



*What Does
The Bible
Say About
That?*

This is part three.
Devotions 154-230





What Does The Bible Say About That?

1. Is there life after death?
2. Where do we go after we die?
3. Is there a real Heaven or a Hell?
4. Does absolute truth exist?
5. Is there only one way to get to Heaven?
6. Is the Muslim Quran the word of God?
7. Are ghosts real?
8. Is there extraterrestrial life in the universe?
9. Are angels or demons real?
10. Does the Bible explain dinosaurs?
11. Does the Bible predict the future?
12. Should women preach the Gospel?
13. Can you be a Christian and be Gay?
14. Is Jesus coming back to earth?

Try reading this book just a little bit.

We promise you that you'll screw up and learn something about the Bible.

There are no rules about how to read this book.

You can jump around all over this book if you want.

You do not have to start at the beginning .

Give it a shot. You'll see.

Before you know it, a little "faith" will begin to grow in you.

You may not even know why. It just will.

You can learn Bible stuff!

154 Not A Blind Faith

John 20: 30-31

“Jesus’ disciples saw Him do many other miracles besides the ones written about in this book, but these are recorded so that you will believe that He is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that believing in Him you will have life”

Luke 1:3-4

“Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught”

Acts 2:32 “...we are all are witnesses that Jesus rose from the dead”

John 20:29

“..Blessed are those who haven’t seen me, but believe anyway.”

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“We walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7)

But don’t let that fact throw you! We don’t have a blind faith!

Our faith is:

1) **Intellectual**

Faith begins when you intellectually believe that Jesus **is** who He claimed to be. Messiah. Son of God. The Lord!

“If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord’, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

(Romans 10:9)

We make a mistake when we down play the intellectual side of faith.

Faith is not blind. It is highly rational.

Faith is based on the historical and factual evidence of Jesus Christ,the risen Lord.

A person has to come to terms with the claims of Jesus.

Faith then, begins with a revelation of Jesus as the Lord God.

2) **Emotional** “believe in your heart”

Faith ties the intellectual, and the emotional, together into a decision of salvation. When you put your trust in Him, you are born again.

This changes the statement that Jesus is the Lord, to Jesus is my Lord.

This is a requirement.... “unless you are born again, you can never get into the Kingdom of God.... you must be born again.” (Jn 3:3,7)

Whether there is communication depends on whether the angel, or demon wants to talk to you.

Now I know it's just a show, but let's talk reality for a minute. Why would a fallen angel show itself to you as a certain "deceased" person?.....Answer: to trick you.

To trick you into thinking that every one goes to a good place into the "light". To trick you into thinking that belief in Jesus, is not a requirement, for eternal life. To trick you into thinking that there is no Hell. And it's a pretty neat trick! Everybody likes watching this kind of stuff.

I want to take this subject one step further. What if a relative who died last year, appeared in your living room to warn you of Hell? They say they have been given five minutes to tell you the truth about death. They tell you that death is only a doorway to Heaven, or Hell. And that the Bible is true when it says- Jesus is THE only WAY to Heaven. So they plead with you to accept Jesus Christ as Savior.

That would be powerful, wouldn't it? Don't you think that a witness like that would definitely cause you to accept Jesus? You finally have seen with your own eyes something that proves Jesus is THE TRUTH.

Well here is our devotional scripture for this week. Read this carefully. Tell me what it says is the: MOST POWERFUL WITNESS ON PLANET EARTH.

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Luke 16: 19-23, 27-31
" 'There was a certain rich man, ' Jesus said, 'who was splendidly clothed and lived each day in mirth and luxury. One day Lazarus, a diseased beggar, was laid at his door. As he lay there longing for scraps from the rich man's table, the dogs would come and lick his open sores.

Finally the beggar died and was carried by the angels to be with Abraham in the place of the righteous dead. The rich man also died and was buried, and his soul went into Hell.

There, in torment, he saw Lazarus in the far distance with Abraham.

...The rich man shouted to Abraham,
'O Father Abraham, please send Lazarus to my father's home—for I have five brothers—to warn them about this place of torment lest they come here when they die.'

But Abraham said,
'The Scriptures have warned them again and again.
Your brothers can read them any time they want to.'

The rich man replied,
'No, Father Abraham, they won't bother to read them. But if someone is sent to them from the dead, then they will turn from their sins.'

But Abraham said, 'If they won't listen to Moses and the prophets, they won't listen even though someone rises from the dead.'"

Hebrews 4:12

"For the Word of God is a living power and is sharper than any two-edged sword, cutting swift and deep into our innermost thoughts and desires with all their parts, exposing us for what we really are."

Romans 10:17

"Faith comes by hearing the Word of God."

.....
Got it?

The **BIBLE**

is the MOST POWERFUL WITNESS ON PLANET EARTH.



**When you are holding a Bible in your hands,
you hold a supernatural "living book".
In reality, it is the most powerful witness on planet
earth. The Bible is real 'hand-held' evidence which
reveals God, and proves His message is true.**

156 God Will Make Sure You Get There

Philippians 1:6

*“Being confident of this very thing,
that God who began the good work within you
will keep right on helping you grow in His grace
until His task within you is finally finished
on that day when Jesus Christ returns.”*

I Peter 1: 3-4

*“...Now we live in the hope of eternal life because Christ rose again
from the dead. And God has reserved for His children the priceless
gift of eternal life; it is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled,
beyond the reach of change and decay.*

*And God, in His mighty power, will make sure that you get there
safely to receive it, because you are trusting Him.*

It will be yours in that coming day for all to see.

*So be truly glad! There is wonderful joy ahead, even though the going
is rough for a while down here.”*

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Once you accept Jesus as your Savior several things happen.

Here are two examples:

- 1) You are sealed by the Holy Spirit until the day of redemption.
(Ephesians 4:30, 1:13-14)
- 2) Your name is written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.
(Revelation 20:12,15; 21:27, Philippians 4:3)

When you get saved, the Holy Spirit comes to live inside you.

(I Cor 3:16, 6:19, 2 Cor 6:16)

He seals you to guarantee your place in Heaven.

And your name is written in the Book of Life. Just like a contract.

In other words, it’s a sealed deal, and God takes over completely.

He is the one who has promised to give you eternal life in Heaven.

God will keep His promise, and get you there.

“Now we live in the hope..”

Is that how you live your life? In hope?

Or do you sometimes forget who you are, and where you’re going?

“God has reserved..”

It's just like Heavenly “reserved seating” in God's house.

And you can't mess this up.

“the priceless gift of eternal lifebeyond the reach of change..”

Even by you.

Romans 8:39 says *“..nothing created can separate us from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

You are part of God's creation.

Once you accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior, nothing can reverse that because of God's promise and power.

Now if you think that means you can sin as much as you like, you may want to look at:

Romans 6:15, Hebrews 12: 5-11, Romans 12:1-2.

The answer is , No you can't.

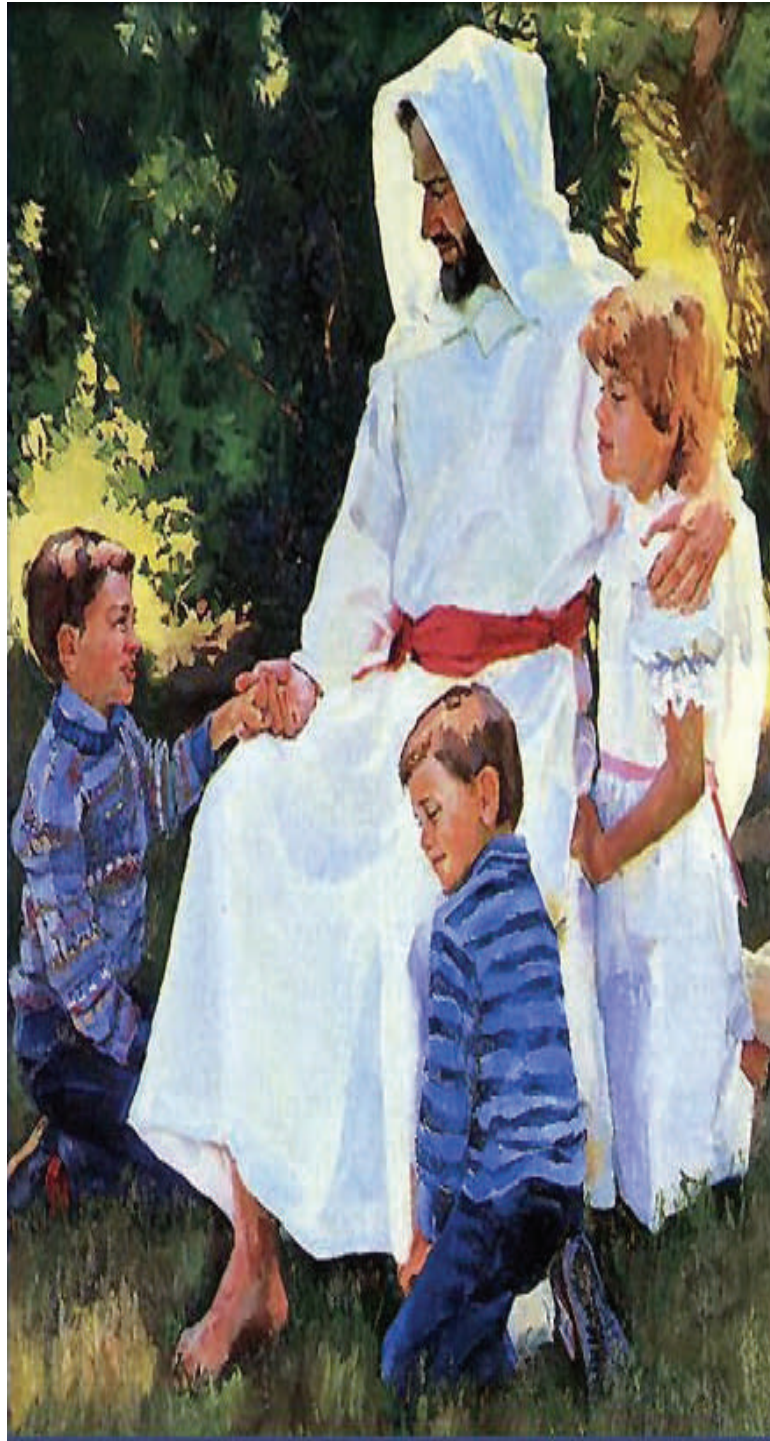
“..His task within you is finally finished..” “And God.... will make sure that you get there safely to receive it,” “. So be truly glad! There is wonderful joy ahead..”

I'm sharing this scripture to cheer you up!

Romans 15:4

“These things that were written in the Scriptures so long ago are to teach us patience and that through the comfort of the Scriptures we might have hope.”





157 Because I Love You

Ephesians 4:2

“Be patient with each other, making allowances for each other’s faults, because of your love.”

Proverbs 17:9

“Love forgets mistakes; nagging about them parts the best of friends.”

Proverbs 10:12

“Hatred stirs old quarrels, but love overlooks insults.”

I Corinthians 13:5 *“Love does not hold grudges and will hardly notice when others do it wrong.”*

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Oh how wonderful when Christians live as Christians.

Life is so much nicer.

Loving each other. Forgetting mistakes. Overlooking insults.

Hardly noticing someone doing the job wrong.

Making allowances for each other’s faults.

All due to Love.

Wow, good stuff.

I have only one small question to pose.

Are they out of their minds?!!

Don’t they know that life is a dog eat dog world.

I don’t know about you,

but I don’t want to be wearing milkbone underwear.

If I do what this says, it will be like having a sign on my back that says: Kick Me. Slap Me. Pull My Hair.

What is wrong with these people?

They must not live on the same planet as I do.

Love others? Ok. As long as they’re nice.

Making allowances for each other’s faults?

I say, ‘Fine, as long as you keep your faults away from me.’

But overlooking insults?! ‘No way!’.

Sounds like a recipe for masochism.

Lord God, you know I love you, but you are kidding, right?
You don't really want me to just love them, do you?

Yes.

He does.

And the ONLY way you can do that
is by having the God of love live it through you.

Try this prayer.

Lord, help me to let YOUR LOVE transform me and flow through my heart. May I give them a portion of the same mercy you gave me. May I give them a portion of the same forgiveness that you have given to me.

Take my body, my words, and my mind
and use me in a supernatural way.

To Love them because I love you.

158 The Way Of The Cross

Mark 8: 34-38

“Then Jesus called His disciples and the crowds to come over and listen. ‘If any of you wants to be my follower,’ He told them, ‘you must put aside your own desires and conveniences and carry your cross to follow me closely. If you insist on saving your life, you will lose it. Only those who throw away their lives for my sake and for the sake of the Gospel will ever know what it means to really live.’

‘What profit is there in gaining the whole world and then lose your soul in the process? For is anything worth more than your soul? And anyone who is ashamed of Me and my message in these days of unbelief and sin, I, the Messiah, will be ashamed of him when I return in the glory of my Father, with the holy angels.’”

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The cross is THE symbol of total submission.

Salvation must start there.

The attitude of daily service continues there.

Luke says it this way,
“*Deny yourself and take up your cross daily.*” Luke 9:23
In other words, it is a daily decision to follow Christ at this level.

When you hang from a cross dying or dead, you really don't care what kind of car is parked at home in the garage.
You don't care what clothes are hanging in the closet.
You don't care how much money is in your savings account.

Therefore, the cross shows the attitude
of how you live your life in submission to God.

It doesn't matter if you do gain the whole world.
Only the soul matters.

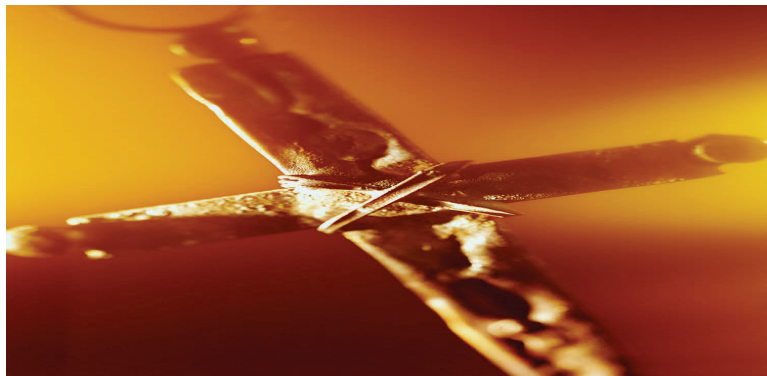
Priority number one:
Submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ as Savior.
Eternal life the result.

Priority number two:
Submit daily to Christ's leadership to help someone else find Him.

Today's passage is saying that nothing else is more important than submissive service.
The souls of men, women, and children are what matters.

And finally, to live a life that shows by your actions and words that you are not ashamed of Jesus and your decision to follow Him.
You are not ashamed of His message.

A life of total submission is a life of obedient honor of God.
There is nothing else more important than this.
This is; The Way Of The Cross.



159 Get Saved!....Get Saved?

Romans 10:9-10

“For if you tell others with your own mouth that Jesus Christ is your Lord, and believe in your own heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in his heart that a man becomes right with God; and with his mouth he tells others of his faith, confirming his salvation.”

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Some may think that a person who tries to witness in America is silly. Why?Because everyone already “knows” the gospel. There is a church on every corner and a preacher on the TV 24/7.

Everyone knows “the story” of Jesus dying on a cross and rising from the dead. They know Christmas is when we celebrate the birth of baby Jesus. They know Good Friday is when Jesus died on a cross. They know Easter is when Jesus reportedly rose from the tomb.

How then do you tell these people anything about Jesus?

Answer(s):

1)You keep quoting the Bible, so that the Holy Spirit can work.

Hebrews 4:12

*“For the **Word of God is a living power** and is sharper than any two-edged sword, cutting swift and deep into our innermost thoughts and desires with all their parts, exposing us for what we really are.”*

Romans 10:17

*“**Faith comes by hearing the Word of God.**”*

2)You keep telling them the story of Jesus and His love. He loves them, so you love them. He is interested in them personally and in the details of their lives, so you show interest in them personally and in the details of their lives.

3)You show them this love by your deeds and submitted service. Practice the ‘way of the cross.’ (from last weeks devotion) *“Deny yourself and take up your cross daily.”* Luke 9:23 Remember, while you hang on a cross no earthly concern will matter. Are you willing to give up everything to bring this soul to Jesus?

I know there are those who 'believe' in Jesus,
....except for the rising from the dead event.

So what does that mean? Are they saved or not?
How do we get saved?

The passage above says it:

*"believe in your own heart that God has raised Him from the dead,
you will be saved."*

There is a big difference
between 'knowing' the story of a historical Jesus,
and 'believing' "*in your own heart*" that Jesus rose from the dead.
Confessing "*with your own mouth that Jesus Christ is your Lord*"
And of course repenting of your sin. (Turning from sin to God.)
Jesus said, "*repent and believe the gospel*"

So it's more than knowing, ...it's believing!!
That's how you get saved!

Get Saved!... by believing.



160 Salt Of The Earth

Matthew 5:13 *“You are the salt of the earth. If you lose your flavor, what will happen to the world?..”*

Mark 9:50
“Salt is good. If it loses its saltiness, it can’t season anything. Have salt in yourselves and live in peace with each other.”



Colossians 4:6
“Let your speech be gracious and seasoned with salt that you may know how to answer everyone.”

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The other day I was leaving some devotional books in various places at the Atlanta International airport for someone to find and read.

As I was placing a book here, and putting down a book there, I heard a whisper inside of me say ‘You are spreading the Salt’. I know that sounds a little weird, but it happened. I believe the Holy Spirit was talking to me. Later, when I read these verses, I knew He had spoken to me. I don’t think I ever knew what these words meant until now. And I’m not sure I can explain it very well.

As a believer in Jesus,
I am *“the salt of the earth..”*
I have the ‘salt’ in me.
My actions can be ‘salty’.
My words can have ‘salt’ in them.
As I left this book with Scriptural words and ideas, I was told I was spreading salt.

Salt is ‘a crystalline chemical used for a particular purpose to season or preserve food to add zest, vigor, or liveliness’.
In other words, to add life to food and preserve it.

Spiritual salt adds spiritual eternal life.
It’s us, as we share and live out the gospel message.
It’s the scripture we spread to win and then to feed another.
It’s God’s rejuvenating Word.
It’s God’s living presence here in reality.

Is any of this making sense to you?

“Have salt in yourselves..” “Let your speech be gracious and seasoned with salt that you may know how to answer everyone.”

I pray the Holy Spirit will open you eyes to this truth.
In these last days, to ‘Spread the Salt’.

Here is a write up on the subject of salt from a commentary:

Work silent as salt, one handful of that salt would diffuse its savour far and wide; would go a great way, and work insensibly and irresistibly as leaven. The doctrine of the gospel is as *salt*; it is penetrating, *quick*, and *powerful* (Heb. 4:12); it reaches *the heart* Acts 2:37. It is cleansing, it is relishing, and preserves from putrefaction. We read of the *savour of the knowledge of Christ* (2 Co. 2:14); for all other learning is insipid without that.

An everlasting covenant is called a *covenant of salt* (Num. 18:19); and the gospel is an everlasting gospel. Salt was required in all the sacrifices (Lev. 2:13), in Ezekiel’s mystical temple, Eze.43:24. Now Christ’s disciples having themselves learned the doctrine of the gospel, and being employed to teach it to others, were as salt.

(Matthew Henry Complete Commentary on the Whole Bible)

Salt changes what it comes in contact with.
Your job is not to try and make that happen.

Your job is simply to shake the salt out of the shaker.

Don’t lose your saltiness. Be ‘worth your salt’.
The rest of these verses make it clear
that salt that loses its saltiness is ineffective.

Salt that doesn’t season anything, gets tossed out.
Which means that shallow words without scriptural power,
are ineffective in spiritual purpose.

Religion without the gospel message is worthless.
I don’t know about you,
but I want to be used in the service of my Lord.
I want to be effective in affecting others for the Kingdom.

How about you? Got salt?

161 Do You Have Hope?

Jeremiah 29: 4,7,10-11

“The Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, sends this message to all the captives He has exiled to Babylon from Jerusalem.

Work for the peace and prosperity of Babylon.

Pray for her, for if Babylon has peace, so will you.

The truth is this: You will be in Babylon for seventy years, but then

I will come and do for you all the good things

I have promised, and bring you home again.

For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. They are plans for good and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.”

I Timothy 1:1 *“From Paul, a missionary of Jesus Christ, sent out by the direct command of God, our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ who is our only hope.”*

Colossians 1:27 *“...And this is the secret: that Christ in your hearts is your only hope of glory.”*

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So in the middle of a dark time of exile, God reminds the nation of Israel that He has good plans for them for a future and a hope.

The same applies to our dark time today.

God reminds us that we have hope.

And what is that hope?

There is only one.....The Messiah.

“Jesus Christ who is our only hope.”

He is the *“only hope of glory.”*

God’s promises us a future.

A future and a hope fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

“I will come and do for you all the good things I have promised,.. plans for good and not for evil.”

As His child you don’t have to be afraid of your Heavenly Father.

He loves you.

He wants to forgive you. He wants to meet your needs.

He wants to heal you.

He likes to give you gifts, just like you do for your own children.

“If as sinful men you know how to give good gifts to your children, won’t your Father in Heaven even more certainly give good gifts to those who ask Him for them?” Luke 7:11

Yes, He may have to discipline us when we go off head-strong and continue in a sin.

But He still loves you, and truly does know what is best for you.

As our good Shepherd, He knows the dangerous places to avoid, and He knows where the green pastures are with the safe still water for us to drink.

His plans for you are for good, not evil.

He wants to give you good things.

Hold on to that thought.

That God's plans for you are for good, not evil. (Romans 8:28)

And finally.

For those of you who may view your work place as your place of exile, I am going to do something that may be sacrilegious, but you will get the point.

"The Lord of Hosts sends this message to all the captives He has exiled to (to your work place).

Work for the peace and prosperity of (to your work place).

Pray for her, for if (to your work place) has peace, so will you.."

(II Opinions 12:11)

Get it?

The same God who was in control of Israel in the wicked city of Babylon, is also in control of all things while you work at your work place.

Serve Him.

Honor Him

with your obedience.

Seek *"Jesus Christ who is our only hope."*





162 Ability Versus Availability

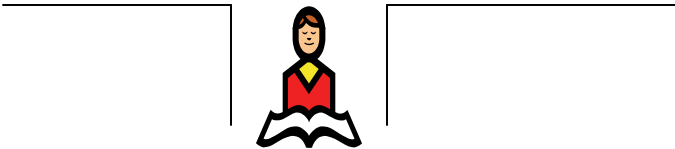
Psalm 147:10-11

“His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse, nor His delight in the legs of a man; the Lord delights in those who fear Him, who put their hope in His unfailing love.”

Ezekiel 22: 23,30

“And the word of the Lord came to me, saying...I sought for a man... to stand in the gap... ..but I found none.”

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STAND

IN THE GAP

Question: Does God need your skills and abilities in order to accomplish His purposes on this earth?..... The answer is NO.

One thing God does not need is our skills and abilities.

But He does want us.

