that you lose track of the time and doze off, oblivious to God. The night is about over, dawn is about to break.

aul admonishes us to stay alert to a high standard of moral conduct. As responsible Christians, we are to display the lofty character Jesus has provided for us.

The enemy appears to be more aware of the high place toward which we are headed; he has pushed all his buttons to get us to use up our energy in busyness so that we are no longer sensitive to spiritual things. If we become distracted by daily pressures we think we must be involved in, we will become as one in need of a nap. The devil wants us to get so caught up in doing that we can't see what day and hour we are in.

We are to pay all our debts, not make new ones. The only debt we are to commit to and never expect to ever pay in full is our debt of love for others. Loving our neighbor as ourselves sums up what we were saved to do. Love, God's love, will satisfy every one of God's requirements.

High time is another reason for living in love. We are aware of the hands on our spiritual clock, and our spirit is saying we don't

The only debt we are to commit to and never expect to ever pay in full is our debt of love for others.

have as much time as we once did to line up with the Lord and His character in us.

Failing to walk in His love could cause us to doze if not fall asleep. We need to awake to where we are in time. We are closer to Jesus' appearance than when we first believed. The night is almost over, and we need to shed everything that is contrary to God's ultimate plan for us.

It's high time we turned the reins of our lives over completely to Jesus and renounce thoughts of self-indulgence. Murder what is not of God in you.

Illumined by His Word

John 1:5 (KJV)—And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

dam's disobedience plunged humanity into darkness. As a result, humanity became dead in the sense that they could no longer walk in the luminescence of God's glory.

God again had to manifest Himself to His creation. He did this by depositing life into the Word, then causing the Word to become flesh and dwell among us (John 1:14). This deposited life was instantly the light of men (verse 4)—not *for* men, but *of* men. This life was and is the bright ray pointing the way in everything. This light was to show and to shine in the midst of the obscurity and dimness that was present due to man's fall from God's grace.

When this light came into the world, John 1:5 says, "...the darkness comprehended it not." One word for "comprehend" here means "to overtake." So the light that was shining in darkness was never to be overtaken by that darkness.

In the natural, the energy force that generates light has to be shut off or disconnected in order for dimness, darkness, or obscurity to take over. Turning on a light switch dispels the room's darkness instantly, but darkness cannot dispel that light while it is on. There must be a break in the circuit for the darkness to take over.

With that in mind, we should make a conscious effort to stay illumined by and with a daily intake of the Word. Truly, the Word is the life and the light of men, and when we allow it to shine in and through our lives, we glow with the rays of God's light for others to be drawn and attracted to Jesus.

Father, You, the greater One, truly live in me, and I will never be overtaken by the things that surface in life to obscure what Your Word has illumined to me. Help me to remember the value of keeping the switch of Your Word turned on, for then and only then do I have the guarantee of a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. Thank You for it, in Jesus' name. Amen.

How Far Away Are You?

Isaiah 21:4 (NKJV)—My heart wavered, fearfulness frightened me; the night for which I longed, He turned into fear for me.

le know that God has not given us a spirit of fear but a spirit of love, power, and a sound mind.

How many have said, "Oh, to have the time to spend with the Lord." You must begin to practice having the time you need with the Lord when others are in your life and distractions are all around. If you don't, and you suddenly find yourself alone with more time than you know what to do with, it can frighten you. Your heart can waver; and you'll realize that you'll have to learn how to be alone with the Lord. It's a culture shock.

What is the problem? You discover that you have allowed distractions to fill in all your spaces. Suddenly faced with the fact that it's just you and

When is the last time you have been alone with the Lord?

the Lord, you discover how far away you are.

I'm not talking about Him not being in your heart if you're born again. He's there from the time you have accepted Jesus, His Son. I challenge you, though, to turn off the TV, cut off the music CDs and teaching tapes, and really get quiet before the Lord. When is the last time you have been alone with the Lord? What would happen if all the modern conveniences were suddenly removed?

In the last days things are going to wax worse and worse. Recent disasters in the world have left people without anything, and that's just the beginning of sorrows. What would be your course of action if your Bible were washed away along with your favorite Christian TV and radio station, not to mention the other things that occupy our time?

Though we are not going to experience the wrath of God, I am sensing that it is time for us to begin to seek God's help on training ourselves to be alone with Him. He is expecting us to endure to the end. How far away are you?

Ingredients for Peace

Philippians 4:9 (KJV)—Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

It must have been gratifying for Paul to know that, as a Christian leader living the godly life in the presence of all, he could command the saints at Philippi to follow the Lord as he had demonstrated before them. His actions illustrated to the Philippians that it was possible to live as God had called them to live.

My success or failure was to be determined by me, not by others.

In this verse, Paul gives certain requirements. He essentially says, "Do what you have learned, received, and heard in me." However, he also identifies the reward for meeting the requirements: "The God of peace shall be with you."

How wonderfully liberating it was for me when I discovered that all that I would enjoy from the Father depended on me and my response to His words! My success or failure was to be determined by me, not by others. My parents, pastor, instructors, companions, relatives, children, and friends were not to be the determining factors in whether or not I would enjoy peace with God.

To experience and enjoy a life filled with the peace of God, which passes all human understanding, is simply a matter of doing what I have learned, received, heard, and seen done in others who are following the dictates of the Bible. It is my choice to apply these truths, and when I do, no force in the universe can alter my destination or interrupt my rendezvous with God's peace. The same can be true for you.

Precious Father, I thank You that I can enjoy the peace that You give. Your peace is not as the world gives, but it only comes through the knowledge I have of You and Your overwhelming love for me. Please help me to always be reminded of Your faithfulness to humankind. Work with me as I model that characteristic in my faithfulness to You, in Jesus' name. Amen.

If Any of You Lacks Wisdom

James 1:5 (NKJV)—If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

any of us are privileged to be blessed with the wisdom and ability to make choices that seem right and sometimes lead to worldly success. Lacking wisdom means that you are void of God's mind and heart.

One of the most successful men I know tells people to follow their "gut" when contrary situations surface. But I am uncertain of his personal relationship with the Lord. As successful as he is in this world in material things, without the wisdom of God as to how to be saved and spend eternity with Jesus Christ, he is what I call a "deprived child." He

likes wisdom, but he is lacking wisdom. Being cleaver, shrewd, and wealthy without the Savior is so limited. They only make you comfortable in this life.

God's wisdom comes when a person recognizes that he does not have it and asks Him for it.

What about eternity? No one would be concerned just

with what he can achieve in this life if he could get a slight glimpse of hell. I have never seen the flames of hell, but I have been out of fellowship with the Lord. I was willing to give up all I had to be restored to fellowship with Him.

God's wisdom comes when a person recognizes that he does not have it and asks Him for it. He is never stingy with it. He gives as much as you need, but not so much that you never return to Him for more. I sense that the Lord provides His wisdom to His children, and then watches what they do with it on behalf of others and for His glory. I don't believe God gives us His wisdom so that we alone are blessed. I believe that He blesses us with the residue of what is gleaned from impacting others. It's sort of like the twelve baskets of leftovers after the multitude was fed. He is always more than enough.

Intelligent Hearing

Genesis 2:16 (KJV)—And the Lord God commanded the man, saying...

hen God created Adam and Eve, He did not just throw them into the Garden to play at their discretion or will. No, He commanded them, saying.... He appointed them and charged them to put in order what He had created. He has always clearly stated to His children what was acceptable and what was not. That is why we as humans are without excuse when we choose to do things according to our plan and not God's.

Adam and Eve's act of eating the forbidden fruit in the Garden was clearly disobedience because everything else that God had created obeyed what He said. When He said, "Let there be light," grass did not appear; rather, light obeyed and was. When He said, "Let the dry land appear," water did not gush forth; rather, dry land obeyed and appeared.

Everything God ever commanded or spoke to obeyed Him—everything except the human. The wind, the water, the grave, death, seeds, herbs, and so forth—all intelligently heard. In other words, they all obeyed. They had no opinion, no attitude, no resistance, no previously planned agenda. God said it, that settled it, and they did it.

When God commanded man, and man acted contrarily to the command, the created was saying to the Creator, "You do not know what is best for me. Therefore, I will assume the responsibility of knowing and doing what is best for me." That is a dangerous proposition.

We are pretty good at listening with our physical ears to what is being said from physical lips. However, the renewed heart is what causes a person to hear—and that does not mean with physical ears. To truly hear means to intelligently hear not with the intellect, but with the mind of Christ. When Christ heard, He became obedient unto death (Phil. 2:8). As recipients of the mind of Christ, this is how we are to hear. We are to be willing to obey our heavenly Father, no matter what the cost.

Father, help us to harmonize with Your plan for our lives. Anoint our hearts to intelligently hear every word You command, in Jesus' name. Amen.

In His Due Season

Psalm 6:3 (NLT)—I am sick at heart. How long, O Lord, until you restore me?

od has promised to bless the godly and surround them with His shield of love (Ps. 5:12). Therefore, whatever we are going through is only uncomfortable to our flesh. The greatest protection we have is His shield of love. We can depend on Him rescuing us and saving us (Ps.6:4).

It will do the enemy no good to pursue evil toward me. Why? Because the Lord hears my crying and pleadings. He answers my prayers because He loves me. It is His love that disgraces and

The Lord hears my crying and pleadings. He answers my prayers because He loves me.

terrifies all who set out to do me harm. He refuses to permit them access to me (Ps. 6:10).

Our actions often contribute to our hearts being sick because we forgot to confer with Him before we made that last choice. Before we ask, "How long, O Lord, before You restore me?" know that He has a due season for everything. I have learned that it is better to talk to Him ahead of time than to try to pinpoint Him as to the time of restoration. Trust me, the time that it takes for the restoration is often much longer than the pleasure that brought on the pain.

Recently, some friends went on vacation with me. We spent most of the week asking, "What's the point?" If we can focus on the fact that as His people we are the godly, and therefore He has promised to surround us with His shield of love, we'll survive. Learn quickly that God will not make us do what is right or exempt us from the devil's darts. But, He will always rescue us and equip us with what is needed to avoid temptation, transgression, and trouble.

Begin to seek Him first, and His kingdom. Not only will He direct our steps to avoid some of life's pits, He will lengthen our legs as well as our life to jump into that which is pleasing and profitable to Him, which always benefits us—in His due season.

Love—Not Fear— Is Your Problem

1 John 4:18 (KJV)—There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

le often state that fear and faith can't operate in the same place at the same time, and that is true. However, what if your faith thermometer is not at the level it should be—either because you don't know enough of the Word or you're still overcoming traditions, culture, and habits? If this is where you are, do not despair while you continue to work on your faith. God has provided a way for you to still overcome, and that is through love. This overcoming love in us is His love that has been "shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 5:5).

Love is the first fruit of the Spirit against which there is no law (Gal. 5:22-23). If you have no faith in your head but have love in your heart, that love alone will eradicate torment. Love does not create fear; it casts it out. It violently strikes down and thrusts out fear. Why would love deal so forcefully with something? It's because fear torments you and me, and Jesus at His crucifixion provided the means whereby you and I would never again have to put up with torment of any kind from the devil.

What is this perfect love that eliminates fear? It is the accomplishment of mental and moral character. When I elect to think and act like God through Jesus, then fear is just a word without any effect. Therefore, I am no longer moved by fear.

Though perfect love alone casts out fear, do not stop developing your faith. That is still your responsibility. But start today, this minute, to release the love that He has given you along with His Son. Stop trying to love people; instead, choose to love God by thinking as He thinks and acting as He acts. The ability to love people will flow from your new nature.

You would be surprised how much easier we Christians would be to live with if we would mimic our Father's love. If you are having relationship problems, others have the same problem with you that you have with them. Remember: Fear is not the problem; a lack of love is.

It's Because He Loves Us

Revelation 3:19 (KJV)—As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

have had to learn that it is not just about correcting, convicting, admonishing, convincing, telling, or exposing my faults and reproving me. It is also not about causing me to learn, train, teach, educate, and instruct that God does these things. It's about the Father God loving me. He is doing these things to show me how much He loves me

Would we rather they not happen? Our flesh cries, "Yes, a thousand times yes!" However, our spirit man, the real me, is grateful because it is an indication of God's love for me. God has a unique way of showing how much He cares for His creation. Would you have sent your only son to hang on a tree for the benefit of others? God did.

It is difficult to comprehend God's kind of love. It has taken me too many years even to glimpse what He allows to bring me to what He intended for me.

I recently shared with one of my protégés that our concern should not be about whether or not we break God's heart. But, we

It is difficult to comprehend God's kind of love.

should focus on how to be pleasing to Him by accepting what He does in us to perfect that which He knows will please Him and benefit us

Jesus never concerned Himself with how not to break God's heart. He came with the attitude of doing the Father's will and being pleasing in His sight. You have to know that you are loved in order to submit to doing what is pleasing to that person.

Rest in God's love and allow His rebukes and chastening to help you with the areas in need of work so you can be in His will, which always will be pleasing to Him. Learn to thank God for what you are going through. It tells the story of His love for you and that your value to Him could include some pain at times.

Mentally Distinguished Versus Wise

Job 38:36 (NIV)—"Who endowed the heart with wisdom or gave understanding to the mind?"

his was a question God asked Job. It is one we should ask ourselves daily, especially when we become inflated in our egos and puffed up with our academic achievements. I have no challenge at all with self-worth and improving our lot in life by acquiring education, as long as we evaluate where these things originate and keep them in their proper place.

No school or training center in the world can enable you to discern and view wisely situations that surface in life and need to be attended to. Real understanding comes from God. Furthermore, no one can skillfully teach apart from personally understanding what he is to impart to others.

I have listened to experts discussing their area of expertise and have known immediately that they were clueless about their subject. Contrarily, I have witnessed a seeming little nobody from nowhere open up his mouth and utter a few words that turned on the right switch for everyone. What is the difference? One has understanding on a mental level; the other has wisdom, which includes being wise in mind, word, and action.

Understanding is good; it has its place, but it may not be in harmony with your words and your deeds. Wisdom, however, proceeds from the inward part and will always flow with the mind, and your words and actions will agree.

There is never a cause for confusion when people operate in wisdom. They don't think one thing and say another. Wisdom is God-inspired because He makes all your thoughts, your words, and your acts complement each other. He then receives the glory.

God also asked Job, "Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge?" (verse 2). This is an excellent question because unless and until we share words we know about, not just know of, the counsel of God is unclear to us.

Father, help us to perceive the risk involved in being used to dim or darken the understanding of those whom we are sent to enlighten. We will no longer neglect to impart Your plan and purpose because of words that are not in harmony with our minds and our actions. Give us understanding, but most of all give us wisdom.

Mind What You Keep In Mind

2 Timothy 2:8 (NLT)—Never forget that Jesus Christ was a man born into King David's family and that he was raised from the dead. This is the Good News I preach.

he elderly Paul, though bound in chains and in prison, was admonishing Timothy, a young man about to be launched into a new position. Paul understood the importance of Timothy keeping his focus on the fact that a man named Jesus, who was once dead, was now risen by a force and power that could only come from God the Father. Jesus could not cause His birth and He could not initiate His resurrection from the dead. But nothing is impossible with God. Therefore, whatever we face in life, especially for the kingdom, is easier to accept when we can see the risen Christ before us. After all, we are not being asked to per-

form anything in which God is unwilling to get involved with us.