He does give us the privilege to exercise our gifts and abilities for His service. That service may be as a pilot, electrician, mechanic, typist, car salesman, police officer, or some other job.

God calls each of us to our vocations to work as unto Him.

He wants our service. He wants our fellowship.

He wants our obedience.

To believe that He needs our skills to accomplish His mission on earth would be to lower our understanding of an all-encompassing and all-powerful God.

The psalmist tells us that His pleasure is not in our strength and ability, but His pleasure is in the attitude of the heart.

What is in the heart determines whether
your ability is translated into availability.

"For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him " 2 Chronicles 16:9

God is looking to and fro throughout the earth for a man or woman who is fully committed to Him.

Because a committed heart shows your abilities are available to God.

When our agenda becomes His agenda,
we can expect God to fully support all that we do.
If we want to see our skills and abilities multiplied a hundredfold,
then we must make them completely available to His service.

Is God calling you to be available to Him?
To stand in the gap for Him?

Remember it is not your ability that is most important,
it's your availability.

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163 The Millennium

Definition: The Biblical concept of a 1000 year period of peace when Christ returns to reign on earth. (Rev 20: 2-7)

1000 YEARS

Imagine being on this earth in your resurrected glorified body
and popping into a room where there are others
who have 'just regular bodies' (like we have right now).

Imagine living another thousand years,
and watching those born live until the end of the era.
Only those born who reject Jesus would die at a hundred years old.

Imagine Jesus giving you responsibility for a certain city or country
while He is King.
(The way I'm living I'll be lucky to get a small village in Idaho)

Imagine going to see Jesus to worship Him
on His throne in Jerusalem. Wow!

“Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.”
Matthew 6:10

“For in those days the whole world will be ruled by the Lord from Jerusalem. He will issue His laws and announce His decrees from there. He will arbitrate among the nations and dictate to strong nations far away. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nations shall no longer fight each other, for all war will end. There will be universal peace, and they will learn war no more.”
Micah 4:2-3

*“I will create Jerusalem as a place of happiness, and her people shall be a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and in my people; and the voice of weeping and crying shall not be heard there any more. No longer will babies die when only a few days old; no longer will men be considered old at 100 years of age. Only the accused will die that young....
For my people will live as long as trees and will long enjoy their hard won gains...The wolf and lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw as the ox does, and poisonous snakes shall strike no more. In those days nothing and no one shall be hurt in all my Holy Mountain, says the Lord.”* Isaiah 65: 18-20, 22, 25



“In the last days during the Kingdom, Jerusalem and the Temple of the Lord will become the world’s greatest attraction, and people from many lands will flow there to worship the Lord. ‘Come,’ everyone will say, ‘let us go to the Temple of the God of Israel; there He will teach us His ways and we will obey Him.’ For in those days the world will be ruled from Jerusalem. The Lord will settle international disputes; all the nations will convert their weapons of war into implements of peace. There will be no more war.” Isaiah 2: 2-4

“And Jesus replied, ‘When I, the Messiah, shall sit upon my glorious throne in the Kingdom, you my disciples shall certainly sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.’ Matthew 19:28

*“...for you were slain, your blood has brought people from every nation as gifts to God. And you have gathered them into a Kingdom and made them priests of our God; they shall reign upon the earth.”
Revelation 5: 9-10*

.....
For more information about this wonderful future read the little book-let entitled: ‘The Truth About THE MILLENNIUM’, by Thomas Ice and Timothy Demy.



164 How To Make A Sermon

I Thessalonians 5:16-18

*"Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances,
for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus"*

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Preaching class 101. This is how to make a sermon.

Give a title, and make a three point message.

Example:

Title: What is the will of God for you?

Point 1: Be joyful always

Point 2: Pray continually

Point 3: Give thanks in all circumstances

And now take the offering.

Ok. Let's try this message out in reality.

I am in jail falsely accused of murder,
I got fired the day I was charged,
I lost my home and car
because I could not work and make money to pay the bills,
and I just learned my young daughter is in a hospital bed
with terminal cancer.

Be joyful and give thanks ? Hmm.....

Your message doesn't seem to be working.

I must have missed something.

It must have something to do with point 2.Pray continually

Praying is more than repeating some words you've learned.

It's more than a Christian wish list.

Praying is a connection.

When you pray you are in the Holy of Holies on your knees submitted
to God the Father and the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

If you get this true image in your mind, you will understand.

That whether you are living, or dying,

or having all that you need,

or walking home crying in the rain,.....God IS God.

God is in control of you. Completely.

Whether you wake up and continue breathing is up to Him.
Not you.
Your life does not belong to you.

Whatever happens in your life is for His glory.
And in the darkest times,
the best honor can occur,
because His power can be seen.

Now, your words of prayer take on a whole new perspective.
A whole new personal and living connection.

Now you can pray like this:

Dear Lord,
Help me see how to glorify you today in the middle of this mess.
I am starting at the right place.
On my knees before you.
My heart submitted to whatever you want.
My life is yours.

Use me today to point someone to the cross.
Help me to lead someone to you.

Help me see past the temporal, to view the eternal.
Because when I do, I see you, my only hope.
I see a wonderful future in Heaven.
I can see into eternity now.
And this eternal viewpoint brings present perspective.

I see my family, friends, and everyone I witnessed to who accepted
you as Savior. There they are in Heaven, in happiness.
And I am truly Joyful and Thankful now.
Thank you Lord.
Amen

So, now does the message make sense?
Let's try it again.

Title: What is the will of God for you?
Point 1: Be joyful always
Point 2: Pray continually
Point 3: Give thanks in all circumstances.

How will God use the mess that you're in to bring glory to Himself?
Follow after Him, and you'll find out.

**Have an
Eternal
Viewpoint**



165 Study and Use Your Bible

Matthew 4: 6-7

“Then Satan took Jesus to Jerusalem to the roof of the Temple. ‘Jump off,’ he said, ‘and prove you are the Son of God; for the Scriptures declare, “God will send His angels to keep you from harm...they will prevent you from smashing on the rocks below.””

(from Psalms 91:11-12)

Jesus replied,

‘It also says not to put the Lord your God to a foolish test.’”

(from Deuteronomy 6:16)

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What a fascinating encounter.

Biggest heavy weight fight in history.

In this corner, Satan- the Devil- evil to the bone,

and in this corner, Jesus- God in a human body-creator.

What a showdown!

And what do they do?

They throw Bible verses at each other!

If you don't see the importance of that,

then you have totally missed the importance and power of the Bible.

The temptation of Jesus Christ. You know it. You've read it.

Jesus has been fasting and is hungry,

so Satan tells Jesus to turn stone into bread.

Satan tempts Jesus with a precise attack directed where the Devil

thinks Jesus is vulnerable. The Devil is good at that.

And Satan will come after you in the same manner.

But look how Jesus handles Satan.

Jesus uses the Scriptures to put the Devil in his place.

Again and again Jesus quoted the Scripture.

You must see the importance of this, and learn from it.

You must read, study, and memorize the Word of God so you can

fight the Devil. You must know the Word, so you can succeed in your spiritual struggle.

It should be a little disconcerting if the Devil knows the Bible better than you. But you can change that!

Hopefully that is why you are reading and studying this!

How do we know about this encounter?
They were alone.
How did Matthew and others know about this event,
in order to write about it?
The obvious answer is that Jesus told them.
Why did Jesus do that?
Come on, think about it.
Why did Jesus tell them about this encounter?

Jesus is our model on how to live for God.
Therefore, Jesus wants us to know how to fight the Devil.

The Bible tells us to: *“Use every piece of the armor of God to resist the enemy whenever he attacks, and when it is all over, you will still be standing up....In every battle you will need faith as your shield to stop the fiery arrows aimed at you by Satan. And you will need the helmet of salvation and the Sword of the Spirit- which is the Word of God.”* (Ephesians 6: 13,16-17)

Use every piece of armor. And the last thing mentioned?
The Sword of the Spirit- which is the Word of God.

Learn to wield this Sword. Practice with it.
Get used to its weight in your hands.
When it comes your turn to do battle against the Devil, fight well !





166 God's Point Of View

Matthew 16:21-23

"...Jesus began to speak plainly to His disciples about going to Jerusalem, and what would happen to Him there—that He would suffer at the hands of the Jewish leaders, that He would be killed, and that three days later He would be raised to life again.

*But Peter took Him aside to rebuke Him saying,
'Be it far from thee Lord, this is not going to happen to you.'
Jesus turned to Peter and said,
'Get behind me Satan, you are a dangerous trap.
You are thinking merely from a human point of view,
and not from God's point of view.'"*

+++++

Satan is a fan of man.
He will support any thinking that steers you away from God.
He loves the philosophy of humanism with Man as number one.
Man in charge of making his own rules. Doing what we want.
Like the song says, 'I did it my... way'.

This humanistic viewpoint
does not have to be dripping with wickedness and evil.

Notice Jesus didn't say
'You are thinking from a satanic point of view'.
Instead Jesus says to Satan:
"You are thinking merely from a human point of view.."
Some might say that's a step up for the Devil.
Or is it?

"a human point of view, and not from God's point of view."
That is as bad as it gets. Psalms 14:1 and Psalms 53:1 talk about the fool who says there is no God.

It's clear that living a life as if there is no God, is a sinful way to live.
(Devotion #88)

As long as you follow your own humanistic point of view
and not God's point of view,
you are going to be in big trouble.
Just like Satan.

And notice, Jesus was speaking **at** Peter, but **to** Satan.
Sometimes it will be those close to us who will knowingly,
or unknowingly, deliver the enemy's poison.
Being able to recognize when the Devil is around is important.

If you are spiritually sensitive,
you will be able to identify demonic venom.
And sort out what your friends, family, and foes are saying,
from the words of the Liar.

Stay close to Christ,
and you will recognize the different weapons of Satan's attack.
You will be able to declare:

"I'm going to obey God no matter what you say,
so get out of my way!"

"Nothing is stopping me
from choosing to see my life from God's point of view."

You will be able to stand up for the Lord,
hear His words, ...and obey Him.

I want to encourage you in this.
See your circumstances, your job, your calling,
and your life from God's point of view,
and you won't turn from what God has called you to.

167 Seventy Times Seven

Luke 17:3-4

*"Rebuke your brother if he sins, and forgive him if he is sorry.
Even if he wrongs you seven times a day and each time repents and
asks forgiveness, forgive him."*

Matthew 18:21-22

*"Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, 'How often should I forgive a
brother who sins against me? Seven times?'
'No.' Jesus replied, 'seventy times seven.'"*

Matthew 6:12

*"Your Heavenly Father will forgive you, if you forgive those who sin
against you.."*

Alright, let me get this message straight.
I'm supposed to forgive someone,
even if they do the same wrong thing 7 times a day?

(That's correct.)

OK, got it.
And the lifetime max for this particular person is 490 sins. Right?

(Wrong. ..In spiritual terms 70 times 7 equals more than 490.)

Huh?

(It implies an infinite amount of forgiving.)

OK fine, but wait a minute, why do **I** have to forgive them that much?

(Because that is how much you've been forgiven by God.)

Oh.

(And who's counting anyway, although **you** are way over 490 sins.)

OK, OK, I'll forgive them, especially since I need God to forgive me.

*'How often should I forgive a brother
Jesus replied, 'seventy times seven.'*

*"Your Heavenly Father will forgive you,
if you forgive those who sin against you.."*

I'm glad to know that God forgives me that many times, aren't you?
To think that He will forgive me again, and again, and again.
And why?
Well first of all,
because that's how many times I'm going to screw up,weekly.

Also, because God loves me that much and is merciful.
Oh, thank God, He is merciful.
He forgives me because of what Jesus did at the cross.
Jesus paid it all..... 490 and beyond.

70 x 7 = INFINITY

“Be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God for Christ’s sake has forgiven you.” Ephesians 4:32

“And Jesus took the cup of wine and gave thanks for it and gave it to them and said, ‘Each one drink from it, for this is my blood, sealing the New Covenant. It is shed for the multitudes for the remission of sins.’” Matthew 26:27-28 (The Lord’s Supper)

“So overflowing is God’s love towards us that He took away all our sins through the blood of Jesus Christ..” Ephesians 1:7

“In whom we have redemption through His blood and forgiveness of all our sins” Colossians 1:14

I want you to read C.I Scofield’s 1909 note on the term ‘remission’ from Matthew 26:28 ...Here it is:

Forgiveness, Summary: The Greek word here is translated “remission”(also in Acts 10:43;Hebrews 9:22), is elsewhere rendered “forgiveness.” It means, ‘to send off’ or ‘away’. And this, throughout Scripture, is the one fundamental meaning of forgiveness—to separate the sin from the sinner.

Distinction must be made between divine and human forgiveness:(1)Human forgiveness means the remission of a penalty deserved, whereas the divine forgiveness, in type and fulfillment in both O.T. and N.T., always follows the execution of the penalty. “...bring a lamb as a sin offering...the priest shall make atonement for the sin that is committed, and it shall be forgiven.”(Leviticus 4:32,35) “Without the shedding of blood there is no remission.” (Hebrews 9:22)

The sin of the justified believer interrupts his fellowship; it is forgiven upon confession “*If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*” I John 1:9, but always on the ground of Christ’s propitiating sacrifice. (2)And human forgiveness rests upon and results from that divine forgiveness. Matthew 18:32-33, Ephesians 4:32

So remember, you are forgiven. 490 and beyond.
And now you can forgive others ‘*seventy times seven*’,
.....because Jesus has forgiven you.

168 Fulfilled Prophecy

Micah 5:2

“O Bethlehem Ephrathah, you are but a small Judean village, yet you will be the birthplace of my King who is alive from everlasting ages past.”

Isaiah 7:14

“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.” (which means ‘God is with us’)

Luke 1: 26-27, 30-31, 2:3-4, 6-12, 16-18

“Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a village of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary....Then the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus.”

(Later)

“Everyone was required to return to his ancestral home for registration. And because Joseph was a member of the royal line, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, King David’s ancient home—journeying there from the Galilean village of Nazareth.”

(Later)

“One night some shepherds were in the fields outside the village, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly an angel appeared among them, and the landscape shone bright with the glory of the Lord. They were badly frightened, but the angel reassured them. ‘Don’t be afraid’, he said. ‘I bring you the most joyful news ever announced, and it is for everyone! The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born tonight in Bethlehem’.

They ran to the village and found their way to Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in a manger. The Shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. All who heard the shepherds’ story expressed astonishment...”

The specifics of the birth of this baby were prophesied **700 years before** it happened.

Prophecy is the evidence and proof of God's involvement and power.

A virgin gives birth to a baby boy in the village of Bethlehem. The birth of the Son was announced by angels who light up the countryside for the eyewitnesses. And the baby was seen by the world! God fulfilled this prophecy.

'I bring you the most joyful news ever announced'

Every TV station in the world would have reported it. The front page of the cities newspapers would read:



PROMISED MESSIAH BORN.
IT'S JESUS!

PROPHET MICAH NAILS IT—
BETHLEHEM IT IS!

700 YEAR OLD SCRIPTURES
PROVE ACCURATE AGAIN!

ANGELS SEEN AGAIN IN BETHLEHEM.
SHEPHERDS KNOW WHY.
—GET THE FULL STORY IN THIS ISSUE!

And since there was no TV or newspapers, it is no wonder that the eyewitnesses tell what they've seen and everyone repeats the story.

I like the reaction that the shepherds had once they heard the message from the angel.....What did they do?

It says they **ran** down to see Jesus, and then **started telling everybody** what happened.

Why?

Because they were excited!
Can't you see them running down the hillside and into the village!
Eyes wide open! Hearts pounding!

Can you feel it?

Something HUGE had happened.
The Messiah, the Savior, was born.

God's prophets had predicted this 700 years ago,
and now it has happened.

This prophecy had been copied over and over again for centuries by
the scribes. It had been read. It had been memorized.
It had been discussed.

Anyone knowing anything about the Scriptures would be looking for
this day.....
AND THE DAY HAD FINALLY ARRIVED.

We are the same way today.
There are prophecies about the Tribulation period, the Anti-Christ,
and Armageddon.
Prophecies about Jesus the Messiah coming back.
Everyone knows about the prophecies.
And we wait for them to be fulfilled.

They will be.

Every prophecy...
...concerning the second coming of Jesus will be fulfilled.

Just like the ones...
...concerning the birth of Jesus by a virgin in Bethlehem.

So get ready!
Get excited!

169 Fulfilled Prophecy, The Sequel

Daniel 9: 25-26
“ ‘It will be 49 years plus 434 years (483 years) from the time the
command is given to rebuild Jerusalem, until the Messiah comes.
Jerusalem's streets and walls will be rebuilt despite the perilous time.
After this period... the Messiah will be killed,
His kingdom unrealized...and a king will arise whose armies will
destroy the city and the Temple”

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Last week we shared the 700 year old Biblical prophecy concerning the Messiah being born by a virgin in the village of Bethlehem. The birth of Jesus fulfilled this prophecy.

Now we see that the time period of the earthly life of the Messiah was also predicted.

Some time in the sixth century B.C., the prophet Daniel proclaimed that Israel's long-awaited Messiah would be living during a time 483 years after the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem.

He further predicted that the Messiah would be killed, and that this event would take place prior to a second destruction of Jerusalem.

Abundant documentation shows that these prophecies were perfectly fulfilled in the life and crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

The decree regarding the restoration of Jerusalem was issued by Persia's King Artaxerxes to the Hebrew priest Ezra in 457 B.C. 483 years later, the ministry of Jesus Christ began in Galilee.

Jesus' crucifixion occurred only a few years later, and about four decades later, in 70 A.D. came the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus.

Unique among all books ever written, the Bible accurately foretells specific events—in detail—many years, sometimes centuries, before they occur. Approximately 2500 prophecies appear in the pages of the Bible, about 2000 of which already have been fulfilled to the letter—no errors.

Given that the Bible proves so reliable a document, there is every reason to expect that the remaining 500 prophecies, those slated for the "time of the end," also will be fulfilled to the last letter.

Who can afford to ignore these coming events, much less miss out on the immeasurable blessings offered to anyone and everyone who submits to this Biblical Messiah?

We know His name. It is Jesus Christ.
So far, He has fulfilled every Messianic prophecy.

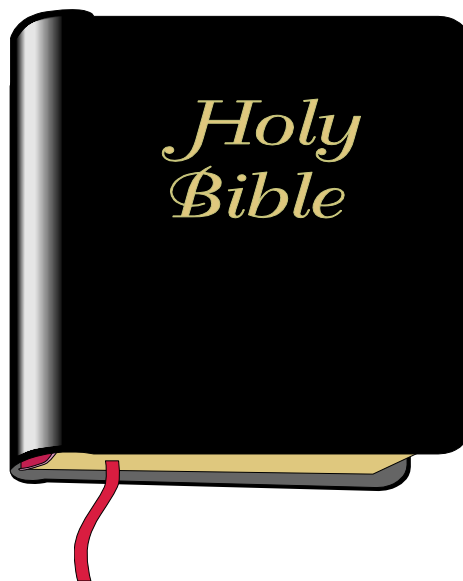
Would a reasonable person take lightly God's warning of judgment for those who reject what they know to be true about Jesus and the Bible?

*Only the Bible
has predictive
and fulfilled prophecy*

“So we have seen and proved that what the prophets said would happen, has indeed occurred. You will do well to pay close attention to everything they have written, for, like lights shining into dark corners, their words help us to understand many things that otherwise would be dark and difficult.

But when you consider the wonderful truth of the prophets’ words, then the light will dawn in your souls and Christ the Morning Star will shine in your hearts. For no prophecy recorded in Scriptures was ever thought up by the prophet himself. It was the Holy Spirit within these godly men who gave them true messages from God.”

2 Peter 1: 19-21



This devotion was taken from the paper entitled, “Fulfilled Prophecy: Evidence for the Reliability of the Bible”, by Hugh Ross, Ph.D.

170 Hear The Message

Acts 4:1-4

“While they were talking to the people; the chief priests, the captain of the Temple police, and some of the Sadducees came over to them, very disturbed that Peter and John were claiming that Jesus had risen from the dead. They arrested them, and since it was already evening, jailed them overnight. But many of the people who heard the message believed it, so that the number of believers now reached a new high of about 5,000 men.”

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It doesn't say that they demanded to see Jesus with their own eyes; it says “many of the people who heard the message believed it”.

They what?

They “*believed it*”.

What are you waiting on?

You've heard the message.

You can probably articulate the message about Jesus better than I can.

You can tell people that He fed 5000 with two fish,
He healed the blind,
He walked on water,
He was betrayed by Judas,
and He died on a crossand rose from the tomb.
He is the Savior and Lord; and if you put your faith in Him,
He will save you. You'll go to Heaven and not Hell.

There it is. The message. You could give it just like that.

You could do that, right?

I know you can. You know why? Because you do know this message.

The question always has been and still is,

Do you believe it?

It says many heard this message and believed it.

Sounds so simple, doesn't it?

Then why don't we do it?

Maybe it's because we're like the Jews in the book of Acts.

“Some believed and some didn’t. But after they had argued back and forth among themselves, they left with this final word from Paul ringing in their ears: ‘

*The Holy Spirit was right when He said through Isaiah the prophet, “Say to the Jews, You will hear and see but not understand, for your hearts are too fat and your **ears don’t listen** and you have closed your eyes against understanding, **for you don’t want to hear** and see and understand and turn to me to heal you.”*

Acts 28:24-27 (from Isaiah 6:9-10)

“Anyone whose Father is God listens gladly to the words of God.”

John 8:47

“He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” Matthew 11:15

Got ears?



171 Be Like A Child

Mark 10:15 Jesus said,
“Let the children come to me, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as they. Don’t send them away. For anyone who refuses to come to God as a little child will never be allowed into His Kingdom.”



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“For anyone who refuses to come to God as a little child will never be allowed into His Kingdom.”

What do you think this means?

Well...let’s take a moment and think about how some children are:

- 1)They don’t understand everything, yet they trust and believe easily.
Even though you may not understand the Trinity, do you believe Jesus?
- 2)They are always curious to learn about everything.
Do you search the scripture with the same curiosity?
- 3)They love freely and unconditionally, and express their love.
When is the last time you told the Lord Jesus that you loved Him?
- 4)They view everything with new eyes and expect things to be full of wonder. **Has your spiritual life become routine and ritualistic?**
- 5)They are not ashamed to show their excitement.
And we hesitate to raise our hands in church. We certainly wouldn’t shout out. We don’t want others to think we’re fanatics.
- 6)They think they can do anything. Ask a child if they want to drive a bulldozer and the answer is going to be ‘Yea!’.
They haven’t thought about the fact that their feet don’t reach the pedals. Yet, they’re ready to go!

God tells us He will supply our needs and asks us to do the simplest things, yet we say we can't. We come up with all the reasons why we will fail. When was the last time you just blew out the door on your way to obey what God said?

So, be like a child.
Come to God just like a child
and you will be allowed into the Kingdom.

Just believe Jesus.

Trust Him, obey Him, and ENJOY HIM!

172 Apostasy

I Timothy 4:1

"The Holy Spirit tells us clearly that in the last times some in the church will turn away from the faith giving heed to seducing spirits and become eager followers of teachers with devil-inspired ideas."

2 Timothy 4:3

"For there is going to come a time when people won't listen to the truth, but will go around looking for teachers who will tell them just what they want to hear. They won't listen to what the Bible says but will follow their own misguided ideas."

2 Timothy 3:1, 5

"Know this, that in the last days perilous times shall come.... People will go to church but they won't really believe anything they hear."

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Apostasy.

(A post of what?)

No, no, it's... "ah- pasta- see"... ..Apostasy.

(Oh, ok,... what's that?)

Well, let me tell you.

In the day and age of the Di Vinci Code, it's time to learn this term.
We ARE in the last days, just in case you didn't know it.

Let's read what C.I. Scofield wrote about this term back in 1909:

Apostasy, 'falling away', is the act of professed Christians who deliberately reject revealed truth as to (1) the Deity of Jesus Christ, and (2) redemption through His atoning and redeeming sacrifice.

(1 John 4:1-3; Philippians 3:18; 2 Peter 2:1)

Apostasy differs, therefore, from error concerning truth, which may be the result of ignorance (Acts 19: 1-6), or heresy, which may be due to the snare of Satan (2 Tim 2:25-26), both of which may exist with true faith.

**Apostates depart from the faith,
but not from the outward profession of Christianity.**

So apostasy has to do with those who say they are Christians,
.....but really are not.

Apostates say Jesus was just a man who was killed by the Romans.
Some say He was married and had children, which is contrary to the Bible. Apostates think Jesus is buried somewhere in Israel.

They say Jesus is not God in the flesh.
They say Jesus did not die on the cross to forgive us our sins.
They say Jesus did not rise from the dead.
This is against what God has said in His written Word,
and is contrary to the gospel.

"Now let me remind you of what the gospel really is, for it has not changed. It is the same good news I preached to you before. You welcomed it then and still do now, for your faith is squarely built upon this wonderful message; and it is this good news that saves you if you still firmly believe it, unless of course you never really believed it in the first place.

I passed on to you right from the first what had been told to me, that Christ died for our sins just as the scriptures said He would, and that He was buried, and that three days afterwards He arose from the grave just as the prophets foretold." 1 Corinthians 15:1-4

“Dearly loved friends, don’t always believe everything you hear just because someone says it is a message from God: test it first to see if it really is.

For there are many false teachers around, and the way to find out if their message is from the Holy Spirit is to ask: Does it really agree that Jesus Christ, God’s Son, actually became man with a human body? If so, then the message is from God.

If not, the message is not from God, but from one who is against Christ, like the ‘Antichrist’ you have heard about, who is going to come, and this attitude of enmity against Christ is already abroad in the world.” 1 John 4:1-4

“is already abroad in the world.”

In other words, apostasy is already here!

Hold tight to what you believe in Jesus Christ!

“this attitude of enmity against Christ is already abroad in the world.”

Enmity is the quality or feeling that characterizes an enemy.

Enmity is:

‘the deep-seated unfriendliness accompanied by a readiness to fight’.

So those who deny Jesus is the Lord God and risen Savior of the world, are also those who stand ready to fight you as an enemy against Christ.

They are not your friends, so wear the armor of God.

And as you witness,
use the Sword of Spirit –the Written Word of God.

Love them.

Hate their sin.

Fight their lies.

173 Listen To Your Counselor

John 14:26

“But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

+++++

Have you had a recent appointment with your counselor?

Told Him what’s bothering you? How you feel? What you think?
And what you need?

He is The One who can lift your heart and encourage you with hopeful words. Have you ever heard Him give you the perfect scriptural thought, right when you need it? Maybe a verse you read ten years ago, and now it is whispered for you to remember.

“the Counselor, the Holy Spirit,will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

It’s how He works.

There you are in the middle of a tough situation, and ...

“The Lord is my Shepherd...I will not be afraid” (Psalms 23)

You pause.

You refocus.

And again...

“Not one sparrow can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it, so don’t worry. You are more valuable to Him than many sparrows.” (Matthew 10: 29,31)

And before you know it, you’re feeling better.

Wow, this counselor is goood.

This counselor is also a great teacher,

so ask your counselor for advice.

He will give it.

He *“will teach you all things”*.

And here’s the best thing about this whole deal.

There’s no copay.

The counseling bill has already been paid in full.

In fact, you have a bunch of sessions already paid ahead.

And they’re a renewable resource.

So use them at will!

Stop right now for a brief counseling session.
Close your eyes and talk to your counselor.
He can hear you right now.

The question is:
Will you listen to your counselor?

174 An Iron Will

Luke 9:51
“As the time drew near for His return to heaven, Jesus moved steadily onward towards Jerusalem with an iron will.”

Isaiah 50:7
“Because the Lord God is for me, I will not be dismayed; therefore, I have set my face like a flint to do His will, and I know that I will triumph.”

Hebrews 12:2
“Keep your eyes on Jesus the author and finisher of our faith. He was willing to die a shameful death on the cross because of the joy He knew would be His afterwards...”

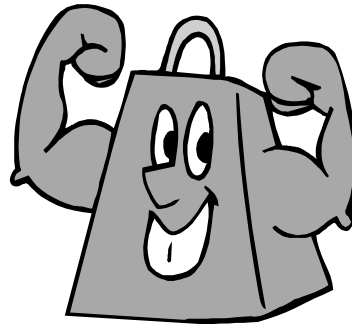
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Nowadays it seems that it is a bad thing to have an iron will that can not be changed. Strong willed people are supposed to be ‘challenging’, or seen as a ‘problem’.
We’re supposed to be flexible at all costs; otherwise we’re seen as ‘bullheaded’.
Always wanting to do things ‘our’ way.
Psychiatrists say we’re too obsessive compulsive.
We read books about strong-willed children and how to deal with their ‘disobedience’.

But how about
an ‘obedient’ strong will?
An iron will to do what God says?

Jesus is the epitome of a strong
willed Savior.

He went to the cross no matter what
or who tried to get in His way.



Even His disciples tried to stop Him from going to Jerusalem because they knew it was dangerous.

Yet Jesus steadfastly went to Jerusalem at the appointed time.

“, *Jesus moved steadily onward towards Jerusalem with an iron will.*”

The prophet Isaiah predicted the Messiah would be that way.

“*.I have set my face like a flint to do His will..*”

Are you that way?

Once called by God to accomplish a task,
nothing can stop you or change your mind?

We read about Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane,
and we see that He followed through with the plan,
even though He also had normal human emotions.

Remember Jesus is all man and all God.

That’s why He is called Son of Man and Son of God. He’s both.

He is our example to follow.

No matter how you feel, do what you will.

Make decisions based on will, not emotions.

Noah probably didn’t feel like spending 120 years to build a boat in a land that had never seen rain. He was the laughingstock of his community, but with his will he obeyed God.

Moses probably didn’t feel like going to Egypt to face Pharaoh and confront him, but with his will he obeyed God.

David probably didn’t feel like facing death by taking on Goliath the giant. David was alone in battle with a sling and five stones, and with his will he obeyed God.

Mary probably didn’t feel like being the one chosen to have a virgin birth. Can you imagine trying to explain that one to your fiancée, family, and the neighborhood?

Here is what Mary said when the angel came to tell her about this:

“*Mary said, ‘I am the Lord’s servant, and I am willing to do whatever He wants. May everything you have said come true.’ And the angel disappeared.*” Luke 1:38

With her will she obeyed God.

No matter how you feel, obey God with an iron will.

175 Don't Quit. Keep Playing.

I Corinthians 15:58

*“Be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord,
for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever wasted..”*

+++++



Ignace Paderewski was a famous concert pianist and prime minister.
He gave wonderful concerts that many attended and loved.
This is a story of one.

There was a mother who bought tickets to a Paderewski performance
to encourage her young son's progress in taking piano lessons.

Arriving at the concert they found that their tickets were near the front
of the stage. They eyed the majestic Steinway piano waiting on stage.

While the mother turned to speak to a friend,
her son slipped away in the crowd.
Suddenly the spotlights came on for the concert to begin.
The audience became quiet.
There at the piano was the little boy innocently picking out 'Twinkle,
Twinkle, Little Star'.

The mother was horrified.
Then the master appeared on stage.
He bent down and whispered to the boy, 'Don't quit---Keep playing.'
Leaning over the boy, Paderewski reached down his left hand and
started playing the bass.

Then, with his right hand he added a running obbligato.
Together, Paderewski and the little boy thrilled the crowd.
When they finished, the crowd erupted with people jumping to their feet, clapping their hands, and shouting their approval.
There was not a dry eye in the house from the tears of joy and excitement.

I ask you now to remember this story, as you do whatever it is that God has called you to do.

Success comes when we take the little we have, and give it to God. He makes up the difference and says, 'Don't quit---Keep playing.'

"Be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever wasted.."

And know this.
That when you finish, there is an audience in heaven who will erupt with shouts of excitement and tears of joy.

So ... 'Don't quit---Keep playing.'

Taken in part from the book "Timeless Truths In Changing Times",
by Dr David Cooper., Mt Paran Church of God in Atlanta GA.



176 God Enjoys Watching You.

Genesis 2: 19-20

“So the Lord God formed from the soil every kind of animal and bird, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them; and whatever he called them, that was their name.”

+++++

So, here’s the image.

God brings a certain animal to Adam.

For example, the first animal can give milk and says, ‘Moooo’.

Adam says, ‘Cow! I’m going to call it a cow!’

And God says,

‘Ok, cow it is. From now on this animal shall be called a cow.’



COW

Now, let’s take a close look at this Bible verse.

The passage reads, *“to see what he would call them..”*

It makes it seem that God doesn’t already know that Adam will call the animal a cow. But God is Omniscient. He knows the end from the beginning. The Bible is clear on this. So God already knows what Adam will say. God knows Adam will say, ‘Cow!’

So what does this mean?

The original Hebrew words ‘to see what’ can also be translated ‘to watch how’.

h)r = to see, to watch, to give attention to, to gaze at

hm = what, how, of what kind

)rq = call, name, give name to

So the passage could be correctly translated:

“and brought them to Adam to watch how he would name them”

In devotion #35, “What Does God Think About?”, we discussed that God thinks about us. That devotion was based on Psalms 139:17
“How precious it is Lord to realize that you are thinking about me constantly.”

The fact is that God loves us. He enjoys us.
He thinks about us. And He enjoys watching us.

Imagine carrying your 2 year old child out to a field and showing them a grasshopper.
It is the first time they have ever seen a grasshopper.
You point it out and you say, ‘Grasshopper.’
Your child is wide-eyed in wonder.

The child looks at the grasshopper hanging on a grass stem.
They study it.
They reach out to touch it, and it jumps three feet in the air over to another grass stem.
The child shouts out with excitement,
‘Grasshopper! Look Grasshopper!’
And you smile and calmly say, ‘Yep, that’s a grasshopper.’



You certainly know what a grasshopper is.
You don’t need the child to point it out to you.
But you enjoy watching the child get excited when they see the grasshopper jump.

Now do you get what God is doing as He brings the animals to Adam to be named?
God is watching us, and enjoys bringing us into new wonder.
When we laugh, He smiles.
When we want to explore, He gives us things to discover.

God likes to watch us, because He loves us.

“The eyes of the Lord are watching over those who fear Him, who rely upon His steady love.” Psalms 33:18

God Enjoys Watching You

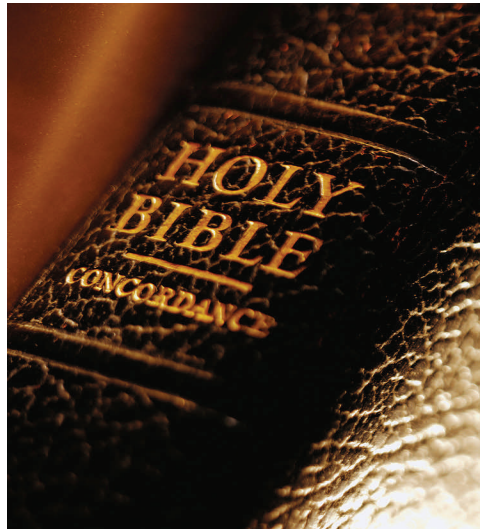
177 The Power Of God's Words

Psalms 33: 4, 6-9

“For all God’s words are right, and everything He does is worthy of our trust...

He merely spoke, and the heavens were formed, and all the galaxies of stars. He made the oceans, pouring them into His vast reservoirs.

Let everyone in all the world—men, women, children—fear the Lord and stand in awe of Him.



*For when He but spoke, the world began.
It appeared at His command.”*

Isaiah 55:11 *“My Word shall not return to me void.
It shall accomplish all I want it to...”*

Hebrews 4:12 *“For whatever God says to us is full of living power...”*

We need to remember that God's written Word, the Bible, has supernatural power.

The same power that created "*all the galaxies of stars*", speaks through the words of that written text. When we quote His Word, we unleash God's power.

God has given us this as a gift, and as a powerful tool.

God stands behind the words of the Bible.
He upholds His Word.
He promises that "*My Word shall not return to me void...*"

I challenge you to take Him up on this promise.
Read it, study it, and memorize it, so that you can use it and quote it.
Then stand back and watch it work.

You may, or may not see the immediate results.
But..... something will happen.
God's name would be dishonored if it didn't.
The reliability of His truth and promise would fail.
And that's not going to happen.
The stars spoken into existence would evaporate first.

So learn to use the Bible.
You are holding the best evidence of God's continued power and presence when you hold the Bible in your hands.

You say you wanted proof of Him, didn't you? Something concrete?
Well here it is. The Bible. More than a book.

I know this may sound strange, but I actually kiss the cover of my Bible on occasion. I have come to realize how wonderful it is to have it as a personal possession.
I truly love the Word.
It is reassuring to hold it, and feel the weight of it in my hands.
I love the Lord Jesus which the Bible represents.
And I can't help but express that.

The Bible.is God's written Word.
Quote it, and watch it change hearts and minds.
Watch it lift and encourage. Convict.

When you are out of ideas, try His.
When you need supernatural help. It's available.
His Words are "*full of living power...*"

178 The Best Path

Psalms 32:8

"I will instruct you (says the Lord) and guide you along the best path-way for your life; I will advise you and watch your progress."

Psalms 1:6

"For the Lord watches over all the plans and paths of godly men, but the paths of the godless lead to doom."

Proverbs 3:5-6

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not unto your own understanding. In everything you do, put God first, and He will direct your path."

+++++

Ever hear someone say, 'All paths lead to heaven.?'
They're trying to convince you that it doesn't matter what,
or in whom you believe.

They get the buzzer.....for the wrong answer.

It does matter which path you choose.
The scripture is clear on the choice of Jesus Christ as Savior.
That's why Jesus called Himself, '**THE** Way'.
His WAY leads to life.

Now, as a Christian, how do you know which is the best path to go
down today?
*"I will instruct you (says the Lord) and guide you along the best path-
way for your life;"*

And then God adds:
"I will advise you and watch your progress."

Are you getting this?
God wants in on the progress you make down the path.
He wants in on the plans for today.
He wants to advise you concerning today's path.

*"For the Lord watches over **all the plans and paths** of godly men.."*

It's not just a one time decision to follow His voice.
It's a life time process of listening and obeying.

That's why He says to:
"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not unto your own understanding.

What a concept!
Trust the One who knows the end from the beginning!

"He will direct your path."



179 It's A Sealed Deal

Ephesians 1:13
"Because of what Jesus Christ did, all of you who have heard the gospel about how to be saved, and believed on Jesus, have been sealed with the Holy Spirit, who long ago had been promised to all of us Christians."

Ephesians 4:30 *"It is the Holy Spirit by whom you are sealed unto the day of redemption."*

2 Corinthians 1:22
"God has sealed us with a mark of ownership by giving us the Holy Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee that we belong to Him."

John 10: 28-29 (Jesus speaking)
"I give them eternal life and they shall never perish. No one can snatch them away from me for my Father has given them to me, and He is more powerful than anyone else, so no one can kidnap them from me."

+++++

This one is clear.
When you accept Jesus Christ as your Savior, you are sealed with the Holy Spirit.
This seal can not be broken.
It is stronger than the Roman Emperor's seal.
Better than the Good Housekeeping seal of approval.
And will last longer than any glad wrap product made of concrete.

This seal is from God Himself.
Your heart's salvation decision is sealed by the indwelling Spirit of God.
You are sealed until the day you step into Heaven.
"sealed unto the day of redemption."

God could not make this any simpler to understand.

So why do we struggle with it?

Nothing you can do can stop God from fulfilling His promise to you.
"He is more powerful than anyone else.."

Jesus said, *"I give them eternal life and they shall never perish.."*

What's stronger than something being sealed in stone?
Something sealed in Spirit.

Once the promise of eternal life is given by Jesus, the promise is sealed in spirit.I want you to let this sink in.

As a believer in Jesus Christ,
you are forgiven and you will be in glory.

All believers in Christ will make it there, so relax. Don't worry.
It's a sealed deal.

Oh, we do have to put on the armor of God daily.
We have to do battle with the world, the flesh, and the Devil.
But nothing and no one can keep you from your final destination.
Eternal life in Heaven with Jesus.

*"God has sealed us
with a mark of ownership"*



"...a guarantee that we belong to Him."

180 Permit The Differences

Luke 9:49-50

"His disciple John came to Him and said, 'Master, we saw someone using your name to cast out demons. And we told him not to because he isn't in our group.' But Jesus said, 'Forbid them not, for whoever is not against you is for you.'"

Philippians 1:15-18

*"Some of course, are preaching the gospel because they are jealous of the way God has used me.
They want reputations as fearless preachers. But others have purer motives, preaching out of love, for they know that the Lord has brought me here to use me to defend the truth.
And some preach to try and make me jealous, thinking that their success will add to my sorrow here in jail.
But whatever their motive for doing it, the fact remains that the gospel of Christ is being preached and for that I am glad."*

So the Biblical idea is this:
Permit the differences.

Permit different folks to do ministry in different ways.
Even if you don't agree with them.
Even if you think they are not doing it with a pure heart.
Even if you don't like them.
Even if you think they are weird.

Permit the differences.

We're not saying it's alright for them to preach heresy.
"Let God's curses fall on anyone, including myself, who preaches any other way to be saved than the one we told you about.." (Gal 1:8)

Jesus is Son of God, Son of Man, Lord and Savior.
He died on the cross for the sins of the world.
He rose from the dead bodily.

There is salvation in no one else.
Every thing else is secondary.

How they do or do not go to church.
How they baptize, sprinkle, pour, or dunk.

Do they speak in tongues,
or do they think that's not applicable anymore?

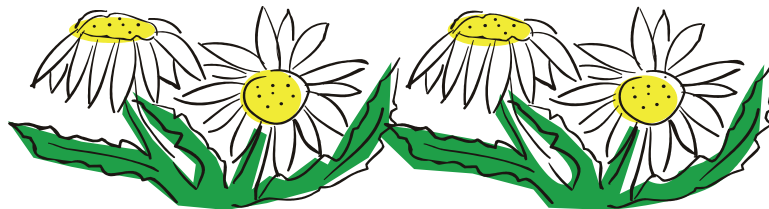
Do they talk about money too much, or not enough?
Do they read the King James Bible, or do they like other translations?

Do the women wear pants, or do the men wear skirts? Who cares?

Do they preach Jesus Christ the Lord God and Savior of all mankind?
Then it is HE who is most important! Focus on HIM!

'Forbid them not, for whoever is not against you is for you.'

".. the gospel of Christ is being preached and for that I am glad."



181 Angels Among Us

Hebrews 13:2

“Don’t forget to be kind to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it.”

Luke 15:10 *“...there is joy in the presence of the angels of God when one sinner repents.”*

Hebrews 1:14

“...the angels are ministering spirits sent out to help and care for the heirs of salvation.”

+++++

They visit us,
they rejoice when we accept the Lord as Savior,
and they minister to us.

It doesn’t say how they do all this stuff,
but they are obviously involved with us.

It doesn’t say where the angels are rejoicing, but they are here.
They’re around us.

A group of them could be sitting at the altar at the front of the church.
Or wherever someone may be praying for Jesus to save them.
The point is, they’re into watching the whole salvation thing.
They rejoice when we get saved.

It says *“..be kind to strangers, for some...have entertained angels without realizing it.”*

Think about this for a minute.
They may take on the appearance of someone walking down the street. Someone you may have a conversation with.
Someone you may have a meal with.
Someone that **can be seen** with our physical eyes.

Interesting, isn’t it?

Do you believe this?
Or is this just the hallucinations of a crazy person?

Angels that are serving the Lord God are all around us.
And so are fallen angels,
who can choose to be seen to try and deceive us.
We discussed this before in devotion #69, 'Jesus and Demons';
and in devotion #59, 'The Spirit World'.

You know we are back to the same issue,.... which is:
Do you believe what the Bible says?

The Bible says God knows when a sparrow falls to the ground.
Do you believe the Bible?

The Bible says God knows how many hairs are on your head.
Do you believe the Bible?

The Bible says **angels are** around us, invisible and **visible**.
Do you believe the Bible?

I do.

The Bible says we are to focus on our Lord Jesus Christ. This is true.
But the Bible is giving us details of angelic involvement for a reason.

To notice them is to live out your faith in reality,
and to serve your living God effectively.



182 The Doxology

Jude 24-25

“Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God, our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.”

+++++

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.
Praise God, all creatures here below.
Praise God above ye heavenly host.
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

This is the common doxology that we sing in church.
So it is a song of praise.

Doxology is also defined as:

‘A formula of praise, used as the closing words of a sermon.’

So the above passage is a doxology from the last two verses from the book of Jude.

It’s an interesting choice of words given as praise to God.
But remember,
God used Jude to write these words of praise for a reason.

In other words, God gave these words to us, so that we could praise Him. Therefore, we should use them. I would suggest memorizing the above passage and saying it on a regular basis.

Why?

“I will praise you to all my brothers; I will stand up before the congregation and testify of the wonderful things you have done.”

Psalms 22:22

“One generation shall praise Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts.” Psalms 145:4

God wants our praise.

God also wants us to pray.

Ever been asked to pray and go blank?
Actually, if we are talking to God all day long ,
(“*pray without ceasing*” I Th 5:17), it shouldn’t be difficult just to
include others in that ongoing conversation.

But if you don’t know exactly what to say after thanking God for the
food, then say the above passage as your prayer.

*“Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present
you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, To
the only wise God, our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and
power, both now and forever. Amen.”*

183 What You Have To Have

Is it money?
God owns everything,
so He could give you four billion dollars if He wants to.

Is it health?
Actually, you can live for God as a wonderful one year testimony,
...with terminal cancer.

Is it beauty?
Believe it or not, you can be happy and ugly at the same time.
(I think I just heard someone say, ‘Yea, you’re proof of that.’)

So what is it? What do you have to have?
Well here’s our scripture for this week.

*“That out of His glorious, unlimited resources He will give you the
mighty inner strengthening of His Holy Spirit.”* Ephesians 3:16

Without the Holy Spirit, all you are is dead.
A corpse, lying in the way.