When it appears that the task before you cannot be done, reflect on the truth that Jesus was once dead

Limitations can never be allowed when we're doing what the Lord asks of us.

and, not only was He raised from the dead, He lives never to die again. Limitations can never be allowed when we're doing what the Lord asks of us. Why? Because He is with us to finish what He started. His requirements for us are to prove how big and bold He is in His children.

Stop trying to understand God and what He asks of us. You will never experience His peace when you try to understand Him. Say this with me, "Lord, Your peace passes all understanding. I don't need to understand everything; I just need Your peace which exceeds my understanding. I thank You for this, in Jesus' majestic name. Amen."

I commit to keep on my mind what God wants me to keep in my mind which is never to forget that Jesus is forever risen from the dead. Since the God I serve did that for me, He will do whatever is needed to further assist me.

Molded Mud

Psalm 103:14 (KJV)—For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.

ho we are and what we are is not a surprise to God. He observes and recognizes the mold by which we are made, or formed. He has marked us so as to recognize that we are dried mud (Ps. 103:14). This is why, "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him" (Ps. 103:13). This verse does not imply that God feels sorry for us. Rather, the word "pitieth" means to love, to have compassion on, and to extend mercy to all who morally reverence Him.

God injects Himself in each of us who honor Him. He is

God injects Himself in each of us who honor Him.

expressed through us not only by our words but also by our witness of His goodness in our lives. He knows that the dried mud out of which we are made is hopeless and helpless without His love, His compassion, and His mercy in us.

The reason He places Himself in us is, first, so that we experience victory for ourselves; and, second, so that we dispense what we have received from Him to others.

Since His love has taken us "mud molds" and made us capable of doing all things through Christ which strengthens us (Phil. 4:13), then the dispensing of that same love, compassion, and mercy will tear down strongholds, destroy yokes, and liberate those bound in any way.

Precious Father, again I have discovered You as You have revealed Yourself to me in Your Word. I am both humbled and inspired to know that as a mud mold with Your power in me I can expect to walk in victory in all areas of my life.

There is no one like You, and I refuse to settle for less in my life. Know that I love You and my affection is ever towards You. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Recognize When God Speaks

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

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

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

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

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.

Chaff or Wheat?

Psalm 1:4 (NKJV)—The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away.

n the natural, chaff was once the covering for wheat. It has no ability to make itself valuable or to give itself substance to keep from being blown around even by the slightest gust of wind. It is worthless and empty, without stability, and yet it was once connected to wheat.

But we humans, made in the image and likeness of God, are likened to wheat. Verse 3 likens us to a well-watered tree planted close to the resource that sustains it to bring forth fruit in its season.

How can this be? This describes anyone who has acknowledged Jesus Christ as God come in the flesh, who refuses to heed the advice of nonbelievers, and rejects to follow in the steps of heathen or seat themselves in the place of scorners. They are joyful concerning both the precepts of God and also the dictates of His children's code of ethics while here in the earth.

When we allow ourselves to meditate and repeat over and over what God has said, we will find that this meditation is more than an exercise of our mind, it is living in our hearts, minds, and bodies with God's plan for our lives. When we do meditate on the truth, we will be productive and personally prosperous (you can be one without the other). This is so unlike the chafflike people who waste their words on empty, idle, and vain things.

Don't you think that since judgment begins at the house of God (1 Pet. 4:17) we should begin to examine ourselves as to whether we are fruit producers? Or are we fainting in the day of adversity because we neglected to anchor ourselves in what God has already spoken concerning us?

We have been given great opportunities to choose that we will no longer be tossed to and fro with every new wrinkle. Instead, with the help of the Holy Ghost we study to show ourselves approved unto God, workmen that will not be ashamed. We will listen to anointed men and women of God teach us, and we will judge what is said by the Spirit in us and what is already written in the Bible.

Money Is Not Your Need or Solution

Acts 3:3 (NIV)—When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money.

oney was not what this man needed. He had been crippled since birth and begging almost as long. Even if Peter and John had money to give him, they perceived that his need was greater; so, therefore, his solution had to be greater.

Today, we often limit what we receive from God because we fail to recognize our true need. Culture often says we need more or better housing as well as government funds to assist us with food for our flesh and clothing for our backs. But in fact, we need Jesus to change those parts of us that can't be seen with the natural eye.

The good news and an open heart to receive truth free one to depend upon God, not man, as his source. Like Peter, we may be used of God to assist with someone becoming stable. However, without the one who appears to be the victim applying some faith

to act on what is happening in and for him, he remains in a beggarly state.

No intelligent person would "pooh-pooh" the use of money to assist in one's well being. But, never, ever conclude that money

Never, ever conclude that money is the answer to what you need.

is the answer to what you need. Jesus is always our solution. He's capable of using what He knows is best for us. Peter knew his limitation to help the lame man; but, by the Spirit of God, he directed the man to look past his limitation to the One who was the solution to his situation.

Stay very close to the Lord Jesus Christ and it will be easy to step aside so that those in need stop looking at you and pass from you to Jesus for help and hope. After all, the Scriptures say, to those who look for Him will He appear, and those who trust in Him will never be ashamed.

Remember, money is never your need or your solution.

My Name Is on My Inheritance

1 Peter 1:4 (NLT)—For God has reserved a priceless inheritance for his children. It is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay.

s the staff and church members began to plan to celebrate my sixty-fifth birthday on March 19, 2002, a number of family members, relatives, and close friends received invitations because we didn't have a facility to accommodate all who would have liked to come. As the responses came in, it was my understanding that each person was being assigned to a seat at a reserved table. That meant that no one else could sit in that seat.

Since we have a manmade system for our special occasions that allows us to respond and receive a reservation, how much more can you and I expect to receive this priceless inheritance that God alone can reserve for us, His children? Our inheritance cannot clash with each other's. Your name has been assigned to what awaits you, and no other person—even one with the same name—can't claim it. He identifies you by your spirit, and no other person has the exact same spirit that you have.

God has reserved something so valuable for each of us that the only way to receive it is by the Spirit. Our names identify us here in the earth, and our names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life in heaven; however, in heaven, our spirits will be the distinguishing factor. If there is another Sarah Utterbach in heaven, for example, it will be okay. She will get her inheritance, but she can't touch mine; nor will I affect hers.

What are you doing here and now to ensure your reservation in heaven? Jesus is real. Heaven is real, and so is hell. The new doctrine of inclusion may be a doctrine, but it is not the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Anyone who does not believe on Him is condemned already. Those who believe on Him are not condemned. Our inheritance will be reserved because we believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God. Don't even consider trying to get to heaven any other way. Follow your spirit, for it will claim your inheritance in the future.

Follow people as they follow Christ. When they stop following Christ, you keep going. You will not regret it.

New Gifts for a New Ministry

am not removing anything from you. Are not my gifts and calling without repentance?

Think over what the world considers modern conveniences. Are they really better? Do you really have more time for the things I call you to do? The world's 'new' is just strange and different. My 'new' is strange, different, and profitable for both you and others whose paths will cross yours.

You want more time for yourself, but you will have more time for Me if you so choose. I will not intrude on your time. I just will not let you be at peace if you neglect Me. I am not out to extract from you what you have. I want to impart new life and a dynamic and dimension yet not evident in you. I can never allow you to become comfortable in your complacency. You would lose your luster to attract others to My Son.

Your age does not factor into anything I have for you to do. The more birthdays you celebrate, the more satan uses each celebration to cause you to doubt what I want to do in and through you. Men and women of old acknowledged another year of their lives as the yardstick by which they could proclaim My goodness and My faithfulness on their behalf. Surely, you remember Abraham and Sarah, Moses and Caleb. Joshua took the lead for a hard-hearted, rebellious people. Zechariah and Elizabeth

became the parents of John the Baptist when they were old and Viagra was not part of the equation.