When you’re dead:
1)You can’t spend your money.
2)Your health isn’t an issue.
3)It doesn’t matter what you look like.
4)You can’t DO anything.

This is the most accurate description of you without the Holy Spirit.

But with the Holy Spirit,
you have everything,
can do anything,
and will live forever in glory.

Now think about this.
God owns everything.
He can give you anything.
And out of all the things He can give you,
what, or shall we say whom, does He give?

Answer: Himself.

*“That out of His glorious, unlimited resources He will give you the
mighty inner strengthening of His Holy Spirit.”*

What you have to have.

184 In Him We Are

Acts 17: 28 “ *For in Him we live and move and are!*”

James 1:17
“*Every good and perfect gift comes from God...*”

Revelation 4:11
“*O Lord, you are worthy to receive the glory and the honor and the
power, for you have created all things. They were created and called
into being by your act of will.*”

+++++

God is the source and center of our existence.

God created all things by calling them into being.
Without Him, there is only death and darkness.

It is only because of God’s mercy and grace that we find salvation and
eternal life. It is only because of His mercy and grace that we live.

I would say that most reading this would agree with the above
statements. But it is amazing that we seem to forget who is in charge
of our daily lives.

I heard a man pray once and what he said changed me.
This is how he started his prayer:

‘Lord Jesus,
Forgive us for assuming we would make it to this meeting.
Forgive us for assuming we would wake up this morning and start
breathing.
Forgive us for assuming our hearts would beat.
Forgive us for assuming that we could possibly plan to arrive here
tonight.
Remind us that we can do nothing without your permission.
Thank you for your mercy today.
Thank you for allowing us to be here.
Thank you O great God for allowing us to live another day.’

Do you think and pray this way?

I think we would live differently if we did.

“Every good and perfect gift comes from God...”
“For in Him we live and move and are!”

A life changing concept if you can grasp it.

And by grasping it, you can’t help but praise Him.

*“O Lord,
you are worthy to receive the glory and the honor and the power...”*

**Every good and
perfect gift
comes from God**

185 Father of Lights

James 1:17

“Every good and perfect gift comes from God, the Father of Lights, who shines forever without change or shadow.”

I John 1:5

“This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.”

John 8:12

“Then Jesus said, ‘I am the Light of the world, he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.’”

John 12:46

“I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness.”

Colossians 1:12

“Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.”

I Thessalonians 5:5

“For you are children of the Light and of the day, and do not belong to darkness and night.”

Matthew 5:14,16

“You are the light of the world.. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

+++++

Wow! I don't know about you, but I think these verses are powerful!

Read them carefully and you will see the following.

God is Light. The Father of Lights.

Jesus is the Light of the world.

All who believe in Him have the Light of Life.

As believers in Christ, we are now saints of Light, or children of the Light. Therefore, we are a light shining in a lost world today.

Are you getting any of this?

We are children of Light.

People should SEE a difference.

Here is what a couple commentaries wrote concerning God,
the Father of Lights:

(The New John Gill Exposition of the Entire Bible)

God is the author of lights; of all corporeal light; as the sun, moon,
and stars; of all natural, rational, and moral light, in angels and men;
of spiritual light, or the light of grace in regenerate persons;
and eternal light, the light of glory in the spirits of the just.

(Coffman Commentaries on the Old and New Testament)

What are the lights here? It might be thought that the light of intelli-
gence, the light of truth, the light of the world who is Christ, or the
physical lights of the heavens, such as the sun, moon and stars, are
meant. But there is no need to restrict the meaning here at all. It is not
amiss to take the whole of these interpretations, because God is the
source of every kind of light. James was most likely thinking of the
heavenly bodies, the sun, moon and stars and the variation which the
heavenly bodies show. Such things as the apparent movement of the
sun around the earth, giving day and night, or its moving southward or
northward, giving the seasons.

By contrast, God is "*without change or shadow.*" In Him there is no
shadow cast by turning. "*I Jehovah change not*" Malachi 3:6

Here is my commentary.

When God saves someone,
He lights up the person with the new spiritual birth.
Envision it this way.
Before you get saved you're dark inside.
After you accept Christ as Savior,
God puts His Spirit in you, ...as a Light.

I wonder how we look to the angels.
Since they are spirits, they can see past the physical.
Can they see our 'internal light'?

Interesting, huh?

Now imagine someone giving you a pair of supernatural goggles.
You would be able to see 'beyond' the falseness of 'physical reality',
to see spiritual.
When you put them on, you no longer can see the physical world.
At least not clearly.
The buildings, the cars, the bodies, the trees..... all fuzzy.
What you do see are "areas" of darkness, or light.
When you look at a lost person,
there is only a dark place walking along, or sitting there.

When you look towards a believer there is glorious light shining out.
Believers are easily identified and can be seen a long, long way off.

You hear them speak praise and prayer.
You watch the light as it mingles with others at a gathering.
Must be a church service.
But maybe not. Maybe they're at work.
You can't really tell
because there are dark ones present at both places.

Ok, ok, take your goggles off for now.
Just remember this.
As a believer, you have been given a Light inside which spiritually
shines. God Himself is present in you. And God is Light.
So when you have the Holy Spirit in you as a believer, you shine.

I encourage you to visualize your light is on when you walk into a
group of people. Remember who you are.

Let your Light shine!



186 History Class 101

I am going to do something totally different this time.
I am going to quote from a book of history written by Flavius Josephus.
Among other things, he was a Jewish historian.
He lived in the first century.
Josephus wrote about history during the period of Jesus.
He was not a Christian.

So if you think the history presented in the Bible concerning the man named Jesus is unreliable, or that the writers made up stuff about their leader, think again.
Let's study another history book, and compare notes.

Now remember being in high school, and having to study history?
You learned about the American civil war and Abraham Lincoln.
You didn't question the author of the history book.
You didn't tell the teacher that you know the war never happened.
You never said,
'Abraham Lincoln never existed, he never lived. He wasn't real!'

If you did say such a thing, everyone would think you were a fool.
You didn't scoff at the details as 'just made up'.
No.
You learned the facts, compared the details, and wrote them down to pass the test.....Remember?

And you still believe those facts because you know they are accurate.
How do you know they are accurate?
Because of the history books.

Well let's look at some history.
Why?

Because there are some now who think Jesus never existed.

But that notion contradicts history.

Here is the history by Josephus:
Antiquities 18:3.3.
"And there arose about this time (that is, Pilate's time, A.D. 26-36) Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one should call him a man. For he was the performer of astonishing deeds, a teacher of those who are happy to receive the truth. He won over many Jews, and also many Greeks. He was the Christ or Messiah.

In response, to a charge presented by the leading men among us, Pilate condemned him to the cross, but those who had loved him at first, did not give up. For he appeared to them on the third day alive again, as the holy prophets had foretold, and had said many other wonderful things about him. And still to this day, the race of Christians, named after him, has not died out.” Josephus.

There you have it.

A secular historian confirms that Jesus lived, died on a cross, and was reported alive again by His followers.

Doubt the resurrection, if you want.
Call those disciples liars, if you like.

But the life of Jesus is historical fact.

John, a disciple of Jesus, wrote the following words in the Bible.

“Jesus’ disciples saw Him do many other miracles besides the ones written about in this book, but these are recorded so that you will believe that He is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that believing in Him you will have life” (John 20:30-31)



187 Tell Your Children

Deuteronomy 4:9

“Watch! Be very careful never to forget what you have seen God do for you. May His miracles have a deep and permanent effect upon your life. Tell your children and your grandchildren about the glorious miracles He has done.”

Judges 2:7,10

“The people remained true to the Lord throughout Joshua’s lifetime, and as long afterward as the old men of his generation were still living—those who had seen the mighty miracles the Lord had done for Israel. But finally all that generation died; and the next generation did not worship Jehovah as God, and did not know about the mighty miracles He had done for Israel.”

+++++

Amazing isn’t it?

After God showed up so big and so real by splitting the Red Sea, leading them out with a pillar of fire at night and a pillar of cloud by day, and all the other miracles that occurred in Egypt, yet that information somehow gets tossed to the side by the next generation.

Those who hadn’t ‘seen’ these miracles with their own eyes somehow miss it all. They do “*not worship Jehovah as God, and did not know about the mighty miracles He had done for Israel.*”

How could that happen?

Perhaps the answer is in the verse above from Deuteronomy.

*“Watch! Be very careful never to forget what you have seen God do for you. May His miracles have a deep and permanent effect upon your life. **Tell your children** and your grandchildren about the glorious miracles He has done.”*

Perhaps they did not tell their children “*about the glorious miracles He has done.*” Somehow the miracles got watered-down.

They must not have had “*a deep and permanent effect*” on their lives. If the ‘stories’ were told during religious rituals, they became dry fairy-tales.

Let me ask you something.
Do you have any children around you?

Yes?

Do you bring up the subject of Jesus with them? Of heaven?
Of the Bible?

Have you ever told them that you believe in Jesus;
and what that means to you?
Shared the miracle of your own salvation story?
Told them about the things you've seen with your own eyes?
The miracles that you've witnessed?
Or has all of this become dry religion?

I encourage you to press the replay button
on your testimony tape recorder.

Tell the children *“what you have seen God do for you”* !



188 Valuable

Matthew 10:29,31 *“Not one sparrow can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it,so don’t worry. You are more valuable to Him than many sparrows.”*

Psalms 49:8
“For a soul is far too precious to be ransomed by mere earthly wealth. There is not enough wealth in all the earth to buy eternal life for just one soul, to keep it out of hell.”

Psalms 116:15
“His saints are very precious to Him, and He does not lightly allow them to die.”

Ephesians 4:1
“...Live and act in a way worthy of those who have been chosen for such wonderful blessings as these.”

+++++

A public speaker stood in front of an audience.
He pulled a hundred dollar bill out of his pocket, and showed it to the crowd.



‘Who wants this \$100 bill?’

Every hand went up.

The man proceeded to crumple up the \$100 bill.

‘OK, but how about now? Who still wants it?’

Every hand still went up.

Then the man dropped the \$100 bill to the floor,
and ground it into the dirt.
While standing on it, he asked,
‘Do you still want it?’

Every hand still went up.

So the man picked up the \$100 bill,
dusted it off, and straightened it out.

He said, ‘No matter what I did to this money, you still wanted it,
because you knew it did not decrease in value. It is still worth \$100.’

Now see yourself in the eyes of God.

You are valuable. You are precious.

Many times in our lives we are dropped, crumpled, and ground into
the dirt. We feel like we are worthless.
But no matter what has happened to us,
nothing can change our value in the sight of God.

Dirty or clean, crumpled or neatly pressed, you are priceless.
Your worth is not measured by what you do, but by who you are.
Created in the image of God and endowed by our Creator
with incredible potential.

Even though that image has been marred by sin and failure,
God’s grace restores the image of God in us.

*“For those God foreknew He predestined to be conformed to the im-
age of His Son.” Romans 8:29*

Live up to the greatness that God has placed within you for His glory.

(Original idea from Timeless Truths in Changing Times by Dr. David
Cooper, Mt Paran Church of God, Atlanta)

189 Trusted By God To Tell The Truth

I Thessalonians 2:4

“For we speak as messengers from God, trusted by Him to tell the truth, we change His message not one bit to suit the taste of those who hear it: for we serve God alone, who examines our hearts’ deepest thoughts.”

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This passage and devotion is my beginning for next week’s devotion. I’ve made up my mind to hit a difficult subject head on. So get prayed up for next week.

For this week, I want you to think about your personal ministry in service to God. What has He entrusted to you?

Speaking for myself, I feel God called me to this ministry of writing easy to understand devotions.

There were days that I did ask myself, ‘Who do you think you are?’ I’m not a Bible expert. I don’t have a seminary degree. But I feel God called me to do this. So I pressed on in obedience to my King.

I am part of the Atlanta airport chaplaincy, although I report to no one, but God. I *“serve God alone.”* I am *“trusted by Him to tell the truth”*. Without being delusional, or on some ego trip, I, like Paul, speak as a messenger from God. . . .And I *“change His message not one bit to suit the taste of those who hear it”*.

Are you that way too?
Will you share the truth of the Word of God in the same way?
Will you obey God? Will you follow His leading no matter what?

In past devotions, I pulled no punches when it came time to speak of the reality of Hell. The Bible certainly states it as fact. So I shared what I believe is the truth. Yet I did lose some readers over those devotions.

Next week, I may lose some more folks, but I hope not. Either way, I’m going to fulfill and obey what I believe God has told me to do.

190 Homosexuality. A Gay Issue?

The title means that, in my opinion, there is nothing emotionally happy about this subject. Homosexuality is a very divisive issue with many points for a disturbing debate.

It doesn't matter what side you want to take, just bring the subject up in any group, and then watch the fireworks.

I think the Devil is having a great time with this one.

It is a Bible issue, a Christian issue, a religious issue, a worldwide social issue, a legal issue, a possible genetic issue, a work issue,and a sin issue.

In my point of view, homosexuality boils down to one single Biblical issue.

Is the lifestyle, or the behavior of homosexuality, a sin, or not?

If you say no, then how do you know?

If you say yes, then how do you know?

The answer to this question is the same answer concerning any question about spiritual knowledge. How do you know?....

The answer: The Bible.

There is only one source from God to get our answer, and that's the Bible.

If you are not going to get your answers from the Bible, then you will never be sure of any answer concerning any doctrine of salvation, of heaven, hell, sin, eternal life, where we came from, where we are going, and a hundred other questions about knowing God.

You can debate genetics, the possible differences in the physical makeup of the brain, the worldwide social view, and the legal ramifications involved in being gay.

But as a believer in the Lord Jesus, if you want to know if being gay is a sin or not, you must pick up your Bible.

It is definitely a Bible topic, so that is why I am writing about it today.

Last week I tried to prepare the way to start this subject.

I said that I am a messenger of God, entrusted by Him to tell the truth.

So are you, if you believe 1st Thessalonians 2:4.

I do not hold myself out as any expert on the Bible.

I'm just a messenger.

I'm sure there are books you can buy that can do a better job discussing all the different issues surrounding this topic.
But, I do believe God gave me this ministry for a reason.
And it isn't to run away from this subject.

I have gay friends, straight friends, Christian friends, and non-Christian friends. And I love them all in the Lord.

God has given me a calling as a minister to strengthen weak believers in the Lord. Of course, I also want to win souls for Christ.

I write devotions to make the Bible fun and easy to study.
That's why I use the Living translation in the emails I write.
I also use many pictures and little cartoons within the printed books because I want to pull in folks who normally do not spend time studying the Word of God.

Ok.
Now, to the issue at hand.
How do I handle this Bible topic,
which has become such a divisive issue?

Here is how I feel today trying to write this devotion.
I feel I can't write about this subject.
I don't know where to begin.
I question whether I should write anything at all.

Maybe I should jump over this subject.
Focus on other things.
Focus on Jesus only.
I certainly do not want to alienate anyone.
I also don't want to lose any friends,
or hinder the presentation of the gospel.

But why be afraid of discussing it?
It is a Bible subject,
and so far, I haven't shied away from any Bible topic.
Why is this different?
And who made it different?
On any sunny day, it all appears very clear to me.
Then the mental clouds roll in, and I have no idea how to proceed.
Some how I get confused.

How do we show love towards each other,
and still differ on such a debatable issue?

How do we put into practice devotion #4, 'Accept Each Other's Differences'? The scriptures quoted in that devotion are still true.

This is such a clear Bible subject,
but there is so much confusion around it.
How can that be possible?
Isn't this exactly where Satan would want us to be?
Confused. Unsure of the Scripture. Weak. Doubting.
Questioning everything. Confronting nothing. Encouraging no one.

If I was the Devil, this is exactly what I would want to create.
I would create this perfect no-win situation.
I would accuse someone for loving,
.....and then accuse them for not loving.
Accuse them for not doing what the Bible says,
.....and then accuse them for doing what the Bible says.
Accuse them for being too accepting,
and thereby being weak on Bible standards,
.....and then accuse them for confronting others,
thereby being too dogmatic.
I would create a divisive subject,
and make it seem like others are creating the division.

What a perfect plan.

Well I say the Devil is a liar.
And I refuse to buy into his deception.
So I am writing this devotion no matter what the Devil says.
And no matter what the consequences may be.

Here we go.
I am going to quote from the same version of the Bible that I use each week, which is 'The Living Way', which is a paraphrased version in modern day English.
I say that because it actually uses the word "homosexual" in certain verses. But you need to know that I didn't use this version just for this devotion. It's the version I have used for every devotion I've written over the last several years.

I know there is a debate by some about the definitions of a few of these Hebrew and Greek words. But what I have seen is that the majority of well-known Bible language scholars do agree on the definitions and meanings of these words when they speak of homosexuality.

There are those who teach that the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah is actually the sin of rape, not the sin of homosexuality.

There are others who say the real problem was that the people of Sodom were inhospitable.

There are those who teach that, in Romans chapter one, the apostle Paul is really talking about lust being a problem, or that having unnatural affections is wrong, not that homosexuality is a sin.

They say that since having homosexual affection is normal, anyone not following true love, (gay or straight) is what is considered an unnatural affection, not that homosexuality is an unnatural affection. And on, and on, and on.

I'm not going to take the time to discuss all of these arguments. I'm just going to give you some of the scriptures to read, and let you decide. You can also do your own research of these passages, just like in our other devotions.

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Let's start at the beginning.

Genesis 2:18, 21-24, 1:27

"The Lord God said, 'It isn't good for man to be alone; so I will make a companion for him, a helper suited to his needs. The Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep, and He took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place from where He had removed it, and made the rib into a woman, and brought it to the man.

And Adam said, 'She is part of my own bone and flesh. Her name is woman because she was taken out of a man.' Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother and is joined to his wife in such a way that the two become one flesh....

So God made man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them."

So God started everything by making humans as male and female. Specifically, He made a man, and then made "*a companion for him, a helper suited to his needs.*"A woman.

God made a man, and a woman, to be together in the Garden of Eden.

Jesus shows that the Old Testament beginning still applied in New Testament times. Matthew 19:3-6

"Some Pharisees came and tried to trap him with this question: 'Should a man be allowed to divorce his wife for any reason?' 'Haven't you read the Scriptures?' Jesus replied. 'They record that from the beginning 'God made them male and female.' And he said, 'This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is forever joined to his wife, and the two are united into one. So no man should divorce what God has joined together.'"

- 1) So Jesus wants us to read the Scriptures.
- 2) Jesus said that God made us male and female.
- 3) And Jesus confirmed that God came up with the beginning idea of a man and a woman being united into one.

Let's continue.

Most of the specifics concerning the Mosaic Law, which was given to the Jews, may have only applied to them, but it is very interesting to see how the Old Testament God viewed homosexual behavior.

See below:

Leviticus 18:22

"You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female, it is an abomination."

Leviticus 20:13

"The penalty for homosexual acts is death to both parties. They have committed a detestable act and are guilty of a capital offense."

It seems mighty clear that homosexuality was seen as a sin, at least for Old Testament Jews.

In the Old Testament there were other things that brought the death penalty. Some of these things did change in New Testament times especially under Roman rule.

There were foods which Jews originally were told not to eat, but in the New Testament they were told they could now eat. (see Acts 10)

So did everything change from Old Testament to New Testament times?

Has the Old Testament God changed His mind about homosexuality being a sin?

Let's read what the New Testament says concerning homosexuality.

Romans 1:26-27

"That is why God abandoned them to their shameful desires. Even the women turned against the natural way to have sex, and instead indulged in sex with each other. And the men, instead of having normal sexual relationships with women, burned with lust for each other. Men did shameful things with other men and, as a result, suffered within themselves the penalty they so richly deserved."

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

"Don't you know that those who do wrong will have no share in the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, who are idol worshipers, adulterers, male prostitutes, homosexuals, thieves, greedy people, drunkards, abusers, and swindlers-- none of these will have a share in the Kingdom of God."

There was a time when some of you were just like that, but now your sins have been washed away, and you have been set apart for God. You have been made right with God because of what the Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit of our God have done for you."

I think the most important part of the passage above is:

" There was a time when some of you were just like that, but now your sins have been washed away."

That is the beautiful part of the whole passage.

Sin can be forgiven.All sin.

I think the Bible is clear both in the Old Testament and the New Testament that God considers the behavior of homosexuality to be a sin.

I can hear my gay friends say:

'You just want to infringe on my rights because I'm gay'.

That is not true at all.

But, if you are a believer, you should remember something.

It's not about your rights.

For we only have a right to worship and obey God,
and love each other.

"Jesus replied, 'Love the Lord God with all your heart, soul, and mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. The second most important is similar: Love your neighbor as much as you love yourself. All the other commandments and all the demands of the prophets stem from these two laws and are fulfilled if you obey them. Keep only these and you will find that you are obeying all the others.' Matt 22:37"

The Bible is clear that we are to love each other.
Yes, we are to abhor sin. All sin. As God does.
But we are also to love the sinner, as God does.
For we are all sinners, and Jesus died for sinners.

Sinners who accept Christ will go to Heaven.
Sinners who die rejecting Christ will go to Hell.
The Bible is clear on all of this.

It's not the kind of sins, or the amount of sins,
that makes the difference.
It's whether we believe in Jesus Christ or not,
that makes the difference.

It is obvious that Christians can still commit sin.
That is why 1st John 1: 9 was given to believers.
We are to confess our sins, and try to live faithful and holy for the
Lord. (devotion #146, 'Faithful and Holy')

It is not a specific sin that you can commit which could send you to
Hell. No matter what that sin is from the list of sins we agree on.
It's being born a sinner, who dies without Christ as Savior,
which seals your fate.
All other actions by a lost person, or a saved person, can be forgiven.
That is the power of the shed blood of Jesus Christ.
Hold on to that one idea. It's important.

You can be forgiven.
You can be forgiven for the sin of fornication.
You can be forgiven for the sin of adultery.
You can be forgiven for the sin of homosexuality.

So can you be a Christian, and be gay?
The answer is obvious.....Yes.
A Christian can commit any sin that a lost person can commit.

I had a gay male friend of mine, who is a believer in the Lord Jesus,
say: "Does God expect me to stop my normal inclination
to be with another male?"

My answer was:
"I also have the normal inclination to have sex with five young
women every night of the week,
but I don't yield to that inclination either."

God expects us to obey what He says.

“But God made me this way!”

I’m sorry, but I disagree with you on this concept.
I don’t think God made you a homosexual
any more than He made me a fornicator.

We’re both just sinners who need to turn to Jesus,
and turn away from our sins.

So in closing let’s try to apply some of this to real life.

If we know our Christian friend is having an affair,
should we say something?
Or should we just accept them in love, and shut our mouths?

Should we attempt to convince them to stop the sinful behavior?
And encourage them to behave in a way that honors the Lord?
Or, should we not care whether they obey the Word of God?
What is the answer?

“Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are spiritual should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. Share each other’s burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ.” Galatians 6:1-2

If someone is truly my friend, and knows Jesus as Savior,
then I will try to talk to them about any sinful behavior.
This is what the Bible says to do.

This is one of the reasons why we develop friendships
in relational ministry.

The most important reason is to try and win someone to Christ.
And so we can give spiritual help to each other.

Alright, I’m finished with this marathon devotion.
I have written many other devotions for years.
This devotion is number 190.
So far, no one has had a problem with one word I’ve written.
I wonder whether that will stay the same after this devotion.

I’ve written a devotion saying homosexuality is a sin.
It is what I believe the Bible teaches.
This is not a hate document, or gay bashing in any fashion.
I state clearly again: I love each and every one of you.

The question might now be,
'Can you still accept me for what I believe?'
Can you, "*Love your neighbor as much as you love yourself.*"?
Matt 22:39

I hope my gay friends will still read my devotions,
and love me in the Lord, in the same way that I will love them.

We may differ on a very important issue, but I for one will not stop
being kind and loving to every sinner I meet.
The lost sinners,..... and the Christian sinners.

May the Lord bless you for reading His Word.

191 Psalms Four

Psalms 4: 3-6

*"Mark this well: The Lord has set apart the redeemed for Himself.
Therefore He will listen to me and answer when I call to Him.
Stand before the Lord in awe, and do not sin against Him.
Lie quietly upon your bed in silent meditation. Put your trust in the
Lord, and offer Him pleasing sacrifices. Many say that God will never
help us. Prove them wrong, O Lord, by letting the light of your face
shine down upon us."*

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What beautiful words. Look at them closely.

"The Lord has set apart the redeemed for Himself"
Because He loves us. He has saved us.
We belong to Him, and to no one else.
"Stand before the Lord in awe" because of who He is.
He is Merciful. Loving. Powerful. Gaze upon Him in wonder.

*"Lie quietly upon your bed
in silent meditation"*

Oh how calming this feels.
How soothing to lie quietly
and think of the Lord.
How good He is to us.
How He has blessed us.
How He loves us.
How safe we are.



To lie quietly, and to meditate on His Word.
This is the picture of serenity.

*“Pity me, O Lord, for I am weak. Heal me, for my body is sick,
and I am upset and disturbed.....
Come, O Lord, and make me well.” (Ps 6: 2-4)*



The other night I was awakened in
the middle of the night sick.
My serenity was broken.
I had been having reoccurring
stomach cramps that month from a
new food allergy.
I had yet to discover the allergy,
so I was repeatedly sick,
and unable to get my rest.

Sometimes I think the Lord wakes us up to tell us something,
or to make us spend some time in prayer.
So we need to be aware of Him in everything that is happening to us.
Including our insomnia or sickness.
This particular episode of sickness was getting very tiresome,
and I was weary.
I prayed and told the Lord that I was willing to go through this,
if it was what He wanted,
but I also wondered if He would heal me of this.

So, as I lay there in bed in the middle of the night, I placed my hand
on my head and asked God to take the sickness away from me.
I actually said: ‘Be healed in the name of Jesus’.

Immediately, the pain completely left.
And I was able to drift back off to sleep.

Now maybe you don’t believe in this stuff,
or maybe this seems like a small thing.
But I think of this passage in Psalms four when I remember this event.

*“Many say that God will never help us.
Prove them wrong, O Lord.....”*

“Therefore He will listen to me and answer when I call to Him.”

I believe He does listen,
and He does answer, just like it says in Psalms 4.

192 A Cup Of Revival

Psalms 85: 4,6-7

“Now bring us back to loving you, O Lord... Oh revive us! Then your people can rejoice in you again. Pour out your love and kindness on us, Lord, and grant us your salvation.”

Psalms 51: 10,12

“Create in me a new , clean heart, O God, filled with clean thoughts and right desires. Restore to me again the joy of your salvation, and help me obey you.”

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Revive us again!Isn't that how the old hymn goes?
This isn't just for all the back-sliders out there.
(Although that would include many of us any way)
Revive us again, should be a constant cry for all of us.
A time of spiritual renewal.

I need this each morning,
just like a cup of coffee.

So pour me a hot cup of
revival.



“Oh revive us! Then your people can rejoice in you again.”
“Restore to me again the joy of your salvation”

I want to rejoice again.
I want to be filled with joy, Lord. Lift my heart!
Forgive my sins. Please take away my pain. Take away my sadness.
And *“bring us back to loving you”*.

“Pour out your love and kindness..” on me, My Lord.
Because that is the key to the joyful song in my heart.

I don't want to be conformed to this world.
I want to be transformed by the renewing of my mind,
and the revival of my heart.

“Create in me a new , clean heart, O God, filled with clean thoughts and right desires” and help me obey you.”

Boy do I need this Jesus.
In this world of rage, apathy, lust, and greed, I need to pray daily for a
clean heart. And I need Your help Lord, “*help me obey you.*”.

What’s great about this whole idea
is that God is willing to answer this prayer.

*“ I will give you a new heart. I will give you new and right desires,
and put a new spirit within you. I will take out your stony hearts of
sin, and give you new hearts of love. And I will put my Spirit within
you, so that you will obey my laws,
and do whatever I command.”* Ezekiel 36:26-27

I am ready Lord..... Pour me a large hot cup of your revival.



193 Look At The Fields

John 4: 3-4, 7-9, 26, 28-30, 34-35, 39, 42

*“Jesus left Judea to return to the province of Galilee. He had to go
through Samaria on the way.... Soon a Samaritan woman came to
draw water from the well, and Jesus asked her for a drink. He was
alone at the time as the disciples had gone into the village to buy
some food.... The woman was surprised that a Jew would ask a
'despised Samaritan' for anything—usually they wouldn't even speak
to them—and she remarked about this to Jesus”...*

(Jesus has a conversation with the woman about 'Living Water', and shows that He knows all about the details of her life)



“Then Jesus told her, ‘I am the Messiah’The woman left her water-pot beside the well, and went back to the village and told everyone, ‘Come and meet a man who told me everything I ever did! Can this be the Messiah?’ So the people came streaming from the village to see Him”

(When the disciples came back with food, they asked Jesus if He wanted to eat, but Jesus said..)

“My nourishment comes from doing the will of God who sent me, and from finishing His work.....Look around you! Vast fields of human souls are ripening all around us, and are ready now for reaping”

“Many from the Samaritan village believed He was the Messiah because of the woman’s report: ‘He told me everything I ever did!’ ‘He is indeed the Savior of the world.’”

“At the end of two days’ stay, Jesus went on into Galilee.”

Here it is in 21st century English:

You, as a servant of the Most High God, must leave the nice church area, where all the religious folks are wearing their nice suits and hats, and go back to the upper middle-class sub-division.

On the way, you must travel through the back part of the city where the lower-class live. You know, the poor, the homeless, the prostitutes on the street corner, the drug addicts, the drunks at the bar, and the perverts at the adult book store.

In other words, the place where all the sinners live.

Now, let me point out something very important about this passage.

Where is Jesus when He says to the disciples, *“Look around you! Vast fields of human souls are ripening all around us, and are ready now for reaping”* ??

Where is He?

HE IS IN THE MIDDLE OF SIN CITY.
NOT IN THE CLEAN, WELL-DRESSED CHURCH.

Did you get that?
Where does He want you to LOOK?
....Where the sinners are.

It's in the darkest places,
that you find the biggest sinners, awaiting salvation.
They are ready to be found, and redeemed by Christ the Lord.

In Luke 19, we read about the tax collector named Zacchaeus. Jesus went to this man's house to visit, *“but the crowds were displeased. ‘He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner,’ they grumbled...”* (Luke 19:7)

Zacchaeus gets saved, and Jesus says, *“This man was one of the lost sons of Abraham, and I, the Messiah, have come to search for and to save such souls as his.”* (Luke 19:10)

“I, the Messiah, have come to seek and to save the lost.”
(Matthew 18:11)

What a great sermon.
We should go and do likewise.
Seek them out. Testify. Love them into the Kingdom.

Pick them up and bring them to Jesus.Whatever it takes.

One final note.

Did you see who it was being used by the Lord in Samaria?
It wasn't the disciples who had gone to get Jesus a happy meal.
They didn't come back with people
"streaming from the village to see Him".
It wasn't a seminary graduate, or a Doctor of Theology.
It wasn't the well-bred upper-class socialite.
Or the great leader or Sunday school teacher of any church.

No, it was the low-class Samaritan woman who, with excitement and passion as a new convert, *"went back to the village and told everyone, 'Come and meet a man....!!!"* Come meet Jesus!!!

"So the people came streaming from the village to see Him".....
And *"Many from the Samaritan village believed He was the Messiah because of the woman's report..."*

Are you listening?!
How passionate are you about Jesus?
When was the last time you went in search of a sinner,
to introduce them to Him?

Can you honestly say that *"My nourishment comes from doing the will of God who sent me, and from finishing His work"??*

Oh my friends, Please....Look at the fields!



194 Bread Of Life

John 6:15-27, 31-36

(The following event occurred right after Jesus fed the 5000 men—plus women and children—with a miracle using only five barley loaves of bread, and two fish.)

“...Jesus went higher into the mountains alone. That evening His disciples went down to the shore to wait for Him. But as darkness fell and Jesus still hadn’t come back, they got into the boat and headed out across the Sea of Galilee, toward Capernaum.

But soon a gale wind swept down upon them as they rowed, and the sea grew very rough. They were three or four miles out when suddenly they saw Jesus walking toward the boat!

They were terrified, but He called out to them and told them not to be afraid. Then they were willing to let Him in, and immediately the boat was where they were going.

The next morning, back across the sea, crowds began gathering on the shore waiting to see Jesus. For they knew that He and His disciples had come over together, and that the disciples had gone off in their boat, leaving Jesus behind.

Several small boats from Tiberias were nearby, so when the people saw that Jesus wasn’t there, nor His disciples, they got into the boats and went across to Capernaum to look for Him.

*When they arrived and found Jesus, they said,
‘Sir, how did you get here?’*

Jesus replied, ‘The truth of the matter is that you want to be with me because I fed you, not because you believe in me. But you shouldn’t be so concerned about perishable things like food. No, spend your energy seeking the eternal life that I, the Messiah, can give you. For God the Father has sent me for this very purpose.’

...They replied, Give us free bread every day, like our fathers had while they journeyed through the wilderness. As the scriptures say, ‘Moses gave them bread from heaven.’

Jesus said, ‘Moses didn’t give it to them. My Father did. And now He offers you true Bread from heaven. The true Bread is a Person—the one sent by God from heaven, and He gives life to the world.’

‘Sir,’ they said, ‘give us that bread every day of our lives.’

Jesus replied, ‘I am the Bread of Life. No one coming to me will ever be hungry again. Those believing in me will never thirst. But the trouble is, as I have told you before, you haven’t believed even though you have seen me.’

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Gimme, gimme, gimme! Feed me!
(Can’t you hear them?)
Where’s the bread?! Where’s the beef?!
It’s pitiful isn’t it?

Now, let’s look at two things:

Number 1) GOD GIVES BREAD

“They replied, Give us free bread every day, like our fathers had while they journeyed through the wilderness. As the scriptures say, ‘Moses gave them bread from heaven.’”

Actually, this is **not** what the scriptures say.
It does not say Moses gave the manna. (bread).
The scriptures clearly state that the Lord gave this manna.

Here it is. Read it from Exodus 16: 8,11-12, 15.
*“The Lord will give you meat to eat in the evening, and bread in the morning.....
And Jehovah said to Moses, ‘I have heard their complaints. Tell them, ‘In the evening you will have meat and in the morning you will be filled with bread, and you shall know that I am Jehovah your God.’””*

Jehovah gave them bread, yet they see only Moses, and a free meal.
And things haven’t changed.
Same issue. And now a different group of people.
Here comes Jesus performing miracles right before their eyes,
yet they are too short-sighted to see beyond the meal ticket.

These folks know what the Torah says concerning Moses, God, and the manna. But they don’t want to believe.
They don’t want to see and obey God.

Number 2) JESUS, THE BREAD OF LIFE

Now think about this next interesting point.
The crowd saw the disciples get into a boat, and leave Jesus behind.
They also know how many boats they have on that side of the sea.
When they find Jesus on the other side of the sea, the crowd should
have suspected that something miraculous had just happened.
I mean, they suspected Jesus didn't use a boat.
'Sir, how did you get here?'
They do ask a very good question.
But they are not really looking for the miracle, or the Messiah.
Just the free buffet at the church.

Jesus could have answered their question with this answer,
'I walked across the sea! I didn't need a boat!'
An answer like that
would plainly reveal Himself as the Messiah, again.

But He knows they aren't interested in being convinced of this.
If they let this kind of information sink in,
then they may have to bend their knees to God.
They may have to change how they are living,
if they believe in Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God.

They don't really want to see the miracle,
because they don't want to see the God behind the miracle.

It is still that way for many today.
People choose their blind spot when it comes to seeing miracles,
so that they don't have to see the God of those miracles.

Are you a little like that sometimes?
Want the free bread, but not the Bread of Life?



Want Heaven and all the good stuff,
but don't want to carry your cross in faith?
You don't really want to give up your life,
to serve and worship the Lord.

Don't be this way.
Look at the miracles God has done in your life,
and see the God behind those miracles. *"Spend your energy seeking
the eternal life that I, the Messiah, can give you."*

Stop, and recognize the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Bread of Life.

195 The Lamb Of God

Exodus 12: 1-2, 6-7, 13 (Passover)

*"Then the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, 'From now on, this month
will be the first and most important month of the Jewish calendar..'"*

(The month of Nisan,
which is the first month on the Jewish sacred calendar.)

*"On the evening of the fourteenth day of this month, the chosen lamb
shall be killed, and its blood shall be placed on the two side-frames of
the door of every home, and on the panel above the door."*

(In the same motion as making the sign of the cross.....)

(1400 years later,
on this exact same day on the Jewish calendar, Jesus was crucified)

(Jesus, our Passover Lamb, died on the evening of Nisan 14th)

*"The blood you have placed on the doorposts will be the proof that
you have obeyed me, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you,
and I will not destroy your firstborn children when I smite the land of
Egypt."*

John 1:29

*"The next day John saw Jesus coming towards him, and he said,
'Look! There is the Lamb of God, who takes away the world's sin.'"*

1 Peter 1: 18-20

“God paid a ransom to save you from the impossible road to heaven which your fathers tried to take, and the ransom He paid was not mere gold or silver, as you well know.

But He paid for you with the precious lifeblood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. God chose Him for this purpose long before the world began, but only recently was He brought into public view, in these last days, as a blessing to you.”

Revelation 13:8 *“...in the book of Life, of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”*

+++++

“the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”

“for this purpose long before the world began”

I don't know if it is possible to fully grasp this idea,
because it is so BIG.
Think about this for a moment.
Before God made Adam and Eve,
He already had the plan of salvation thought out.
God provided the way of redemption, because He knew we would sin.

He knew we would lose everything,
including our fellowship with God.
He went ahead and created us,
and prepared the way for us to get back to Him.

He created us with this plan in mind,
because He wanted to have fellowship with us.
The Lord was already willing to come as our sacrifice.

Isn't that a wonderful thought?

The Lord your God wanted a relationship with you.
He planned for it.
Down to the smallest detail.
He knew we would blow it, but He made a plan to make it all better.
And the plan was in the works even before we arrived here.

That's how much God wants us, to be with Him.

The Lamb of God was willing to die, before we were ever born.

He gave us the perfect picture of this sacrifice,
when He instituted the Passover.
And He then followed it with the perfect sacrifice at the cross.

Jesus.
Our Lamb.
Sacrificed for us.

Even though we are sinners, and certainly deserve God's judgment,
instead:
"when I see the blood, I will pass over you".



196 Preincarnate Jesus

Joshua 5:13 to 6:2 “*And it came to pass, when Joshua was praying about how to battle Jericho, that when he lifted up his eyes, a Man appeared with a sword drawn.*”

Joshua walked over to him and asked, ‘Are you friend or foe?’ ‘I am the Captain of the Lord’s army’, he replied.

Joshua fell down with his face on the ground, and worshiped Him, and said, ‘What do you want me, your servant, to do my Lord?’

And the Captain of the Lord’s army said, ‘Take off your shoes, for this is holy ground.’

And Joshua did so.

The gates of Jericho were kept tightly shut because the people were afraid of the Israelis; no one was allowed to go in or out. But the Lord said to Joshua, ‘Jericho, and its king, and all its mighty warriors are already defeated, for I have given them to you.’”

+++++

Who was this “*Captain of the Lord’s army*” mentioned in this passage?

While you’re thinking about that question, here is another: Who do we bow down to, and worship?

Are we to worship men?

No.So this was not just a man.

Are we to worship angels?

No.So this was not an angel.

We are to worship the Lord God only.

So who is this “*Captain of the Lord’s army*” that Joshua “worshiped”?

There can be only one answer: The Lord God.

Now, let’s look at the definition of the word: Incarnate.

Incarnate: **embodied in flesh**, especially human form, to present in concrete shape or form, the bodily form assumed by a deity, or supernatural being.

So when talking about the Preincarnate Jesus, the word Preincarnate means: “The human form taken by God the Son, before He (Jesus) was born as a baby in the manger in Bethlehem.”

Since we believe the Bible clearly teaches that Jesus IS God, (John chapter one) we therefore believe that Jesus existed before the Bethlehem manger. When **He** (God/Jehovah/Yahweh) decides to show Himself in human form, the person that you would see would undoubtedly be Jesus.

We talked about this once before in Devotion #99, “The Face of God”.

In that devotion we gave scripture that showed that no man has ever seen God. (Jn 1:18) And that no man can see God and live. (Exodus 33:20)

Yet the Bible gives examples of people talking to God, face to face. (Exodus 33:11)

When the Lord God appeared in the Old Testament as a man, or as “The Angel of the Lord”, we call those appearances ‘Theophanies’— ‘Preincarnate appearances of the God the Son’ (Examples: Genesis 18:2, 32:24, Exodus 23:23, Judges 13:9)

So the passage for today, from Joshua chapter five, is another prime example.

Imagine seeing Jesus standing there “*with a sword drawn*”.
Whoa!

Quite the scene, isn’t it?
I think we would have asked the exact type of question.
‘Are you here as my friend, or my foe?’

And pray it’s not foe, or you’re in big trouble.

Good thing He was, and is,
a friend to those who believe in the Lord God.

So come to Him with respect.
“*Take off your shoes, for this is holy ground.*”

We should do as Joshua did.....,
fall with our face to the ground and worship Him!

197 Face of the (sun) Son of God

Revelation 1:13,16

“And standing among them was one who looked like Jesus who called Himself the Son of Man.....He held seven stars in His right hand, and a sharp double-edged sword in His mouth, and His face shone like the power of the sun in unclouded brilliance.”

Matthew 17:1-2

“Six days later Jesus took Peter, James, and his brother John to the top of a high and lonely hill, and as they watched Jesus was transfigured before them, His appearance changed so that His face shone like the sun, and His clothing as white as the light.”



So we have a passage in Revelation, and the Transfiguration of Jesus.

Metaphors in the verses of Revelation?, or real event in Matthew?

Apparently, both.

Prophets, who give revelation in symbols, dreams, and metaphors, are sometimes hard to understand.

Like the passage in Revelation where he writes about the stars in His hand, a sword in His mouth (Word of God), and Jesus' face shining like the sun.

The prophet Daniel also wrote in metaphors like this when he wrote about Jesus "...*and His face was like the appearance of lightning.*"
(Daniel 10:6)

Was that just a metaphor?.... Probably..

But then, we read what Matthew writes about the Transfiguration of Jesus. It's a very famous passage where Jesus is seen in His glory. The disciples say His face shone like the sun.

So they saw His face like this. This wasn't just a metaphor.
His face really did shine!
How cool is that!
Is this how we will see Jesus in Heaven?
Will we be shining also?

We have written before on the subject of how light is an important topic in the Bible, especially in connection to God, and to believers. (Devotion #54, "Be a Beacon", Devotion #79, "Does Your Face Shine", and Devotion #185, "Father of Lights")

These connected threads through out scripture are fascinating.
John 8:12 "*Then Jesus said, 'I am the Light of the world'*"
I John 1:5 "*God is Light*", James 1:17 "*God, the Father of Lights*"
I Thessalonians 5:5 "*For you are children of the Light*"

He is light, we is light, we be shining!
This is great.

I don't know about you, but I can't wait to see Jesus' shining face!

198 A Broken Spirit. A Broken Heart.

Having a broken spirit and a broken heart,
doesn't sound like a good thing does it?
We want everything working at 100 percent,
or at least, fixed and up to speed.
Right? We don't want broken stuff!

But I can honestly tell you this.
I strive daily to remember my broken spirit, and my broken heart.
To remain on my knees, completely dependent on God.
And Yes, God has restored to me the joy of His salvation.
(Psalms 51:10,12)

He has given me a new heart,
and filled me with His Spirit and His power.
So now, it's all good.

But I think back and remember the brokenness. For in it, I found Him.
And in finding Him, I found forgiveness and new life.

Our scripture for the week was written by King David after Nathan,
the prophet, had come to inform David of God's judgment against
him, because of his adultery with Bathsheba, and his murder of Uriah,
her husband.

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Psalms 51: 16-17, 7, 13

*"You don't want penance; if you did, how gladly I would do it!
You aren't interested in offerings burned before you on the altar.
It is a broken spirit you want—remorse and penitence.
A broken and a contrite heart, O God, you will not ignore.*

*Sprinkle me with the cleansing blood, and I shall be clean again.
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.....
Then I will teach your ways to other sinners, and they—guilty like
me—will repent, and return to you."*

+++++

I understand King David's prayer.
And I can also testify that our God is a God of forgiveness.
He is a God of second, third, and "seventy times seven" chances.
He truly is a loving and kind God.
A merciful Father.

*“So overflowing is God’s love towards us
that He took away all our sins through the blood of Jesus Christ..”*
Ephesians 1:7

Come back to Him with a broken spirit and a broken heart.
For He will not ignore you.
You have His promise.

Come back to Him.

199 Look At My Heart Lord

I Samuel 16:7
*“But the Lord saidI don’t make decisions the way you do.
Men judge by outward appearance, but I look at a man’s heart,
thoughts, and intentions.”*

Isaiah 55:8
*“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my
ways, says the Lord.”*

I Kings 8:38-39
(King Solomon’s prayer at the dedication of the Temple)
*“When the people realize their sin and pray toward this Temple, hear
them from Heaven and forgive them and answer all who have made
an honest confession: for you know each heart.”*

+++++

“I look at a man’s heart, thoughts, and intentions.”

I am going to take this idea in two different directions. ..So hang on.

First direction:
When we see a smiling face who is neatly-dressed and well-spoken;
we may say, ‘They look like a nice person!’
Because we judge based on the outward appearance.
But God knows whether they believe in Jesus Christ.
God knows how what they really think, and what they really want.
God knows their heart. They may be neatly-dressed, and unsaved.

Now in reverse direction:
Outwardly we may look like any other sinner,
but God can see the heart of a saint, if we know Christ.

We may sin, but God can forgive. And inwardly renew us.
God can bless us. God can use us in His service.

On the outward appearance, we may look kind of rough around the edges, But God knows our "*heart, thoughts, and intentions.*"
God can forgive
and "*answer all who have made an honest confession*"

In the words of the old country preacher:
GOD CAN STRIKE STRAIGHT WITH A CROOKED STICK.