Put your faith in gear and get ready to do mighty exploits.

Clear your thinking and

renew your mind with that of Christ. Your new gifts for your new ministry will only operate when they are received and dispensed from a new mind. Forget those things which are behind. Put your faith in gear and get ready to do mighty exploits. Go back to when you had only your faith to go on. Your faith worked for you then. It will work for you again with your new gifts for your new ministry. Trust Me. I've never failed you.

No, Never Alone

Isaiah 49:21 (NIV)—"Then you will say in your heart, 'Who bore me these? I was bereaved and barren; I was exiled and rejected. Who brought these up? I was left all alone, but these—where have they come from?'"

hough Israel had been brought to ruin and was made desolate, they found their once wasted land was now too small to accommodate their growth and increase. What happened? The sovereign Lord said, "See, I will beckon to the Gentiles, I will lift up my banner to the peoples" (verse 22). According to this verse and its surrounding verses, God called foreigners and the people of the earth to come to serve the people of Israel.

When people share with me about their lacks in life, I usually inquire about their traditional and cultural attitudes toward change and inclusion. When we refuse to allow ourselves to include what used to be foreign to us, we may have lack. However, when we respond to the leading of the Holy Spirit and reach out to the unfamiliar and formerly uncomfortable, we suddenly find ourselves no longer lacking. In fact, we find that we need to grow and develop because what we had that was comfortable is no longer sufficient.

We must make room for our increase in relational and material blessings. God has beckoned, and people will come into our lives, our homes, and our churches who would not have come or whom we would not have accepted before.

Loneliness and lack are a byproduct of selfishness. Open up your life, your home, and your church to the ones God has called to you, and you will not be lacking or lonely anymore.

Father, I thank You for keeping me aware of how easy it is to draw inward, when in fact, You want us to open all the doors, move back the walls, and welcome the change, because it is of You. Shake us and rock us until we are loosed from those things and people that held us back from Your plans and purposes. Open us up to nations, peoples of every tongue and tribe, who need to know more of You. Don't cease to expose "sacred cows" that we need to remove from our lives, until we are flowing in Your Spirit for all humankind. Thank You for this time of preparation for the harvest. For then, we will never be alone again.

Only Trust in Christ Is Dependable

1 Timothy 4:10 (KJV)—For therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe.

ost of us long for the day when the contending for our faith will cease. At times, the daily challenges appear to be more than our coping skills. Don't despair. That's a good place to be. When you find that you have reached the end of your rope, let go and land in His arms because He is trustworthy.

Jesus is the only one with our solution. He is the problem solver for all who trust in Him. Have you ever tried to depend on something that was unreliable? Failure is the usual result. It affects your faith and enhances the fear which already is trying to dominate your life.

Most of us have allowed our focus to become distorted because of what we watch or read.

We forget that our attitude is a result of what we observe, and that affects our hope. I have said many times, "A trapeze artist knows that before he completes his transfer from one safety bar to a new safety

When you find that you have reached the end of your rope, let go and land in His arms because He is trustworthy.

bar, he must do two things. One, let go of the first bar with both hands. Two, suspend in space for a time until the new bar is in place for him to grasp. Timing is everything."

We can trust the Lord only when we have let go of everything on which we have relied. There have been times when the Lord said, "Abandon all to follow Me." Other times, He has not asked me to abandon my abundance as long as I didn't depend on it. I am willing to give all I have for His use, at His direction. However, wisdom has taught me not to give out of emotion or guilt, so I'll have no regrets when I obey Him.

Once you learn that Christ is the only trust to depend on, everything and everyone else take their proper place.

No Man Could Do It; No Devil Could Stop It

Psalm 66:12 (NLT)—You sent troops to ride across our broken bodies. We went through fire and flood. But you brought us to a place of great abundance.

f you have not yet arrived at a place of abundance in Jesus Christ, a few things could be responsible. First, your season for the fire and the flood may not yet be completed. Second, your focus may be too much on your body. Third, you may not have chosen to rejoice in the middle of the "mess" because you have allowed the devil's deceit to blind you and cloud your vision of victory.

I have often shared with you, dear reader, that I am no more thrilled with adversity and affliction than anyone else is. However, it is not about what tries to thrill or scare me. God is looking for my obedience, not my emotions.

I have a sister in the Lord who refuses to go on any type of sea vessel. She will go to the jungles of the most remote places, but is reluctant to board a luxury liner to the most civilized places in the world. To ensure that she does not disobey if the Lord asks her to board a sea vessel, I will lovingly assume the position of clubbing her in the head, dragging her aboard, then praying for her recovery so that her anointing will still be intact! Of course, this sounds humorous, but when we find valuable human vessels whom God is using, we need to do what is necessary to keep them in God's will.

Clinton and I went through challenging times. They were never impossible, though, because we looked not at the challenge but at the prize.

So what if troops ride across your body, and fire and floods try to boil you for lunch? Read my lips: God has done a good thing in your life, and no demon or devil can stop it now. God's goodness is released to you in abundance in a great way. You have just been too busy being distracted to realize it. Don't you know if the devil could have stopped you, he would have? Poke your Holy Ghost tongue at him, and enjoy your new position and place!

Reconciling the Covenant and the Circumstances

Romans 4:23,24 (NLT)—Now this wonderful truth—that God declared him to be righteous—wasn't just for Abraham's benefit. It was for us, too, assuring us that God will also declare us to be righteous if we believe in God, who brought Jesus our Lord back from the dead.

braham accepted his covenant with God, ignoring the condition of his body. Being made the "Father of many nations" was God's idea, so why did Abraham need to be concerned? He did not petition God for a child, let alone nations. What he did was where most of us miss it. He believed in an invisible God of whom he had no knowledge and left it to Him.

The part that excites me is that what He did with Abraham was the example God would use to make the same offer to us. God started with Abraham to assure us that we, too, could have access to Him

Believing is blindly trusting what you accept as truth with no evidence of its accuracy.

and His promises by simply believing.

What is believing? Believing is blindly trusting what you accept as truth with no evidence of its accuracy. People believe inaccurate information all the time. You can't say they do not believe just because what they believe is wrong. How much more should we benefit from what we believe, having the truth of God's words available to us?

For twenty-seven years, I believed that I would never "sit as a widow." Then, on April 16, 2005, Clinton fell asleep in Jesus. I believed; but it wasn't until the Lord asked me, "What did I say to you?" and shared with me that He never told me that I would never be a widow, He said I would never sit as one. There is a vast difference in being a widow and sitting as one.

The point is I trusted what I chose to accept as truth, with no evidence of its accuracy. What I chose to believe was my choice. Thank God I have since paid closer attention to exactly what His words are to me. Those are all He backs up.

No Brotherhood Without Sonship

1 Peter 2:17 (KJV)—Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.

his verse contains the only mention of the word "brother-hood" in the New Testament. It tells us to love the brother-hood. Love for the brotherhood is not possible without first having obtained sonship.

Peter shares that we are to honor, or respect, all men. However, love for the brotherhood—God's other children—is only possible for those who have entered into sonship through His beloved Son, to those who allow God to deal with them as sons.

Just because you have given birth to a baby does not mean that child will allow you to parent him later. God's sons and daughters voluntarily receive and accept God's love, discipline, correction, rebuke, and endless mercy.

One of the ways God deals with us, His children, is to require us to love one another. This is more serious and demanding than the respect we must show to all people because they are creations of Almighty God. When we show respect to all people, we show reverence to God. I did not say that all people deserve to be respected, but the mere fact that they were created by God gives them the right to be respected.

I suspect that respect for others begins with respect for oneself. If I do not respect myself, it will be challenging to respect you. God wants each of us to do both.

Learn to distinguish between respect for all people and love for the brotherhood. Without God's grace, we are unable to love the brotherhood. When there is true brotherhood, there is pure sonship. Biblical brotherhood is a coming together around Christ for His purpose and plan.

Because of our sonship, let us learn to restore relationships to each other and to Him. The greatest honor we can bring to our King is to love one another as He has loved us. This is possible only because His Spirit in us allows for our differences, but never our division, for "by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35).

Sons of Light, Daughters of Day

1 Thessalonians 5:1,2 (The Message)—I don't think, friends, that I need to deal with the question of when all this is going to happen. You know as well as I that the day of the Master's coming can't be posted on our calendars. He won't call ahead and make an appointment anymore than a burglar would.

Tone of us knows the exact time of Jesus' return. However, God's sons and daughters certainly should know the season because it should be spiritually discerned so that those of us who are serious about a life with Him will not be caught unaware.

Many Christians seem confused about studying to show themselves approved versus living to show themselves approved. What is the good of knowing the history and future events of the Bible

while there is little or no effort to live the Bible on a daily basis? What benefit is it for us to be able to answer others' questions concerning past and future happenings while neglecting to imitate the life of

Let's listen intently for the sound of His voice telling each of us what He wants of us.

Jesus and conform to His image?

I believe the Spirit is showing me at this stage of my life that it is more important to study to show myself improved rather than approved. When we allow the Spirit of Christ in us to influence and direct us, our concern or interest as to His appearing will occupy very little of our thought life.

When are we going to learn and apply the principle of staying ready to go, and not getting ready? E-tickets and express check-in won't work when the Father looks over to the Son and says, "Go." Let's not sleepwalk like others, but believe the Lord to keep our eyes open and our spirits sensitive to spiritual things.

Let's listen intently for the sound of His voice telling each of us what He wants of us. I don't have to tell my legs or my arms what to do because they are a part of my body. They know what must be done and when.

Companion in Labor

1 Corinthians 3:9 (KJV)—For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.

egardless how well a farmer produces a crop, he knows that at best he understands the essentials and principles required under favorable conditions to reap a profitable harvest.

Furthermore, a good farmer never works just for a harvest for himself. He produces enough for others also—some as a gift and some for profit. One thing he knows is that he must produce enough to

Never refuse to pray for another.

sow again. A good farmer knows he is not the seed, the ground, the water, or the sun, which together grow an abundant crop. Nevertheless, no one talks about these;

they praise the farmer.

Recently a woman thanked me for a breakthrough she had received because of something she thought I had done for her. It would have been so easy to take the credit, but my heart smote me the moment she spoke and I said, "I did not do this thing. I simply obeyed the prompting of the Spirit." I could not take credit for this; God had done it. He had allowed me to work together with Him. His desire had become my desire; my desire was already His desire. In His timing He included me in it with Him, and the job was done.

Acts 15:4 says that when the disciples passed through on their way to Jerusalem, they "declared all things that God had done with them." Job 42:8 says that God told Job's friends, "Go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept."

Many people talk about God. Then there are the servants of the Lord whom He claims as His own. God decides who is to labor with Him and when. When Job prayed for his friends, obeying the Lord's voice, God turned Job's captivity (verse 10). Holy Ghost-inspired intercession is not just for others. Often God will use it to break strongholds off the intercessor.

Never refuse to pray for another if they are not in disobedience. It could be the seed God will use for your breakthrough. The key is to give God all the praise by declaring that He has done this thing.

Thank You

ather, I want to say 'Thank You' for never allowing me to be satisfied with the mundane things of this world. Because of that, I have been forced to face the reality of being different which does not permit a child of God to ever just settle. As I was writing this, I looked out of my den window, across from one of the major corporations of the world, and saw a man just plop in his executive chair. My spirit sensed his unhappiness. I am ever so grateful that You removed me from that rat race I once thought was my answer to everything.

"Dear God, help me to show others what You have shown and are showing to me. Time is so short, and men's hearts are failing them for fear. Fear torments. There is no torment for those who are obedient

There is no torment for those who are obedient and follow You. Your Word is always true and that will never change.

and follow You. Your Word is always true and that will never change.

"However, I am sensing that for some there is another dimension that we must receive in order to follow You more closely. It's being led by the Spirit which is always supported by Your Word. There are things that You are speaking to Your children that have not been done before. Not because You did not decree or declare them, but because we were too stiff-necked to let go of what we had to be able to receive what You have for us. We are just getting around to trusting You enough to do it Your way. What years we have wasted! But, we believe in these last days You will strengthen us to take back not only what has been stolen, but by using Your strength, to forge on into the unfamiliar and that which is not comfortable to our flesh.

"With Your help, we will do it. Help us to develop a life of prayer and fasting which will aid us in hearing more clearly every word that You are speaking to us. Lives are depending on it. Now, today."

Fruitful Despite Affliction

Genesis 41:52 (KJV)—And the name of the second called he Ephraim: for God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.

ost of us who live in America expect to improve and increase in our homeland. After all, many people view America as the promised land, the security and hope of the world. Their view of America, however, is a misperception.

Don't get me wrong. The United States of America is the land of opportunity, but it takes a great deal of diligence and labor to locate the opportunities. Some Americans never seem to find opportunity boulevard, street, avenue, city, town, or village. They get so close, but their navigation device appears to be faulty.

Why do so few people reach their potential? Genesis 41:52 contains the answer: "God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction." Why are some fruitful even in adversity? It says, "For God caused...." What a powerful statement! This says to me that no matter where I go, I can trust God to make me fruitful and to cause me to increase whenever I receive Him as my source. You can make it anywhere at any time if you will allow the way maker to stay in the lead.

Choose to follow spiritual leaders as they follow Christ. If they stop following Christ, stop following them and move in closer to Jesus. Never allow someone else's fall to trip you up. When you continue in His Word, then are you His disciple indeed and you shall know the truth, and the truth will make you free (John 8:31,32).

You will have days of affliction, persecution, disappointment, and disagreement. Accept that as a truth to remember. However, none of that should prevent you from being fruitful. Don't you see? It is the choice to remain faithful to the One who causes us to be fruitful that separates the victims from the victors.

The Bible does not record much about Joseph complaining or being discontented wherever he was—from the prison to the palace. What about you? Are you bemoaning your fate, or making the most of what you have to work with? Your condition will change when your attitude and your words change. You will have what you say, so choose to be fruitful.

The Abundance of Your Heart Will Speak

Ezekiel 3:10,11 (NLT)—Then he added, "Son of man, let all my words sink deep into your own heart first. Listen to them carefully for yourself. Then go to your people in exile and say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says!' Do this whether they listen to you or not."

e are so accustomed to reading the words in the Bible without the understanding of what the Spirit is saying to us that, other than the assurance of our eternal life in Christ Jesus, we are not in any better shape than the saints of the Old Testament who were captive and exiled in bondage.

All of the words of the Lord are to sink into our hearts. That only occurs when we listen with a receptive heart and spiritual ears, paying close attention to every word God is speaking to us.

Some of us are called to minister salvation to the heathen. Others are called to assist the people of God to walk in their liberty. Some will hear and others may refuse.

We are to go to them with His truth, dispensing it uncompromisingly because it is the only thing that will change their condition. You and I are not to be influ-

Bondage or freedom, that is our choice.

enced by what they heed or resist. Our job is to have it so real in our lives that we can go with confidence to other believers who have gotten weak in their faith and allowed themselves to be taken captive.

People often become prisoners of the enemy because they get their eyes off the Lord and His Word and begin to judge things by what is going on in their lives. The only keys to God's prescribed freedom are to continue in His Word as His disciples and to know that every word He has uttered is truth, and His truth will make us free (John 8:32,38).