I've been studying the Old Testament for the last few weeks,
and it appears to me that the great Patriarchs of the faith were actually
just a bunch of sinners.

- 1) Moses was a murderer.
- 2) Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were all liars.
- 3) Judah liked prostitutes.
- 4) The other 10 brothers (Patriarchs of the tribes of Israel) who sold Joseph into slavery,...instead of just killing him. (How nice of them.)
- 5) By the way, it was Judah who came up with the idea of making some money by selling his bother Joseph into slavery.
- 6) And finally let's not forget my favorite, King David, who was an adulterer and murderer.

The more I read about these guys, the happier I got. ...Why?
Because if God can use these sinners,
maybe God can forgive and use me too.

And our devotional thought for today is;
God can forgive and use you as well!

God knows your future.
He knows what good you are capable of, IF, you come to Him for forgiveness, direction, and Holy Spirit indwelling power.
And yes, this maybe a daily trip back for you.

Thankfully, God is a God of mercy and grace.
So come back again to Him today.

And remember, God looks at the heart.



Lost Heart?



Saved heart?

*“But the Lord saidI don’t make decisions the way you do.
Men judge by outward appearance, but I look at a man’s heart,
thoughts, and intentions.” I Samuel 16:7*

200 Face To Face

2 John 12

*“I have much I wish to communicate with you, but I do not want to use
paper and ink. Instead, I hope to visit you and talk with you face to
face, so that our joy may be complete.”*

3 John 13-14

*“I have much to say but I don’t want to write it, for I hope to see you
face to face and then we will have much to talk about together.”*

+++++

It is easy to fire off an email to someone,
in this age of electronic communication.

However,
there are times when nothing but a face-to-face visit will work.

We know that verbal skills are a very small portion of communica-
tion. Written words have their limitations as well.

Body language, voice tone, and our expressions make up the majority of our overall communication. This cannot be seen through a letter or electronic medium.

From the Christian standpoint we get an added perspective.
Because the Holy Spirit wants to use YOU as His communication device. Your smile. Your kind eyes. Your gentle approach.
Your empathetic prayer.
Your admonition,... or warning.
Your words. Your tone of voice.
The touch of your hand on a shoulder.
To share in someone's tears, or laughter.
To encourage, instruct, or uplift.
You are a walking vessel of Holy Spirit power.
A representative of the Lord Himself.

History shows that people were always impacted when they met Jesus face to face.

And as His representatives now here on earth, something happens when we speak and act in His name.
("Know Who You Are", dev #19, "Speaking For God", dev #92)

The Lord knew the importance of meeting people face to face.
We, therefore, need to learn the value of our personal involvement in each others lives. To see our place in the CHAIN OF MINISTRY.
From God, through you, to others.

As far as we know, Jesus never took "pen and paper" to write anything. That's interesting isn't it?
But look at the impact of His face to face ministry.
More has been written about Him than any other person in history.
Of course Jesus knew the value of the written word.
That's why we have the Bible.
And He promises that His Word will never come back void.
(Isaiah 55:11)

But think about it,
Jesus used people to write scripture,
used fisherman to give witness,
used disciples to preach the gospel,
and uses HUMANS to minister WITH and FOR God.

".....I do not want to use paper and ink. Instead, I hope to visit you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete."

2 John 12

John knew that being face to face with those he ministered to was important. And for John, it meant some major trouble to get from one place to another.

It wasn't as simple as getting into a car, or hopping onto an airplane. John's desire and determination to visit and talk face to face reinforces the importance of one-on-one personal communication. One-on-one communication and connection with others, and with Jesus.

“that OUR joy may be complete.”

In other words, something happens to you as well as to the person you're seeing. That is what happens when we are in HIS presence, because remember He said:

“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them.” Matthew 18:20

Remember the importance of being face to face, to communicate, connect, and minister.



201 God is Sovereign

Let's start with a definition.

Sovereign: Possessing supreme authority, jurisdiction, power, excellence, and greatness.

Now an example:

The book of Jonah shows God in control of the storm that buffets the ship, in control of the whale that swallows Jonah, in control of a plant that grows on land, and in control of the worm that eats the plant....

My friend, that's being in complete control!

That is God being Sovereign!

We serve the Lord God who can calm the waves of the sea...
by speaking a word.

Speak to a bird to deliver food to a prophet.
Reverse the rotation of the earth to make the sun back up.
Tell a lion not to eat one man,
and then allow the lion to tear another man to pieces.

Cause crops to multiple, or wither and die.
Control a host of locust, or organize a stampede of frogs.
Turn water into blood, or into wine.
Make two of every kind of animal get into a boat.
Direct one specific star to shine brightly over a manager.
Launch hail from the sky to hammer an army.
Make a wall of stone fall down at the sound of a trumpet.
And stand water up on end to part a sea.

We serve a Sovereign God.

Now look at God's Word.

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II Samuel 2:2,6-8

"No one is a Holy as the Lord. There is no other God, nor any Rock like our God....The Lord kills, The Lord give life. He can send you to Hell, or resurrect you to life. Some He causes to be poor, and others to be rich. He cuts one down, and lifts another up. He lifts the poor from the dust, yes, from a pile of ashes, and treats them as princes, sitting in the seats of honor. For all the earth is the Lord's, and He has set the world in order."

I Chronicles 29:10-13

“O Lord God of our father Israel, praise your name forever and ever. Yours is the mighty power, and glory, and victory, and majesty. Everything in the heavens and earth is yours, O Lord; and this is your kingdom. We adore you as being in control of everything. Riches and honor come from you alone, and you are the Ruler of all mankind; your hand controls power and might, and it is at your discretion that men are made great and given strength. Now therefore, our God, we thank you, and praise your glorious name.”

Psalms 83:13-18

“O my God, blow them away like dust; like chaff before the wind—as a forest fire that roars across a mountain. Chase them with your fiery storms, tempests and tornadoes. Utterly disgrace them until they RECOGNIZE YOUR POWER AND NAME, O LORD. Make them failures in everything they do; let them be ashamed and terrified until they LEARN THAT YOU ALONE, JEHOVAH, ARE THE GOD ABOVE ALL GODS, IN SUPREME CHARGE OF ALL THE EARTH.”

Isaiah 45: 5-7,11-12

“I am Jehovah; there is no other God.....I am Jehovah and there is no one else. I alone am God. I form the light, and make the dark. I send good times, and give negative consequences for sin. I, Jehovah, am He who does these things. Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, Israel’s Creator, says: ‘What right do you have to question what I do? Who are you to command me concerning the work of my hands? I have made the earth and created man upon it. With my hands I have stretched out the heavens and commanded all the vast myriads of stars.”

Revelation 4:11

“O Lord, you are worthy to receive the glory and the honor and the power, for you have created all things. They were created and called into being by your act of will.”

Psalms 95:6

“Come kneel before the Lord our Maker.”

John 1:1-3,14

*“The Word was with God, the Word was God, ...
...and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”*

Philippians 2:10-11

“At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow in Heaven and on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

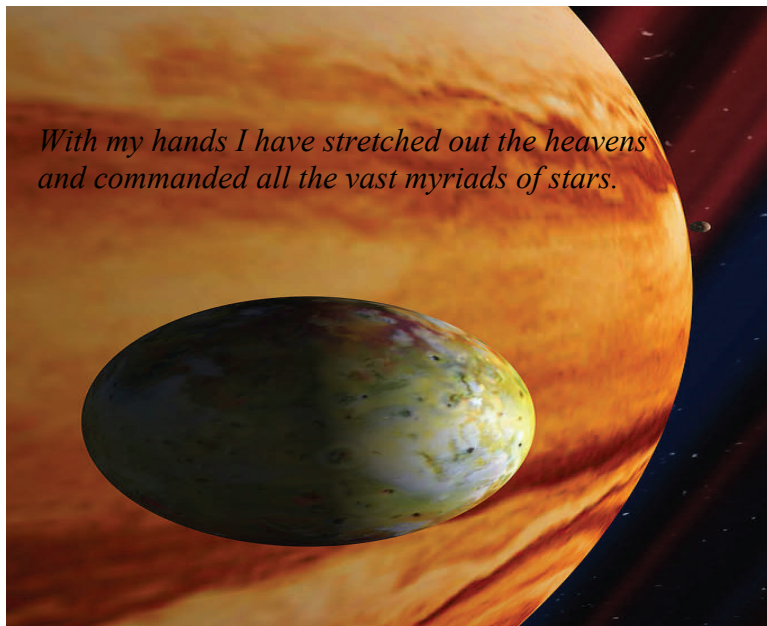
Today we serve the same God.
The same Old Testament/New Testament SOVEREIGN GOD.
He is in charge of everything.
He controls the details of your life.

Quit fighting with Him. Recognize His power and name.
And come to Him for help and direction.
Honor Him.
Acknowledge Him for who He is.
SOVEREIGN GOD.
Kneel before Him to praise and worship Him.

May this be your prayer:

“We adore you as being in control of everything...”
“You alone, Jehovah, are the God above all gods, in supreme charge of all the earth.”

“Now therefore, our God, we thank you, and praise your glorious name.”



202 A Singing God

Zephaniah 3:14-18

“Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. For the Lord will remove His hand of judgment, and disperse the armies of your enemy.

And the Lord Himself, the King of Israel, will live among you. At last your troubles will be over—you need fear no more.

On that day the announcement to Jerusalem will be, “Cheer up, don’t be afraid. For the Lord your God has arrived to live among you. He is a mighty Savior. He will give you victory. He will rejoice over you in great gladness; He will love you and not accuse you.”

Is that a joyous choir I hear?

*No, it is the **Lord Himself singing over you.**”*

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The concept of God is overwhelmingly complex.
Sovereign. Omnipotent. Omnipresent. Omniscient. Eternal.
A tri-personal Being who made us in His triune image.
A Spirit who took on human flesh and walked among us.

One of the reasons why God came in the flesh is so we could see the humanity in Him. That’s a mind blower to understand the concept.

Able to be tempted like us.
Able to suffer emotional and physical pain.
Able to bleed.
As a man needing to eat bread, rest, and sleep.

He also did this so we could comprehend Him singing.

Can’t you see Jesus singing? Rejoicing? Happy? Smiling?

He wants us to know Him.
To connect with Him.
To love Him.
To laugh with Him.

To sing with Him.

Do you get it now?

The passage above is bigger than just the Nation of Israel in the New Jerusalem. It's written so we can observe and examine our Lord, Savior, God, and King in reality.

The more you can visualize your God as someone who will sing over you, the more you will be able to grasp His full love for you.

“He will rejoice over you in great gladness; He will love you..”

How do you feel when you are in the presence of someone who loves you?Special, right?

Well that's what Heaven is going to be like.

God is love, and we are heading towards an eternity of spending time with Him. Yes, we will worship Him.

Yes, we will sing to Him.

But don't forget how good it's going to feel to be around our Lord who loves us with an unfailing love. And who is going to show it in His smile, His eyes, His face, His words.

He loves you, now and forever.

“We need have no fear of someone who loves us perfectly...”

I John 4:18

And He is going to sing, because He is rejoicing over us!



203 Remember the Fish. Recognize the Lord.

Luke 5:1-10

“One day as Jesus was preaching on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, great crowds pressed in on Him to listen to the word of God. He noticed two empty boats at the water’s edge, for the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. Stepping into one of the boats, Jesus asked Peter, it’s owner, to push it out into the water. So He sat in the boat and taught the crowds from there. When He finished speaking, He said to Peter, ‘Now go out where it is deeper, and let down your nets to catch some fish.’

‘Master’, Peter replied, ‘we worked hard all night and didn’t catch a thing. But if you say so, I’ll let the nets down again.’

And this time their nets were so full of fish they began to tear! A shout for help brought their partners in the other boat, and soon both boats were filled with fish and on the verge of sinking.

*When Peter realized what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus and said, ‘Oh Lord, please leave me—I’m too much of a sinner to be around you.’ For he was awestruck by the number of fish they had caught, as were the others with him. His partners, James and **JOHN**, the sons of Zebedee, were also amazed.”*

John 21: 1-14

(After the death and resurrection of Jesus)
(John had been at the foot of the cross and watched Jesus die.)
(John had also been at the empty tomb with Peter
to witness Jesus had risen)

*“Later Jesus appeared again to the disciples beside the Sea of Galilee. This is how it happened. Several of the disciples were there—Peter, Thomas, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, (**JOHN**), and two other disciples.*

*Peter said, ‘I’m going fishing.’
‘We’ll come too,’ they all said.
So they went out in the boat, but they caught nothing all night.*

*At dawn Jesus was standing on the beach, but the disciples couldn’t see who He was.
Jesus called out, ‘Fellows, have you caught any fish?’
‘No,’ they replied.*

*Then He said, 'Throw out your net on the right-hand side of the boat,
and you'll get some'*

*So they did, and they couldn't haul in the net
because there were so many fish in it.*

*Then **JOHN** said to Peter, 'It is the Lord!'*

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John saw the connection. He remembered the fish from before,
and it helped him see the presence of the Master.

Jesus uses past events that are connected in our lives to help us
recognize that it is He who is at work in our lives.

When something happens, we may not understand at first what
significance the event will have later when the Lord reveals Himself
to us.

When we recognize what is happening in our lives, and recognize that
Jesus is in the center of the events, and therefore is in the center of our
lives; we can then come to Him as our Lord and Master who loves us,
forgives us, and is taking complete care of us.

When we remember the fish, we can recognize the Lord who is
present, and in control.



204 Learn To Look Up

2 Chronicles 20: 1-6,10-17,22,24

“The three armies of the kings of Moab, Ammon, and the Meunites declared war on King Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah. Jehoshaphat heard that “a vast army is marching against you from beyond the Dead Sea, from Syria. It is already at Engedi.” Jehoshaphat was terrified by this news and begged the Lord for guidance.

So he announced that all the people of Judah should go without food in fasting with penitence and intercession before God. People from all across the nation came to Jerusalem to plead unitedly to God with Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat stood among them as they gathered at the new court of the Temple, and prayed this prayer:

O Lord God of our fathers—the only God in the Heavens, the Ruler of the kingdoms of the earth—you are so powerful, so mighty. Who can stand against you?

....And now we see what the armies of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir are doing. You wouldn't let our ancestors invade those nations when Israel left Egypt, so we went around and didn't destroy them.

Now see how they reward us.

For they have come to throw us out of the land which you have given us. O our God, won't you stop them?

We have no way to protect ourselves against this mighty army.

We don't know what to do, but WE ARE LOOKING UP TO YOU.”

As the people from every part of Judah stood before the Lord with their little ones, wives, and children, the Spirit of the Lord came upon one of the men standing there—Jahaziel, who said:

“Listen to me, all you people of Judah and Jerusalem, and you, O king Jehoshaphat. The Lord says, Don't be afraid, Don't be paralyzed by this mighty army. For the battle is not yours, but God's. Tomorrow, go down and attack them.”

The next morning the people starting singing and praising God.

And at the moment they began to sing and to praise the Lord, the Lord caused the armies of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir to begin fighting among themselves, and they destroyed each other.

So when the army of Judah arrived at the watchtower that looks out over the wilderness, as far as they could see there were dead bodies lying on the ground—not a single one of the enemy had escaped.”

It's not about your problems.
It's not about your circumstances.
It's not about the trouble that surrounds you.

It's about the Lord God.

Get your eyes off of the situation.

Learn to look up to God.

1 John 5:1,4

*"Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.....
For whoever is born of God overcomes the world,
and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.
So how do we overcome the world? Believe on Jesus the Son of God!"*

Faith in what?, in religion? , in rules and guidelines?, or a blind faith?
or
Faith in WHOM?

Faith in the Lord God.... Your faith rests in a Person.
Look to HIM.

Learn to look up

205 The Comforter

John 14:16,26-27

"I will ask the Father and He will give you another Comforter, and He will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit who will lead you into all truth.....When my Father sends the Comforter in my name—and by the Comforter I mean the Holy Spirit—He will teach you much, as well as remind you of everything I myself have told you."

+++++

The definition of the word—

Comfort: 'relief from sorrow, distress, pain, want, grief, or trouble; to give aid, ease, consolation, cheer, solace, and satisfaction.'

From the passage above it seems clear that the job of the Comforter is to teach us, lead us into truth, and remind us of what Jesus said.

the Comforterwill teach you much

So if He is a teacher, then why is He called the Comforter?

I think it's because the ideas and the words from the written Word of God give comfort, as well as knowledge.

In addition to this,
we have to remember that the Comforter is a Person.

Comfort is **in** a Person, just like faith is in a Person,
and salvation is in a Person.

This is more than words on a page, or ideas in a book.
This is more than spiritual symbols, a religious place, or a ritual.
The difference is a big one.

It's like the difference between
getting an email that says "Cheer up!";
verses
having someone sitting beside you, holding your hand, smiling, softly
telling you everything is ok, promising to stay with you, covering you
with a warm blanket, and helping give you your medicine with a bowl
of chicken soup.

Comfort makes you feel better.
Comfort gives calming peace and relief.
Comfort is a Person.
God gives you HIMSELF as comfort.

Look to Him, contact Him, and rely on Him.

"He will never leave you."



206 The Humanity of the Son of Man

Mark 13:29,32

“When you see these things happening that I’ve described you can be sure that my return is very near, that I am right at the door. However, no one knows the day and the hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in Heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.”

John 14:28

“Remember what I told you—I am going away, but I will come back to you again. If you really love me, you will be very happy for me, for now I can go to the Father, who is greater than I.”

+++++

Jesus was Son of God and Son of Man.
Being God, Jesus knows everything.

As a man, Jesus was no more omniscient (all knowing) than he was omnipresent. (able to be everywhere at the same time).

Hebrews 2:9

“We see Jesus—who for awhile was made to be a little lower than the angels—crowned now by God with glory and honor because He suffered death for us.”

Being God, Jesus is equal with the Father.

As a man, Jesus admitted that God the Father was greater than he.

John 14:28

“.....I am going away, If you really love me, you will be very happy for me,...

The Father is greater than I.... is not a denial of the deity and Godhead of Jesus Christ, but a contrast of the Father’s state in glory with that of the Lord in the depths of his humiliation.

If the apostles had understood what a glorious thing it was for Jesus to leave the wretched scenes of his humiliation, and return to the glory he had enjoyed with the Father from times eternal, they would have rejoiced.

Coffman Commentaries on the Old and New Testament

Philippians 2:5-8

“Your attitude should be the kind that was shown us by Jesus Christ, who, though he was God, did not demand and cling to his rights as God, but emptied himself, taking the disguise of a slave and becoming like men. And he humbled himself even further by dying a criminal’s death on a cross.”

Jesus

Jesus.
All God.
All man.

All God. All man.

Blessed be
His name.

207 Bible Tidbits

The Gethsemane Streaker

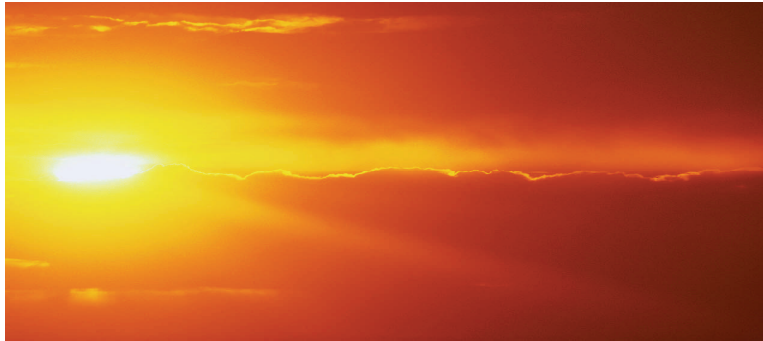
As the mob was leading Jesus away
from the garden of Gethsemane....

“Meanwhile, all His disciples had fled. There was, however, a young man following along behind, clothed only in a linen cloth. When the mob tried to grab him, he escaped, though his clothes were torn off in the process, so that he ran away completely naked.” Mark 14:50-52

A Day Long “High Noon”

“As the men of Israel were pursuing the enemy, Joshua prayed aloud, ‘Let the sun stand still over Gibeon, and let the moon stand in its place over the valley of Aijalon’. And the sun and moon didn’t move until the Israeli army had finished the destruction of its enemy.

*This is described in greater detail in The Book of Jashar.
So the sun stopped in the middle of the sky and stayed there for almost
24 hours.”* Joshua 10:12-13



We said “Turn your clock back”,

not “Back up the movement of the sun!”

*“Alright, the Lord will give you a sign of proof”, Isaiah said,
‘Do you want the shadow on the sundial to go forward ten points or
backward ten points?’.*

*‘The shadow always moves forward,’ Hezekiah replied;
‘make it go backward.’*

*So Isaiah asked the Lord to do this, and He caused the shadow to
move ten points backward on the sundial of Ahaz.” 2 Kings 20: 9-11*



What is it? Manna.

*“When the people of Israel saw the food on the ground, they asked
each other, ‘What is it?’*

...And the food became known as ‘manna’, (meaning ‘What is it?’).

*It was white like coriander seed, and flat, and tasted like honey
bread.”Exodus 16:15,31*

Them Bones are Powerful.

*“So Elisha died and was buried. In those days bandit gangs of
Moabites used to invade the land each spring. Once some men who
were burying a friend saw these marauders so they hastily threw his
body into the tomb of Elisha. And as soon as the body touched
Elisha’s bones, the dead man revived and jumped to his feet!”*

2 Kings 13: 20-21

Tidbits

The Bible contains 66 books.

39 Old Testament Books. 27 New Testament Books.

31,173 verses written by over 40 authors over a 1500 year period.

One continuous story.

Old Testament was written in Hebrew and Aramaic.
New Testament was written in Koine Greek,
which was the everyday language of that day.

The OT was translated into Greek and was called the Septuagint.
Then both the OT and NT were translated into Latin which was
known as the Vulgate used for about a 1000 years.
(400 AD to 1400 AD)

The first machine-printed book in the world was produced with a
movable type printing press in 1456 AD. The book was the Vulgate
translation of the Bible called the Gutenberg Bible.

After several English versions were translated, the King of England,
King James 1st, commissioned an Official English translation of the
Bible in 1611 AD that would become the primary Bible for English
speaking people for more than 300 years.

Today there are many easy to read English translations available.
So get a copy! Give a copy!
And study the most interesting book on the planet!

208 Showing Love

I Corinthians 13:4-8

*“Love is patient, love is kind. It is not envious or jealous,
never boastful or proud. Love is not rude, it is not self-seeking,
it is not easily angered, and it keeps no record of wrongs.
Love is never glad about injustice, but rejoices in truth.
It always protects, always trusts, always hopes,
and always perseveres. Love never fails.”*

+++++

Wow. What a passage.
Maybe we can try to remember just one of these proofs of love.
If we do, we can change how we act, and react.

We can begin to live godly lives.
And how could we accomplish that?
By doing the following:
Not easily angered.
Not rude.

Not boastful.
Not self-seeking.
Not envious or jealous.
Kind.
Patient.
Protecting.
Trusting.
Full of hope.
Keeping no record of wrongs.
Rejoicing in the truth.