What are you saying concerning your circumstances? Bondage or freedom, that is our choice.

Come With the Word, Not Merely to Observe

Job 2:13 (NKJV)—So they sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word unto him, for they saw that his grief was very great.

ne of the reasons we discourage hospital visits is that too many people come to see the shape you're in and want you to rehash what caused you to be there in the first place. Such people seldom, if ever, come with truth that will make you free.

Bless God, if I show up at a hospital to visit you, the whole unit will know that I am there to speak life-giving words over you. Who cares why you are there? The object is to get you out of there and back in your Holy Ghost saddle. It is not the quantity of time I visit with you that matters; it is the quality of what I say once I appear.

People don't need to just see your face; they need you to change their circumstances. That occurs only when they see Jesus' face in

You are on assignment to turn grief into a grin because of the glad tidings you bring. your face and hear His words in the words you speak.

While you are under attack, instead of repeating countless times what happened to you, I challenge you to tell your well-meaning visitors, "Glory to God, I'm here because I am righteous and godly. I am here

so God can work this affliction and condition for my good. It is only for a moment and will be over soon." Not only will you startle your visitor, but you will utterly confuse the devil.

Job 2:11 says, "They had made an appointment together to come and mourn with him, and to comfort him." Well, I don't need anyone to mourn with me, and the only way you can comfort me is with God's Word and presence in the middle of our talking about Him, His goodness, and His endless mercy.

You are not sent merely to observe someone in grief. You are on assignment to turn grief into a grin because of the glad tidings you bring. Go ahead: make your appointment to visit; but through His Word, take His life-giving Spirit with you. Otherwise, don't go.

The I Am and I Will of the Promises

Genesis 17:1 (NLT)—When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; serve me faithfully and live a blameless life."

ost of us don't make it to the age Abram was when God appeared to him. God initiated this relationship. He asked very little of Abram, and that was to serve Him faithfully and live a blameless life. Then God proceeded with what He would do. "I will make a covenant with you." "I will guarantee you many ancestors." "I am changing your name." "Kings will come from you." "I will be your God as well as the God of your descendents." "I will give you and your children the land that you are presently a stranger in." In fact, this "agreement will be forever."

God could have selected a younger person who was already fruitful in his body, but He didn't. Why? I suspect He did all of this for our benefit to show us that we are never too old to become acquainted with Him and that He reserves the right to dispense whatever He wants to whomever He will. It is not our place

to try to determine our usefulness to God or the timeframe that we will be productive for the kingdom. Just because we haven't done a thing does not mean we'll never do it.

Man cannot undo what God has decreed and declared.

I used to smile when I heard of negotiations concerning portions of Israel to be given to people who are not under this God-ordained agreement with Abraham. Man cannot undo what God has decreed and declared. God said that the land He was giving to them was for always.

Abraham laughed in unbelief when he was told Sarah would bear him a son. It didn't change God's Word spoken. Stop and reflect on what the Lord has spoken to you. Jesus did not go to the cross for us to be denied anything that lines up with God's will, which is His Word. Remind yourself that God initiated this relationship, not you.

Here for a Season and a Purpose

1 Peter 1:4,5 (KJV)—To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

he natural man seeks to receive from others through their deaths what was acquired and obtained in their lives. However, this kind of inheritance is subject to decay and is not pure. I have provided for you, My child, an everlasting, immortal possession that you can only receive by accepting My Son's resurrection from the dead. Yes, He did die, but it was not in His death alone that you became an heir, for had He remained dead you would be without hope. Never wait for one to die to receive what I have for You. What I offer is superior to anything any human can provide.

Your inheritance and all of your true possessions are from Me. They will never decay or rot. They are pure and undefiled. They do not diminish with time, and they never lose their value. They are maintained in heaven for you as I keep you by My power in the earth through your faith.

In the meantime, experience and enjoy the residue of your future inheritance. It is more than adequate, for you are only here for a season and with a purpose.

The day is soon coming when I will reveal what I have provided and promised. In the meantime, occupy until I come, for it won't be long now.

The Lord's Requirements

Proverbs 21:3 (NLT)—The Lord is more pleased when we do what is just and right than when we give him sacrifices.

hen Israel wanted to make those things which they had failed at right, God reminded them of His faithfulness to them and what He always wanted from them. He said, "No, O people, the Lord has already told you what is good, and this is what he requires; to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8 NLT).

For years we have heard some teach what they consider proof that God is with us and pleased with what we are doing; and it has been far from what God wants from His people. What we have and

where we live do not move or impress God one bit if we neglect what is good according to His standards. He wants us always to do what is right even when everyone around

There comes a time when we have to stop following the crowd and go it alone with Jesus.

us is doing wrong or trying to get even for what has been done to them. He doesn't want us just to show mercy, He wants us to love it, and, most of all, walk humbly with Him.

There comes a time when we have to stop following the crowd and go it alone with Jesus. After all, He is the one with whom we will spend eternity. It is He who provides the Spirit and the life to walk victoriously here and there. Remember, that it is God who works in you, the individual, to do two things: His will and His ability to accomplish what pleases Him (Phil. 2:13).

God doesn't just tell us what makes Him happy. He also equips us to bring it to pass. He always stacks the deck of life in His children's favor. Why? Because He wants us to succeed at whatever we are doing. Listen closely to every word He is saying to you. It will be to your benefit all the time.

Deliverance for My Children: The Reward for My Work

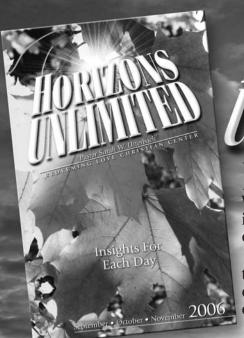
Jeremiah 31:16-17 (KJV)—Thus saith the Lord; Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own horder.

arents, stop fretting over your backslidden, wayward children. God has made a promise to every parent at work for Him. In fact, He calls it a reward. The compensation and benefit package and salary from God is that my children shall come again from the land of the enemy. I may not be able to prevent them from visiting the enemy's camp, but the Boss I work for has made my wages not dollars and cents, but deliverance for my children. He has given me the hope that I shall see my sons not only delivered from the enemy, but they shall return again to their own border, their landmark, the territory God has enclosed for them.

My children may have left the region or coast where they began. They may play in the enemy's playground for a season, but my Father has promised me that *He*—not my children—will reward my work by bringing them out and back to their roots and foundation.

Parents, the more you serve the Lord and refuse to allow your voice to weep, bemoan, or complain, and refuse to allow tears to come to your eyes, the more you can enjoy your salary. In addition, as you keep your voice from weeping and your eyes from crying, then you can stand flatfooted in the devil's face and decree and declare your children's liberty and continue to work as though they are free—because they are.

Father, I am eternally grateful that You have allowed me to see the fruit of my labor for You. Not only have You allowed me to be a blessing to other people's children, but You have rewarded my effort for You by liberating my offspring. May they continue in the plan You have for their lives, which includes not only their energy but their effort in doing what is pleasing in Your sight. Thank You for the greatest Mother's Day gift ever.



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God Does Not Lie— Why Do His Children Lie?

Genesis 26:7 (NKJV)—And the men of the place asked about his wife. And he said, "She is my sister"; for he was afraid to say, "She is my wife," because he thought, "lest the men of the place kill me for Rebekah, because she is beautiful to hehold."

ear will make you a liar. Fear will cause you to think doubtful thoughts. Fear will cause you to *say* what you think. Fear will cause you to forget the promises of God. Fear will cause you not to consider how your choices will affect another person.

Aren't you glad God is faithful to do what He has promised even when we fail to trust Him? So many times, God will make us a promise and the first contrary condition will cause us to plan our protection, as if we were more capable than God. That is what Isaac did when he feared what people could do to him, and it is what we do when we don't understand what God's protection can do for us.

It is only when God does the supernatural in the middle of our fear that we return to His promises to us. We wake up one day and find that, although we have a famine, we have been provided with seed to sow during the famine. Then, before we realize it, we are reaping in the same year we sowed an abundant crop because God has blessed us as He promised He would.

Commit to truly trusting God's promises, because trust is the only thing that will cause truth to proceed from your lips. Trusting the promises of God is the only eradicator of the torments of fear. Remind yourself often of His promises so that trust will squeeze out truth from your heart when fear is trying to rent space in your head.

Father, You are the faithful God whose demonstration of mercy and grace dilutes the justice we deserve when we neglect to trust You and take You at Your Word.

Your patience overwhelms us and acts as a rod to prod us to act like You on behalf of others. We are grateful that You are not offended at our lack of trust. But, then, that is what makes You the One true living God. We love You for who You are.

The Privilege of Hearing Him Speak

ay the body of Christ receive and understand what a privilege it is to hear the voice of the Lord, however He speaks to us. "Dear God, I am aware that Your power is needed to perform the task before me. I am also aware that Your power does not flow where there is any refusal to surrender all to You. Your will and our will must be united in order for Your Spirit to flow more freely.

"How wrong we have been to think that You are impressed with our meager effort toward You and Your plan for humankind. You are looking for lives that are so close to You that You are free to remake us, at Your will, as we acknowledge our flaws. You cannot avoid helping us."

As painful as it is and has been, there is no other way to the

Lord's path of beauty except the road that He decides for each of us. The Lord is not looking just for servants. He is looking for containers who love Him so much

Your will and our will must be united in order for Your Spirit to flow more freely.

they cannot help but serve Him. Change is uncomfortable to the flesh, but without it there will be no improvement or promised rewards for any of us.

There is the need to say, "Father, I don't know how to do that which is pleasing in Your sight, but I yield my will to Your will and desire You to teach me Your way which is the only way. This journey is at times hard. It's steep and difficult. My thinking has been, 'If it's too easy, it cannot be You.' How wrong I've been to think that You keep a scorecard of the suffering and sacrifices that Your children make. Suffering and sacrifice are experienced by all of us, but is it always Your will or for Christ's sake? How many times in our quest to please You have we caused undue scars which require You to perform surgery so that our original beauty, which is so valuable to You, is restored?"

Never Cooperate in Shady Deeds

Ephesians 5:11 (KJV)—And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.

or ye were sometimes darkness, but now ye are light in the Lord: walk as children of the light" (Eph. 5:8). Regardless of the color of our skin, we all were once as dark as midnight; but now we are light in the Lord. Now we are to tread all around and follow as companions the luminous fire because we are sons and

Just as light causes the darkness in a room to disappear, we are to be so luminous that no darkness can remain.

daughters of the ultimate fire, produced by God's Spirit working in us.

God created Adam and Eve. We are products of God's fire through the Holy Spirit by the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Because of this wonderful change in our lives, we are never to cooperate in shady acts.

The fire in us is to consume all the darkness in and around us. Just as light causes the darkness in a room to disappear, we are to be so luminous that no darkness can remain.

We are to be tried by fire because we are fire, and children of fire. The fire does not consume fire, but it consumes everything else. Whenever there is a fire, everything that was conceived in the darkness is brought to light. It is exposed. We cannot have or be partakers of the barren unfruitfulness of the darkness. Our fire, the fire in us, is to convict, convince, rebuke, and tell a fault—not conceal it and cover it up.

Father, I thank You that as Your child, produced by Your Holy Spirit, I am fire. I do not just have fire, but I am fire. Therefore, I will not participate in the works, acts, or deeds of barren or unfruitful things. I ask You to continue to work within me as I continue my walk throughout the earth as a child of light. Please release in me Your fire that will illumine all the darkness that exists among the people. Help me to expose what is not pleasing to You and to help others desiring a change to come in the direction of Your life. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

The Tragedy of Tradition

Matthew 15:3 (KJV)—But he answered and said unto them, "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?"

We have become so hardened by the traditions of the world and those around us and their interpretation of the Bible that we have lost our ability to hear from God directly and be led by His Spirit.

For the Thanksgiving holiday following Clinton's death, I was inundated with dinner invitations by so many well-meaning friends and family members that I could have started at midnight and eaten my way through the day until the following midnight. Instead, I chose to purchase some rib lamb chops, steam some vegetables, and whip up some mashed potatoes. I spent the day alone except for a two-hour visit from my granddaughter who was on her way to have dinner with her other grandmother.

The point I am trying to make is that my choice had no effect on the day which the world has decided to call "Thanksgiving." For the first time in my life, my choice was my choice. I was not dictated to by the world's choice, and I was not abandoned. I had Jesus, some

quality food, and more time on my hands to spend with the Lord than I can ever remember enjoying. In fact, I found myself repenting for all the previous years that I spent preparing natural food to feed people physical-

What traditions do you need to release?

ly, which did nothing to feed them spiritually.

Paul was so warped in his zeal and traditions as a Jew that he surpassed many of his contemporaries as he championed Judaism's traditional regulations. But God, who set him apart from birth, called him by grace to reveal Jesus and to preach to the Gentile heathen. He abandoned conferring with flesh and blood and returned to Damascus where, after three years, he met Peter. This resulted in the one who formerly followed tradition, praising and glorifying God for what He was doing in him.

What traditions do you need to release?

No More Seeking the Low Life

Colossians 3:1 (KJV)—If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

have not doubted my salvation since I received Jesus at age seven. I did not always know what to do with it or what it provided, but I was thoroughly convinced that I had it.

I am not trying to blame anyone for my past ignorance of God's Word. I am too busy being grateful that once His hand was on me, it remained. However, I never read or heard this verse until I had violated many of God's commandments and statutes, and was in my late thirties.

I try to imagine what a difference it would have made had I known that salvation meant more than getting to heaven following my passing. I had no idea that going to the altar that Sunday morning in May 1944 meant that I, too, was risen with Christ. I never doubted that He had risen, but no one told me that I had been resurrected; no one told me that I had been dead!

I was brought up among good people. Most of them lived decent lives. However, I have concluded that they just must not have understood the Bible, for I do not believe that anyone fully understanding Scripture would hide it from another person. Something in it makes you want to witness to others. The best witness in the world is being what the Bible teaches that you are. Despite a lack of understanding in my younger years, I thank God that I discovered not only that I was resurrected with Christ, but also that God expected me to seek the things from above that the Father gave to me in Christ Jesus.

You can't begin to appreciate how much and how long I had sought after what was available here in the earth. I was pitifully limited until I made this verse a hallmark for living. Please instill this verse in your little ones and loved ones. Tradition and culture taught are okay, but often they put you in bondage if you are not skilled in balancing them with the Word. Thank God, I heard and received. No more low life for me!

Time to Remove the Scales and the Veils

oth Paul and Moses had a greater experience with the Lord when the scales and the veil were removed from them. Paul went on to greater revelations; while Moses, who received the original instruction and the commandments for Israel, had the glory fade that had shown on his face. Because of what Jesus had for Paul to perform supernaturally, the scales were removed from his eyes so that he could perceive and walk in the direction of what the Holy Ghost had for him to do.

We are told, in 2 Corinthians 3, that we should have a far greater life when the Holy Spirit comes to give us life. Moses had a glorious Old Covenant, but it brought condemnation. The New Covenant provided more for us when Jesus ascended to the Father and Pentecost was fully come. The Old Covenant with its glory was set aside so that the New Covenant, which will remain forever, could give us a far greater glory.