Can you do one of these today?

Something happens to us when we pause to think about this.
When we look into the mirror of the Word of God, ...
something is revealed...
we see where our spiritual hair is messed up.
It gives us a chance to break out the Holy Spirit comb.

With the help of God, we can change.

Why?

Because “*God is Love.*” (1 John 8:16)

And because, as believers of Jesus Christ,

God the Holy Spirit lives within us.

“*Your body is the home of the Holy Spirit given to you, and He lives within you.*” (1Corinthians 6:19)

“*For you are God’s temple, the home of the living God.*”
(2 Corinthians 6:16)

We therefore can truly show the love of God,
if we allow God to love through us.

God will make it possible for us to show love in the way the passage
above states.

The Love of God Through You.

209 Hush and Live

James 1:19,26, 3:2-5

“Dear brothers and sisters, don’t forget that it is best to listen much, speak little, and be slow to get angry.....If you claim to be a Christian but don’t control your tongue, you are fooling yourself, and your religion isn’t worth much....If anyone can control their tongue, it proves that they have control over themselves in every other way.

We can make a large horse turn around and go wherever we want by means of a small bit in his mouth. And a tiny rudder makes a huge ship turn wherever the pilot wants it to go, even though the winds are strong. So also the tongue is a small thing, but what enormous damage it can do. ”

Proverbs 21:23

“Keep your mouth closed and you’ll stay out of trouble.”

Proverbs 13:3a

“Those who control their tongue will have a long life.”

+++++

So listen, if you can be silent and bite you tongue when you really feel like biting someone’s head off, then the Bible says you have proven that you are able to control every other area of you life.

Stop and ponder that thought for a moment.....

.....

.....are you pondering?

This is good practice, because when you stop to think, you are generally quiet as well.

Listening has the exact same effect. Ears open. Mouth shut. So why is that so hard for some people to do?

Maybe talking all the time is a way to avoid self evaluation and change? Maybe it’s also because when we are truly quiet, we can hear the knock of the Lord on our heart’s door. And others don’t want to hear that.

The Bible says to “*be still and know that I am God*” Psalms 46:10

Revelation 3:20 says: *“Behold, I have been standing at the door and I am constantly knocking. If anyone hears me calling him and opens the door, I will come in and fellowship with him, and he with me”*

Yes, this is about salvation, but we must remember that as Christians we still have to decide daily to open our hearts to the Lord’s control. Allow the Holy Spirit to fill us today.

Controlling your tongue allows you to listen for the knock,
.....and hear His voice.

The Bible gives several interesting and pertinent descriptions of the power of the tongue.

Steering a huge ship with a tiny rudder.

Turning a large horse with a small bit in his mouth.

(Boy is that one appropriate!)

How easily we are controlled by the small tongue in our mouths!

How it affects our whole body.

And how important is it to control our tongue so we can live a long and blessed life.

Why does the passage say, *“If you claim to be a Christian but don’t control your tongue, you are fooling yourself, and your religion isn’t worth much..”* ?

Because a true connection with God should show in a controlled tongue, and a changed life.

Does ‘your religion’ do that for you?
Does your daily connection with Jesus Christ show in your controlled tongue and changed life? We hope your answer is yes, and that you’ve learned to hush and live.



Control your tongue.

Learn to hush, and live.

210 Would a Miracle Make Them Believe?

If God would just allow me to perform a miracle,
then the lost would see, and believe.
It doesn't have to be anything huge.
I don't have to raise someone from the dead,
but maybe a little lightning on command!
That would do it, wouldn't it?
Or a little "Harry Potter" action?
Maybe turn somebody into a dog, and back again.
Wouldn't that convince everybody?

If you remember,
the magicians in Egypt
were able to turn their walking sticks into snakes,
just like Moses did.

Many miracles can be duplicated by the Devil to trick us.
But the **Holy Spirit power** behind the **Gospel message**.....
.....**can't be duplicated.**

This is why we quote and explain the Bible message.
Look at the following passage.

"Paul and Barnabas went to the Jewish synagogue and preached with such power that a great number of both Jews and Greeks became believers.

Some of the Jews, however, spurned God's message and poisoned the minds of the Gentiles against Paul and Barnabas.

But the apostles stayed there a long time, preaching boldly about the grace of the Lord. And the Lord proved their message was true by giving them power to do miraculous signs and wonders.

But the people of the town were divided in their opinion about them. Some sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles." Acts 14:1-4

Did you follow this passage?

It says that the Lord gave the apostles power to do:

"miraculous signs and wonders" to show proof that their message was true, yet *"the people...were divided in their opinion"*.

Some still didn't believe,
even after the supernatural signs and wonders.
How can that be?

Acts 28:23-24

“So a time was set, and on that day a large number of people came to Paul’s lodging. He explained and testified about the Kingdom of God and tried to persuade them about Jesus from the Scriptures. Using the Law of Moses and the books of the prophets, he spoke to them from morning until evening. Some were persuaded by the things he said, but others did not believe.”

Again some just didn’t believe the message, no matter what was said. Miracles or not, some choose not to believe.

Why?

Isaiah prophesied about this. (Isaiah 6:9-10)

Paul quotes this prophecy (Acts 28:26-27)

“Go and say to this people: When you hear what I say, you will not understand. When you see what I do, you will not comprehend. For the hearts of these people are hardened, and their ears cannot hear, and they have closed their eyes—so their eyes cannot see, and their ears cannot hear, and their hearts cannot understand, and they cannot turn to me and let me heal them.”

Oh how we pray that Jew and Gentile alike will open their eyes, ears, and hearts to the Gospel message so that Jesus can heal them.

But some will not believe.

No matter what you preach, explain,
and even prove with lightning bolts.

“For the hearts of these people are hardened.... and they have closed their eyes—so their eyes cannot see, and their ears cannot hear, and their hearts cannot understand.”

It is a choice they make.

Your job is to give the message, and proof of your life.

The passage says Paul *“explained and testified about the Kingdom of God and tried to persuade them about Jesus from the Scriptures.”*

Explained and testified.

Quoting and explaining the Bible.

And giving your own testimony.

Sow the seeds of the Gospel on the best ground you can find, in the best way you can, and leave the convincing to the Holy Spirit.

***Explain, testify,
and quote the Bible.***

211 Women Preachers

For those of you who love my short easy devotions,
fasten your seat belt, because this is a long one.

For those of you who enjoy tackling controversial subjects with
detailed Bible study, you're going to like this one.

Should women be preaching?

Should a woman be a pastor of a church?

For some, this is a non-issue, so this devotion is simply to educate
and encourage you.

But for others, this may be a bone of conflict, so this devotion is to
inform, and hopefully, to request that you stop and think about the
subject again. I want to discuss the subject, and do so in an attitude of
love for each other. I have been on both sides of this fence.

So I can equally argue both sides of this issue, and win either debate.
This subject has many points which either side can claim as evidence
to back their view.

Introduction

Before we start, let's remember some Scripture.

In 1 Corinthians 13:13 Paul tells us that certain gifts of the Holy Spirit
will someday cease. But of these, Faith-Hope-Love will continue, and
the greatest of these is Love.

This is an interesting Bible verse.

It doesn't say the greatest is Hope,
which Jesus gives us for time and eternity.

It also doesn't say the greatest is Faith,
which Jesus is looking for when He returns. (Luke 18:18)

It says the greatest is Love, so no matter where you stand on the issue
of women being preachers and/or pastors, we are encouraged and, in
fact, commanded to love each other.

(Leviticus 19:18, Matthew 19:19, 22:39, Mark 12:31, John 15:12,17)

Devotion #4, "Accept Each Other's Differences", was one of our first
devotions ever written.

This devotion today is numbered #211, so we are a long ways from
our beginning thoughts, but we should not forget what the Bible said
to us in that past devotion.

We need to work at loving and accepting each other,
even when we disagree over certain issues.

We should not allow Satan to distract us, and divide us.
That's the Devil's plan.
But the Bible says "*..we are familiar with his evil schemes.*"
(2 Corinthians 2:11)

So please focus on Jesus Christ,
and our agreement on the major doctrinal issues.

Ok, here we go.

Number One

A starting point, for those who think women should not be pastors of a church, is the chain of command in 1 Corinthians 11:3.
That passage says "*the head of every man is Christ, the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.*"

So it is God-Christ-Man-Woman.
But we should remember that lines of authority,
do not infer lines of superiority.

I like how the Living Way version quotes this verse. It says,
"*a wife is responsible to her husband, her husband is responsible to Christ, and Christ is responsible to God.*"

The phrase, "*the head of Christ is God*", does not mean Christ is inferior to God in any way.
(Christ is equal with the God according to Philippians 2:6)
Paul was referring to humanity of Jesus, the Son of Man.
(see devotion # 206)

Likewise, the phrase, "*the head of the woman is man*" does not indicate the man's supremacy, but rather his being her source.
Because man was created first, the woman derives her existence from man, and, of course, Christ was there at the creation of man, so Christ is the head of all mankind.

The same equality, unity of purpose, and unity of will, should exist between a man and his wife, as exists between the Father and the Son.

The subordination of a woman to her husband does not set aside the equality of both male and female "in Christ".

In this discussion there is no real argument with this authority chain.
Just remember
that the woman was made from man's side,not his foot.



Number Two:

Here are the main two passages that really trip us up.
These verses are at the heart of the debate.

1 Corinthians 14:34-35

*“Women should be silent during the church meetings.
It is not proper for them to speak.
They should be submissive, just as the law says.
If they have any questions, they should ask their husbands at home,
for it is improper for women to speak in church meetings.”*

1 Timothy 2:11-12

*“Women should learn quietly and submissively.
I do not let women teach men, or have authority over them.”*

I’m going to quote some commentary from a large group of Bible scholars to shed some extra light on these passages.
But before I do, I want to set the stage by giving you a few things to think about.

Number Three

Romans 16: 1

“I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a deacon in the church in Cenchrea. Welcome her in the Lord as one who is worthy of honor among God’s people...”

The word in Romans 16: 1 in the Greek is “diakonon”, which in the King James Version is translated as: ‘deacon’ on three occasions, ‘servant’ on eight occasions, and translated as ‘minister’ on twenty occasions. You can not get around this verse no matter how you slice it. This woman was a leader in her church and “*worthy of honor among God’s people..*”

Now other folks like to jump on the words of Paul where he gives instructions for the men chosen as deacons.

(Acts 6:3, 1 Timothy 3: 1-13)

So is this a contradiction?

I don’t think so.

There are other portions of Scripture that do this same type of thing.

Give different viewpoints on the same subject.

And the answer is always the same.

You must interpret ‘one verse’ by the rest of the Bible.

God’s Word is whole.

Not a collection of seemingly contradictory pieces.

If there are 25 verses that say one thing,
and one verse that says something different,
then we must understand the one verse
by interpreting it in light of the other 25 verses.
All doctrinal subjects are judged this way.

In my opinion, the point Paul was making was that deacons and ministers are to be living holy lives, and be grounded and mature in the faith. You can think and believe what you want on this. Just remember, we love each other.

Let's keep going. Here's another point to consider.

Number Four Acts 18:24-26

“Meanwhile, a Jew named Apollos, an eloquent speaker who knew the Scriptures well, had arrived in Ephesus from Alexandria in Egypt. He had been taught the way of the Lord, and he taught others about Jesus with an enthusiastic spirit and with accuracy. However, he knew only about John's baptism. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him preaching boldly in the synagogue, they took him aside to teach and explain the way of God even more accurately.”

It doesn't say Aquila did the teaching,
and Priscilla made the coffee and cookies.
They did the teaching of this man together.

Number Five

1 Corinthians 11:4-7 is talking about public worship. The passage gives guidelines to the church at Corinth. It is talking about both men and women “*praying and prophesying*” when worshipping. The discussion was a cultural one having to do with Jews wearing a head covering, and Gentiles not wearing a head covering. The point was, if you are doing something that might easily offend members, and might divide the church, then you are to change your ways to promote church unity.

But don't miss what the passage said.
It said that women were “*praying and prophesying*” in the church. Some try to argue that only the men were doing this in public, and the women may have been doing this in private. Come on now! Read the passage in context. The whole thing deals with public worshipping of the church. With praying. With prophesying. In the church. And women were involved.

We'll come back in a moment
and talk further about the church at Corinth.

Number Six

The first person to the tomb of Jesus on resurrection morning was a woman. (Mary)

If you read Matthew 28:9-10, Mark 16:9-11, and John 20:11-18 you will see that it was a bunch of women who saw Jesus first, and Jesus told these women to “*Go and tell my disciples (the men) that I will meet them in Galilee*” (Matthew 28)

Another passage says Jesus told Mary “*Go find my brethren and tell them that I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.*” (John 20)

Are you getting this?

Jesus gave these women a message to go and tell the men.

The women saw Jesus alive.

He was risen from the dead.

And they were now eyewitnesses of this resurrection.

Jesus told the women to go and tell the men.

My friend, that is the Gospel message pure and simple.

Go and tell others that Jesus Christ lives!

If you don't want to call women ‘preachers’, ok, then call them ‘message deliverers’.

Number Seven

Now back to the two difficult passages in

1 Corinthians 14, and 1 Timothy 2.

Here is the commentary on those passages.

First I'll give you the verse, then the commentary.

1 Corinthians 14:34-35

“Women should be silent during the church meetings. It is not proper for them to speak. They should be submissive, just as the law says. If they have any questions, they should ask their husbands at home, for it is improper for women to speak in church meetings.”

Does this mean that women should not speak in church services today? It is clear from 11:5 that women prayed and prophesied in public worship. It is also clear in chapters 12-14 that women are given spiritual gifts and are encouraged to exercise them in the body of Christ. Women have much to contribute and can participate in worship services.

In the Corinthian culture, women were not allowed to confront men in public. Apparently some of the women who had become Christians thought that their Christian freedom gave them the right to question the men in public worship. This was causing division in the church.

In addition, women of that day did not receive formal religious education as did the men. Women may have been raising questions in the worship services that could have been answered at home without disrupting the services.

1 Timothy 2:11-12

“Women should learn quietly and submissively. I do not let women teach men or have authority over them.”

To understand these verses, we must understand the situation in which Paul and Timothy worked.

In first- century Jewish culture, women were not allowed to study.

When Paul said that women should “learn quietly and submissively”, he was offering them an amazing new opportunity to learn God’s Word. That they were to listen and learn quietly and submissively referred to an attitude of quietness and composure (not total silence).

Paul acknowledges that women publicly prayed and prophesied. Apparently, however, the women in the Ephesian church were abusing their newly acquired Christian freedom.

Because these women were new converts, they did not yet have the necessary experience, knowledge, or Christian maturity to teach those who already had

extensive scriptural education.

Some interpret this passage to mean that women should never teach in the assembled church; however Paul did not forbid women from ever teaching.

Examples of Priscilla teaching Apollos, and Phoebe who was a deacon in her church. Others were Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis were the Lord's workers (Romans 16:6,12) as were Euodia and Syntyche (Philippians 4:2).

Paul was most likely prohibiting the Ephesian women from teaching, but not all women from teaching. Paul did not want the Ephesian women to teach because they didn't yet have enough knowledge or experience.

The Ephesian church had a particular problem with false teachers. Evidently the women were especially susceptible to the false teachings (2 Timothy 3:1-9) because they did not yet have enough Biblical knowledge to discern the truth.

Paul was telling Timothy not to put anyone (in this case, women) into a position of leadership who was not yet mature in the faith (1 Timothy 3:6; 5:22).

The same principle applies to churches today.

Conclusion

I have to admit something to you. After a lifetime of being taught and believing that women should not be pastors, it still doesn't "feel" right when I see a woman in a church pulpit preaching as the pastor.

But, we're supposed to base our lives on what the Bible says, not on our feelings.

Sometimes we must step out in faith and obey what God's Word has said, and THEN WE WAIT for our emotions to catch up.

Seek the Kingdom of God FIRST,
and all these things will be added to you. (Matt 6:33)
Trust in the Lord, and watch as everything else follows.
(Prov 3:5-6, Phil 4:6-7)

We renew our minds with the Bible,
so we won't be conformed to the world. (Rom 12:2)

To see a woman at a conference giving a Biblical message seems different for some reason. I don't know why.
But a woman giving a Christian message in a mixed group setting at a conference, or preaching an evangelistic gospel message in an auditorium, or giving a message on Sunday morning as a pastor of a church, is all the same thing.

Even teaching a Sunday school class with one man in the room counts. So where do you draw the line?
Where does it "feel" right, or not?
Again, we must base our lives on what God's Word has said, not on our feelings.

Now you may certainly hold on to your opinion that women should not being allowed to do any of this preaching and teaching.
That's fine. We love each other, right?

But men, if you have this opinion, then please be ready to answer the call of God to go into the ministry.
If God tells you to become a pastor, and you say no, then don't say that a woman can't take your place.

One final thought and I'm done.

Why would we help the Devil to destroy Christian ministries such as Joyce Meyer's, and many others like her?
Isn't it more likely that it is the Devil himself who is whispering?
"God says women should shut up"
I can see him saying,
"Women shouldn't be going and telling others about salvation."
"Let's stop them in the name of God."

I close with the words of Jesus: ...Hear Him.
"***For anyone who is not against you is for you.***" Luke 9:50

"By this shall the entire world know that you are my disciples, if you have love for each other" John 13:35

May the Lord bless you for reading this devotion.

212 Knowing Versus Doing

"I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection...."

Philippians 3:10

+++++

If I asked you the purpose for which God made you,
what might you say?

You might give a lot of answers that require some action on your part.
However, the simplest answer to that question relates to one primary
thing: fellowship.

The most important thing God desires from us today is to have a deep
and intimate fellowship with each of us.

The apostle Paul said he wanted to know Christ, and by knowing
Christ he could experience the power of His resurrection.
A connection made. Salvation received.

To know Christ means to be in intimate union with Him.
(See devotion #9 "Know God")

So often it is much easier to be busy with the urgent (or Christian)
activity than spending quiet moments with the Lord.
Before we realize it,
days have passed since our last quiet time with Jesus.

Jesus understood how important quiet moments were with the Father.
*"After He had dismissed them, He went up on a mountainside by Him-
self to pray. When evening came, He was there alone"* (Mt. 14:23).

Jesus was demonstrating the proper attitude that we should have, and
live by.

We must take time to reflect, to share our concerns with the Lord, and
to hear Him speak. *"Be still and know that I am God"* (Psalms 46:10)

We should understand that Jesus views us as His friend.
He wants to spend time with us.
We are depriving Him of His time,
when we put Him aside for the urgent.

When we make prayer a priority,
urgent things seem to wane as we focus on Him.
He makes all these other things fall into place.

Before we give it, let's look at what the Bible says about Mary.

*"Gabriel appeared to her and said,
'Greetings, favored woman. The Lord is with you.'
...the angel told her, 'you have found favor with God.'" Luke 1:28,30*

*"Elizabeth gave a glad cry and exclaimed to Mary, 'God has blessed
you above all women, and your child is blessed..... You are blessed
because you believed that the Lord would do what He said."
Luke 1:42,45*

The Bible says Mary was blessed because she believed.
Because she believed, and obeyed the Lord.
*"Mary responded, 'I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have
said about me come true.' And then the angel left her." Luke 1:38*

And now our passage for today.

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Luke 11: 27-28
*"As Jesus was speaking, a woman in the crowd called out, 'God bless
your mother—the womb from which you came, and the breasts that
nursed you.' Jesus replied, 'But even more blessed are all who hear
the Word of God and put it into practice.'"*

+++++

Mary was a special person. And she knew this.
*"Mary responded, Oh how my soul praises the Lord. How my spirit
rejoices in God my Savior. For He took notice of His lowly servant
girl, and from now on all generations will call me blessed.
For the Mighty One is holy, and He has done great things for me."
Luke 1: 46-49*

We also need to recognize how blessed we are in our Lord Jesus.

How **He** has done great things for us.
And stop for a moment to give **Him** praise.
God our Savior has given us everything.
He has blessed us even more than Mary.
Lift up your voice to honor Him.

Praise Jesus!

214 God Has Given You Today

I Corinthians 3:22

"..God has given you all of the present, and all of the future.."

Psalms 139:16

*"You saw me before I was born.
Every day of my life was recorded in your book.
Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed."*

Job 14:5

"You have decided the length of our lives. You know how many months we will live, and we are not given a minute longer."

Proverbs 27:1

"Don't brag about what you are going to do tomorrow, since you don't know what the day will bring."

James 4:13-16

*"Look here, you who say,
'Today or tomorrow we are going to a certain town and will stay there a year. We will do business there and make a profit.'
How do you know what your life will be like tomorrow?*

Your life is like the morning fog—it's here a little while, then it's gone. What you ought to say is, 'IF the Lord wants us to, we will live and do this or that.' Otherwise you are boasting about your own plans, and all such boasting is sinful and cannot please God."

+++++

*"..God has given you all of the present.."
God has "decided the length of our lives...."
"..Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed."*

The Bible says God has given you this very moment.
God knew about this current moment...
from before you were formed in the womb.

If you are alive and reading this devotion,
then God has obviously given you today.
What are you going to do with it?
Try to "get to the weekend"?
Or do you have a purpose for today that is greater than that?
A purpose that will focus you on this eternally laden moment?

It is true that as a believer, God has given you “*all of the future*”.
But who says God has given you this weekend HERE on earth?
Even as a believer in Christ,
perhaps He has given you this weekend....in Heaven.

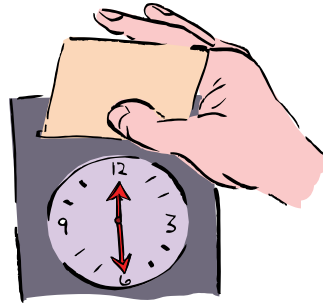
Maybe God has given you
a bunch more days on earth IF you are fruitful.

Living out loud for Christ. Bringing others to Jesus.
Loving and building others up in the Lord.
This is a scriptural idea based on John 15:1-2
*“I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener.
He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn’t produce fruit,
and He prunes the branches that do bear fruit
so they will produce even more.”*

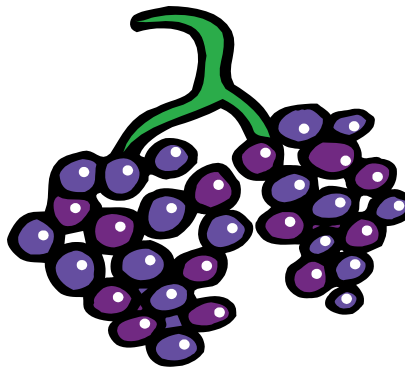
The title of the devotion from this verse might be,
‘Be fruitful, or get whacked!’

In other words,
God takes what you’re into today very seriously.... Do you?

Remember,
the time given to you is a gift.
“...we are not given a minute longer.”



**GOD HAS GIVEN
YOU TIME**



TO BE FRUITFUL

215 Give Vertical Thanks

Psalms 50:13-15, 23

“I don’t need your sacrifices of bulls and goats.