Why? Because this New Covenant we have in Christ gives us confidence to go forth with the message of Christ and the Father's love for all humankind. Moses' message

Hard hearts and dull minds cause a veil to cover understanding of the truth.

was to a limited group of people, the chosen ones of Israel. Paul, a spokesperson for Christ, was given the light to see that Christ's shed blood and bruised body, along with God's never-ending love, was available for everyone.

Hard hearts and dull minds, even today, cause a veil to cover understanding of the truth. However, those of us who turned to Christ, have both the scales removed from our eyes as well as the veil taken from our hearts. We have had the veil removed in order to be reflections which enhance the glory of God to the world. The world is beginning to recognize their need for what their riches can't buy. They need love, joy, and peace, and all of the fruit of the Spirit which lives freely in us. Though we are perishable containers, we still have His treasure to offer them.

Not a Martyr— A Role Model

Philippians 1:20 (KJV)—According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.

here are people who make every choice based on what the history book or the obituary column will say about them. Some even choose to die for a cause that has no eternal significance just so that the people who observe or read about their lives will declare them martyrs.

God is not interested in us dying for His cause; He sent Jesus to do that. He needs us to live in such a way that His cause is a reality or a living epistle that will bring people to a saving knowledge of

It is the reflection of Christ in me that others are to see. I only need to be recognized by the One who will reward me. Christ. More than martyrs, role models are what God needs.

What is of value, and what are others to see in me? Unless Christ is made or declared to be great and is glorified in my body, either in life or in death, then whatever is said of me has no real value. It is the reflection

of Christ in me that others are to see. I only need to be recognized by the One who will reward me.

Precious Father, in the lovely name of Jesus, I come declaring that my aspiration, expectation, and inspiration is that in nothing I say or do will I be ashamed. I expect to walk in all frankness, and confidence of speech—openly, freely, and plainly sharing what will bring the vast knowledge of Christ to others. Keep me ever in Your will as I keep Your words before me, so that I can know that respect for Your commandments will protect me from ever being ashamed (Ps. 119:6). Thank You for Your commands and Your Spirit in me equipping me with the ability to heed Your every word. It is my pleasure to obey, honor, and glorify You in my life. Amen.

Walk Worthy of the Lord

1 Thessalonians 2:11,12 (NKJV)—As you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged everyone of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

he greatest sermon we can preach is the one that allows us to live the Gospel in front of all humankind. This is not just being in His kingdom. It also is having Him share His glory with us, which helps us to be all pleasing and faithful in every good work while we increase in the knowledge of God (Col. 1:10).

God gives us, His children, detailed commandments that must be obeyed. But, instead of a bunch of rules and regulations, His Spirit in us allows us to voluntarily live the principles of the Bible because of who we are in Christ.

God gives us, His children, detailed commandments that must be obeyed.

Walking worthy of the Lord is without reservation or doubt, obeying what His Word teaches us, then showing our respect and appreciation by becoming His example to others. God has given us everything. The question is what are we returning to Him for His investment in us?

What He has provided for us requires that our manner of life and conversation honor Him at all times with the same quality and quantity He offers when He serves us. Unless we catch a glimpse of God's love toward His creation, we cannot understand that apart from God's grace and His affection and determination to bring us to where He originally intended for Adam to go, we would never comprehend our need to draw closer to God. It is He who makes us worthy to be considered in the same breath as our Father and Creator.

As I have said in times past, God never created us to keep Him company; He created us to run His company. We must learn the art and secret of walking worthy of His confidence in us.

More Than Conquerors Are Always Persuaded

Psalm 27:3 (KJV)—Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.

may not be able to prevent the enemy from pitching his tent in my neighborhood, but I can be confident that my Father will prepare me a banqueting table in His presence. The enemy's presence in full force does not in any way diminish my supply from my Father. He knows how to break through the enemy's camp to provide for me.

The wars that rise against me will never exceed the weapon I use to resist them. What is that weapon? It is a confident heart that

The Lord is my light; He is my salvation; He is the strength of my life, so whom shall I fear?

refuses to fear a foe that my Champion has already defeated.

What makes me so confident? The Lord is my light; He is my salvation; He is the strength of my life, so whom shall I fear? Of whom shall I be afraid? Jesus defeated satan so He would have

the right to defend me. I see the enemy's camp; I am aware of the size of his forces; I recognize that his plan is to wage war against me, but he will never succeed. How can I be so sure? It is because the devil can only triumph where fear and lack of confidence and persuasion exist—and these do not exist in me, for with confidence in my Champion I have a spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind (2 Tim. 1:7).

Thank You, Father. I know (and I am not guessing) in whom I believe, and I am fully (entirely) convinced and assured that You are able to keep me from the evil that is in the world because Jesus petitioned You for this on my behalf (John 17:15).

How wonderful it is to sit and watch the enemy powerless to harm me and never have to enter into battle with him! Therefore, I choose to use the energy and effort to praise You for Your love that I will never be separated from. Amen and amen.

Positioned and Secure

Hebrews 13:5-6 (NIV)—Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"

he reason God speaks to us through His Word and by His Spirit is so that we will declare and decree His position in our lives. He talks to us to position us and to secure us. When we say anything based on what He has said, confidence will surface every time. Our hearts will not fail us, though doubt may come to try to shake our minds loose from what our hearts already believe.

You must allow every word that proceeds from your mouth to find its foundation in what God has already spoken in a promise to you. Speaking with confidence and patiently waiting will result in the manifestation of your desired request or petition. The choice never to quit always guarantees victory for those who patiently endure to the end. You do not win because you enter the race. You do not even win because the finish line is in view. In this race of the spirit, you win because you finally cross over the line, even if you are not the first.

Too often we cease running because it appears that another has crossed the finish line first. We throw in the towel because others were first to win the award we thought we deserved. We stop praising and serving God because a loved one has died. We sit down, refusing to go on because another person seems better prepared and equipped for the task.

Instead of looking around at the others in the race, we need to be looking at the One who re-created and equipped us for it. What did God say? Follow His lead and say who He is to you according to what He has spoken to you in the Word or in your spirit. When you base your sayings on His promise to you, you can pick up the prize because it is yours.

Precious Father, I thank You for Your promises. I can go to bat with them. When my weakness is leaning on Your strength, I can hit a home run every time. Together we win, and that is the truth.

Good Question

2 Chronicles 25:15 (KJV)—...Why hast thou sought after the gods of the people, which could not deliver their own people out of thine hand?

y mother used to say that some people's brains went on vacation, which was to suggest that their mental capacities were experiencing a time of doing nothing or, at best, very little. That is what I believe happened to idol worshippers. Imagine worshipping something that could not protect itself *or* you!

The Bible says when "Amaziah was come from the slaughter of the Edomites, that he brought the gods of the children of Seir, and set them up to be his gods, and bowed down himself before them,

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and burned incense unto them" (2 Chron. 25:14). Any god that you can maneuver or manipulate is an idol; it is not the God, the only One who is worthy of all of your worship. If you can set it up, it should worship you; you should not

worship it. It would benefit all of us to stand and examine our lives. What has grasped our attention and our affection? In what have we placed our trust and confidence? To whom are we looking for our pleasure and purpose?

Each of us has personal, direct access to our God through the blood and the name of Jesus. Your position in society or your role in your family does not affect your relationship with God. Yes, I believe that God ordained the man to be the head of his family, but that does not mean that women do not have access to God for themselves. Ladies, you are not to worship God through your spouse. Thanks be to God, as sheep of Jesus, all of us can personally hear from God for ourselves (see John 10:4,5).

Father God, please move by Your Spirit on the hearts of husbands to accept that their wives also are to be led by Your Spirit. Otherwise, they are entertaining a controlling spirit. If the man were to do everything by himself, then You, God, made Your first mistake in making a helpmeet for him. Since You do not make mistakes, please teach Your sons the value of the gift You have given them in their companions, in Jesus' name. Amen.