Make thankfulness your sacrifice to God, and keep the promises you have made to the Most High. I want you to trust Me in your times of trouble, and I will rescue you, and you can give Me glory....

Giving thanks is a sacrifice that truly honors Me.”

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Ask God for help on everything,
and then thank Him for every answer.
Seems simply enough, doesn’t it?
Then why don’t we do it?

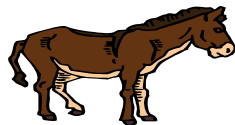
Because we refuse to recognize His care.
We refuse to give Him our sacrifices of praise.
(Devotion #81, ‘Sacrifices of Praise’)

Look at this next verse from Isaiah 1:3.
“Even an ox knows its owner, and a donkey recognizes its master’s care—But Israel doesn’t know its master. My people don’t recognize my care for them.”

There is a story about a non-believing farmer who decided to go to the church to listen to the message of the preacher.
On that day the message was on the verse above.
Later when the farmer went home and walked up to his field, the farmer’s favorite cow came over and licked his hand.
The cow certainly knew the farmer.

The farmer remembered the message and thought about how this cow showed more recognition and love for him than he did for God.
It was at that moment that the farmer gave his heart to the Lord, and was converted.
A powerful lesson for us.

“Even an ox knows its owner,



and a donkey recognizes its master’s care..”.....do you?

Here's another interesting verse from Habakkuk 1:16.
"They will worship their nets and burn incense in front of them.
'These nets are the gods who have made us rich.', they will claim."

So the idea is that after God has given you a full load of fish,
you turn around and worship the nets used to catch the fish.
Sounds stupid, doesn't it?

Yet isn't that what we do?
God has made it possible for you to receive your paycheck.
Yet you look to your employer.
God gives you a safe trip.
But you thank the car.
On vacation you fly in perfect weather.
Yet we thank the airplane, instead of the God who made the air.

Thinking about thankfulness caused me to realize something.
In the past 53 years, I have never had to go a day without a meal.
Not once.
God has faithfully provided my daily ration of bread.
Every day for 53 years.
And I am thankful to Him.

How about you?
It's time for you to give some vertical thanks.

216 Our Faith Is Tied To Reality

There are those who say that the essence of Christianity
is only emotional.
They say it is theologically true,
but historically irrelevant.
They try to tell you that Christianity
is not proven with historical evidence.
This is totally untrue.
Christianity is tied to historical events.
Our faith is tied to reality.

Some say they would blindly believe in Jesus
no matter what the facts show.
I beg to differ.
If you can show me the real tomb of Jesus filled with his bones,
then I will walk away from the church, and ask for a refund.

I Corinthians 15:17-20

“If Christ did not rise from the dead, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty in your sins. In that case, all who have died believing in Christ are lost. And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world. But in fact, Christ did rise from the dead. He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died.”

The Bible is based on historical facts.

If you could use your time machine to go back into time, you would find the people the Bible talks about. Adam, Noah, Moses, Abraham, David, Peter, John,Jesus.

From the creation of the world, to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, our faith is reality based, historically factual, and scientifically demonstrated by fossil evidence.

Our faith has archeological verification, written documentation, prophetic proof, and eye-witnessed testimony.

It's historically factual that Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem, lived in Nazareth, performed miracles, and died on a cross.

Undisputed even by early secular historians.

And five hundred and thirty people said they saw Him after He rose from the dead. This information is also reported by the historians even though they did not believe it.

The life, death, and resurrection of the person named Jesus of Nazareth is no less historically obvious than the events of 9/11.

Christianity is tied to historical events.

For God chose to reveal Himself in history.

He created the earth.He created us.

God can be known through that which He created.

The universal design reveals the divine designer.

Hebrews 11:3

“By faith we understand that the entire universe was formed at God's command, and that the things which are now seen were not made by things which do appear.”

Romans 1:20

“For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see His invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature.”

So if you want to know the God
who is revealed in the majesty of creation, just ask.
Seek Him and He will be found. (Mt 7:7).
The details of Jesus Christ will be given.
For Jesus Christ is a real person,
and He can still be experienced today in reality.



**Our faith is tied to
reality including a
Savior who is a
real person.**

217 Old Age Is A Time Of Glory

Psalms 71:17-18

*“O, God, you have taught me from my earliest childhood,
and I constantly tell others about the wonderful things you do.
Now that I am old and gray, do not abandon me, O God.
Let me proclaim your power to this new generation,
your mighty miracles to all who come after me.”*

Isaiah 46:3-4

*“...I have cared for you since you were born. Yes, I carried you be-
fore you were born. I will be your God throughout your lifetime—
until you hair is white with age. I made you, and I will care for you.
I will carry you along and save you.”*

Don't let the philosophy of the young conform you to this world's thinking.

Don't be embarrassed to tell your age.
Old age is a time of glory.



It's a time where you are getting near graduation day.
It's a time we give extra attention and honor to graduating seniors.
The spotlight is not supposed to be on the freshmen.

It's a time where you aren't concerned with the next promotion at work.

Instead, you are looking with anticipation to your final magnificent promotion.
Being old means you are less concerned with your physical problems, and more concerned with the spiritual.

*"..I constantly tell others about the wonderful things you do"..
"Let me proclaim your power to this new generation,
your mighty miracles to all who come after me."*

It's a time where old Christian soldiers talk to the new soldiers about the battles ahead.
Where what was learned in past experiences can be taught.

Where the truth of God's second chances can be shared with those who may be in the middle of a time of failure.
A time where empathy and encouragement can be given because the old soldier remembers the tough times.
There's an old saying, 'You can't tell what you don't know, any more than you can tell about a place you've never been.'

John 9:4

"We must quickly carry out the tasks assigned us by the One who sent us while it is day, for the night is coming, and then no one can work."

Psalms 92:14

"Even in old age they will still produce fruit..."

Win souls. Give a witness for the Lord. Tell your testimony to anyone who will listen. Give your message with certainty.

Old age is a time when your gray hair is a glorious symbol that you're almost home.

The saying is that seeing gray hair is like seeing the 'land birds'. When a ship has been out at sea, and is now heading back to port, the sight of 'land birds' flying over head meant you were getting close to home.

218 Satan the Accuser

Zechariah 3:1-3

"Then the angel showed me Joshua the high priest standing before The Angel of the Lord.

The Accuser, Satan, was there at the angel's right hand, making accusations against Joshua.

And the Lord said to Satan,

'I, the Lord, reject your accusations, Satan. Yes, the Lord, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebukes you. This man is like a burning stick that has been snatched from the fire.'

Joshua's clothing was filthy as he stood there before The Angel.

So The Angel said to the others standing there, 'Take off his filthy clothes.'

And turning to Joshua He said, 'See I have taken away your sins, and now I am giving you these fine new clothes.'"

John 12:31-33 (Jesus speaking)

"The time for judging this world has come, when Satan, the ruler of this world, will be cast out.

And when I am lifted up from the earth,

I will draw everyone to myself.

He said this to indicate how He was going to die. "

Revelation 12:7-11

"There was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon and his angels. And the dragon lost the battle, and he and his angels were forced out of heaven.

This great dragon—the ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, the one deceiving the whole world—was thrown down to the earth with all his angels.

Then I heard a loud voice shouting across the heavens, '

It has come at last—salvation and power and the Kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ.

For the accuser of our brothers and sisters has been thrown down to earth—the one who accuses them before God day and night. And they have defeated him by the blood of the Lamb....”

Romans 8:33-34

“Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and He is sitting in the place of honor at God’s right hand, pleading for us.”

+++++

“The Accuser, Satan, was there at the angel’s right hand, making accusations against Joshua.”

The Devil was accusing Joshua the high priest.

“This man is a sinner!”

“How can he perform any sacrifices for the sins of others when he is a sinner himself!”

But God said, *“I, the Lord, reject your accusations, Satan!”*

And why?

Because God had forgiven Joshua, *“I have taken away your sins..”*

Joshua was saved ‘on credit’ because he was looking forward to the cross of the promised Messiah.

It is because of what Jesus did on the cross that we no longer have to worry about the attacks of the Accuser.

We have been forgiven.

Don’t forget this fact.

Jesus told us. *“And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself.”*

The Accuser has already been defeated *“by the blood of the Lamb....”*

“Who then will condemn us? No one..”

Did you hear that? NO ONE.

Grab a hold of what God’s attitude is towards the Devil....

“.. ‘I, the Lord, reject your accusations, Satan...”

We should have the same attitude toward the accusations of the Devil!

Say it with me, *“The Lord rebuke you” Devil!* (Jude 9)

+++++

(For further comments explaining--The Angel of the Lord-- from Zechariah 3:1-3, see previous devotions: (#17 - “I Am Yahweh”), (#99 - “The Face Of God”), and (#196 - “Preincarnate Jesus”)



219 Them Pearly Gates and Streets Of Gold

Revelation 21:10-13, 15-16, 21, 23, 25, 27

“So he took me in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and he showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. It shone with the glory of God and sparkled like a precious stone—like jasper as clear as crystal. The city wall was broad and high, with twelve gates guarded by twelve angels. And the names of the twelve tribes of Israel were written on the gates. There were three gates on each side—east, north, south, and west.....

The angel who talked to me held in his hand a gold measuring stick to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. When he measured it, he found it was a square, as wide as it was long. In fact, its length and width and height were each 1,400 miles....

The twelve gates were made of pearls—each gate from a single pearl. And the main street was pure gold, as clear as glass....

And the city has no need of sun or moon, for the glory of God illuminates the city, and the Lamb is its light.... Its gates will never be closed at the end of day because there is no night there....Nothing evil will be allowed to enter,....but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.”

Did you hear the one about the guy who was standing at the pearly gates? He was looking in at the streets of gold and was asking if he could get in.....But the angel wouldn't let him in.

The angel said:

'Look buddy, your name isn't in the Master Address Book!'

So the guy said: 'Ok, can we try the rolodex'?

(Ok, quit moaning, so it's really lame, but you'll get the point)

The point is: the image behind these types of jokes isn't off by much.

Because there really will be pearly gates in that New Jerusalem....

"twelve gates were made of pearls—each gate from a single pearl.."

The gates are guarded by angels

"twelve gates guarded by twelve angels"

And the Bible says that the main street is made of gold...

"And the main street was pure gold, as clear as glass"

It's not just a fantasy.

It is real and awaits those who know Jesus as Lord.

It's certainly no joke for those whose names are not written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

"Nothing evil will be allowed to enter,....but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life."

I want to make sure that you get this point.

It's called the Book of LIFE.

I don't know everything, but I will tell you one thing for sure.

I want in on anything dealing with LIFE,

because the alternative scares me.

I want LIFE, don't you?

And THE WAY to LIFE is JESUS.

With Jesus the way leads through those pearly gates to streets of gold.

And I want to see it all. The gates. The streets... Jesus.

How about you?

220 The Bible Is Like...

The Bible is like a light.

Psalms 119:105

"Your Word is a lamp to guide my feet, and a light for my path."

The Bible is like a fire.

Jeremiah 23:29

"Does not my Word burn like fire?.."

The Bible is like a hammer.

Jeremiah 23:29

"Does not my Word burn like fire?, says the Lord. Is it not like a mighty hammer that smashes a rock to pieces?"

The Bible is like seed.

Mark 4:14, 20

"The farmer plants seed by taking God's Word to others...And the seed that fell on good soil represents those who hear and accept God's Word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted."

The Bible is like a sword.

Ephesians 6:17 ; Hebrews 4:12

*".. take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."
"For the Word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword.."*

The Bible is like a mirror.

James 1:23-24

"For if you listen to the Word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror, seeing yourself, and then walking away forgetting what you look like."

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You may view the Bible just as another large 1000 page boring book to read through. But it has the potential to become so much more.

It has the versatility of a Swiss Army knife.

What do you need on any given day?

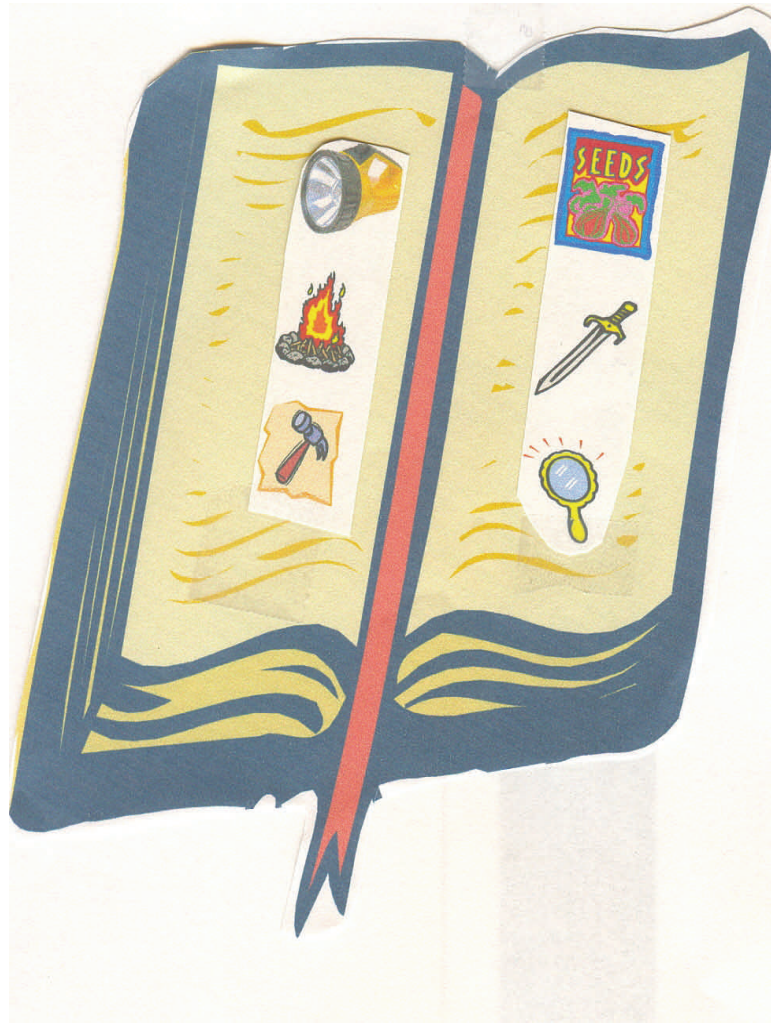
A light to get you through some dark times?

A mirror to help you see how you're doing?

A sword to defend yourself against forces you can't even see?

A hammer? A fire? A seed to grow and nurture?

The Bible can be any and all of these things.
But like any other tool, we need to know how to operate it before we
can expect to receive all of its benefits. We must read it.
We must study it. We must memorize it.



We must get to know the Author of it. ..The Lord God.
For it is His book, and He communicates to us through it.

The Bible is like...no other book.

221 Buried With Christ

Romans 6:4

“For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism...”

Colossians 3:3 *“For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God.”*

2 Corinthians 5:14

“..Since we believe that Christ died for all, we also believe that we have died to our old life.”

Galatians 2:20

“My old self has been crucified with Christ..”

+++++

The burial of Christ
paints a clear picture of the burial of the believer’s old life.

When you accepted Jesus as Savior,
you died, and were buried that day.

If you are able to say,
‘I was buried with Christ 10 years ago,’ you must surely be dead.

When you are indoors the passers-by do not know that you are dead.
But when the funeral takes place, you are carried through the streets,
and everybody knows you are dead.
The believer’s death to sin is at first a secret, but by open confession
to others, everyone now knows that you are dead with Christ.

When you are dead you no
longer live in the house.
Instead, you are placed
apart as one who ceases
to be numbered with the
living.

Such is the believer when
your death to the world is
fully known.
You are poor company for
worldlings, and they shun
you as a damper upon their
revelry.



When you are dead and buried,
the world doesn't expect to see you again.

In spiritual things, however, I am afraid that some are not so buried
with Christ.....Some walk a great deal among the tombs.

In Christ, you should not try to walk as a ghost of this world.

Stay dead.

*“So you also should consider yourselves to be dead to the power of
sin, and alive to God through Christ Jesus.”* (Romans 6:11)

If you see your old self as dead and buried,
it can be a powerful help in resisting sin.

The old you is dead, and has been laid in the tomb.
Christ now lives in you.

“It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.”(Rom 2:20)

For the new you is raised to newness of life in Christ.

*“....Just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of
the Father, now we should walk in newness of life.”* (Romans 6:4)

‘When my Lord’s grace got hold of me and buried me,
He wrought in my soul the conviction that henceforth
and forever I was to the world a dead man. Tell the world
they need not try to fetch us back, for we are spoiled for
them as much as if we were dead. Tell the world not to tempt
us any longer, for our hearts are changed.’
Charles Spurgeon

++++
Original idea is from a sermon by the same name given by Charles
Spurgeon delivered on October 30, 1881 in London.



222 The Power Of The Cross

I Corinthians 2: 2, 4-5

“For I decided that while I was with you I would forget everything except Jesus Christ, the one who was crucified....I relied only on the power of the Holy Spirit. I did this so you would trust not in human wisdom, but in the power of God.”

I Corinthians 1: 18, 20-22

“The message of the cross is foolish to those who are headed for destruction. But we who are being saved know it is the very power of God.....God has made the wisdom of this world look foolish. Since God in His wisdom had established that the world would never know Him through human wisdom, He has used our foolish preaching to save those who believe.”

+++++

While Paul visited Greece, the intellectual center of his day, he said,
“that while I was with you I would forget everything except Jesus Christ, the one who was crucified...”

Why? *“ I did this so you would trust not in human wisdom, but in the power of God.”*

What was Paul doing?

Paul knew something important.

He knew that *“God in His wisdom had established that the world would never know Him through human wisdom.”*

In other words, you’re not going to find Jesus the Savior, in Plato’s philosophy class. You will not understand the Gospel of God, studying transcendental metaphysics.

Paul decided he was not going to get into a debate to try to convince them of anything.

The Greeks loved to debate everything, and believe nothing.

Paul made up his mind that he would only preach the cross of Christ, and then watch the Holy Spirit work.

Paul *“relied only on the power of the Holy Spirit”* as he preached *“the message of the cross”*, which he admitted was *“foolish to those who are headed for destruction”*.

He also understood that
“The message of the cross.... is the very power of God”

Our recent devotion, (# 216 ‘Our Faith Is Tied To Reality’), along with previous devotions (# 2 ‘So That You May Know’), and (#15 ‘Were They Lying’), all dealt with the idea that we need to be able to give an explanation for the reason why we believe.

Our answers are based on facts, historical reality, prophetic scriptures, and eye-witness testimony. There is nothing wrong with these logical answers, and this type of message.
In fact, the Bible tells us to be ready to explain our faith.

“If someone asks about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it. But do this in a gentle and respectful way.” (1 Peter 3:15)

Sometimes you can dazzle them with your knowledge of the reality of your faith, you can explain and discuss the details and depths of the Scriptures, but remember this,
the true power of our message is in the cross.

The cross **is** our message.
It is the central point of our faith, and of all history.
Without the cross, there is no payment for sin made for us,
and we, therefore,
must make the individual payment ourselves in Hell.

The Gospel we share
is a message of the death and resurrection of Jesus.
(1 Corinthians 15)

Jesus paid the price.
As believers, we don’t have to fear
judgment any more.

Christ took the judgment at the cross,
and rose from the dead to give us life.

The cross is our primary message.
Everything else is secondary.



In any given church in America you can receive many things.
A social gathering.
Entertaining music.
An outreach to the needy.
Even a way to find a spouse who believes like you do.
And, oh yea, a place where we preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

If the church stops providing the social gathering,
the world can duplicate that.

If the church stops being a place with entertaining music,
the world can duplicate that.

If the church stops giving you an outreach program to help the needy,
the world can duplicate that.

And if the church stops being a place where you can find a spouse,
the world can even duplicate that.

But the world can not duplicate the message and power of the cross.

It is what we preach, whether from a pulpit,
or across a break room table.

The cross may be a symbol of death,
but it is also the fundamental foundation of your hope and life,
both now, and forever.

The cross is a symbol of death,

and the foundation of hope and eternal life.

223 A Sinful Heart

Before we give the Scripture verses for this devotion,
I want to say something.

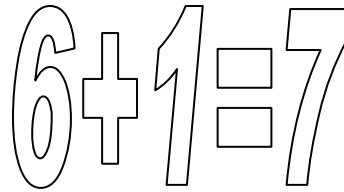
Joel Osteen isn't the only one who wants to be upbeat all the time.
I also find it difficult to talk about people being sinners. Being "bad".

In my world of psychology and psychiatry, we stress the optimistic
aspects of a person. We talk about the importance of good and healthy
self esteem. Good self talk.
Beneficial reinforcement and constructive affirmation.
We encourage others to adapt their behaviors,
so that they will fit into society.
A positive focus, not a negative one.

But that doesn't seem to fit....
with the Bible's message on people having a sinful heart.

So it makes me wonder. Have we conformed to this world's thinking?
If the answer is yes, then we need to be transformed by the renewing
of our minds. (Romans 12:2, devotion # 29, 'Bath Regularly')

Yes, we are of great value.
That is why Jesus died for us.
I had a Bible teacher who said
that in Biblical numerology
man is 6, God is 1, and $6+1=7$,
.....the perfect number.

A large, stylized outline drawing of the equation 6+1=7. The numbers and symbols are hollow and have a thick border, giving them a three-dimensional appearance. The '6' is on the left, followed by a plus sign, then the '1', an equals sign, and finally the '7' on the right.

He pointed out that we are a "six", not a "zero".

Yes, as believers in Christ, we are heirs of God,
and joint heirs with Jesus. (Rom 8:17)
Many other scripture passages reflect our positive value in Christ.

But the Bible is quite clear about how God sees us without Christ.
Look at the following verses.

Isaiah 64:6

*"We are all infected and impure with sin. When we display our
righteous deeds, they are nothing but filthy rags."*

Jeremiah 17:9

*"The human heart is the most deceitful of all things,
and desperately wicked."*

Romans 3:10, 12, 23
*“No one is righteous, not even one...
No one does good, not a single one...
For everyone has sinned;
we all fall short of God’s glorious standard”*

John 3:19
*“...people love the darkness more than the light,
for their actions are evil.”*

+++++

Pretty strong words, aren't they?
But they come from the same God who has given us salvation.

God is telling us the truth,
so that we can know of our need for His mercy and grace.

Someone once said that a dying man
will not delay taking the medicine needed to make him well.
A dying man will not play around with the remedy.

Why would you?

*“Jesus answered them,
'Healthy people don't need a doctor—sick people do.
I have come to call not those who think they are righteous,
but those who know they are sinners,
and know they need to repent.”* (Luke 5:31-32)



224 Sin Separates All From God

Luke 22: 42, 44 (Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane)
“ ‘Father, if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine.’
...He prayed more fervently, and He was in such agony of spirit that His sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood.”

Mark 15: 33-34 (Jesus on the Cross)
“At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o’clock. Then at three o’clock Jesus called out with a loud voice,
‘Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?’
which means ‘My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?’”
(quoting Psalms 22:1)

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Jesus is our prime example of how to live our lives,
and give our lives to God.

Jesus is the Son of God.
And the Son of Man.
All God.
All man.

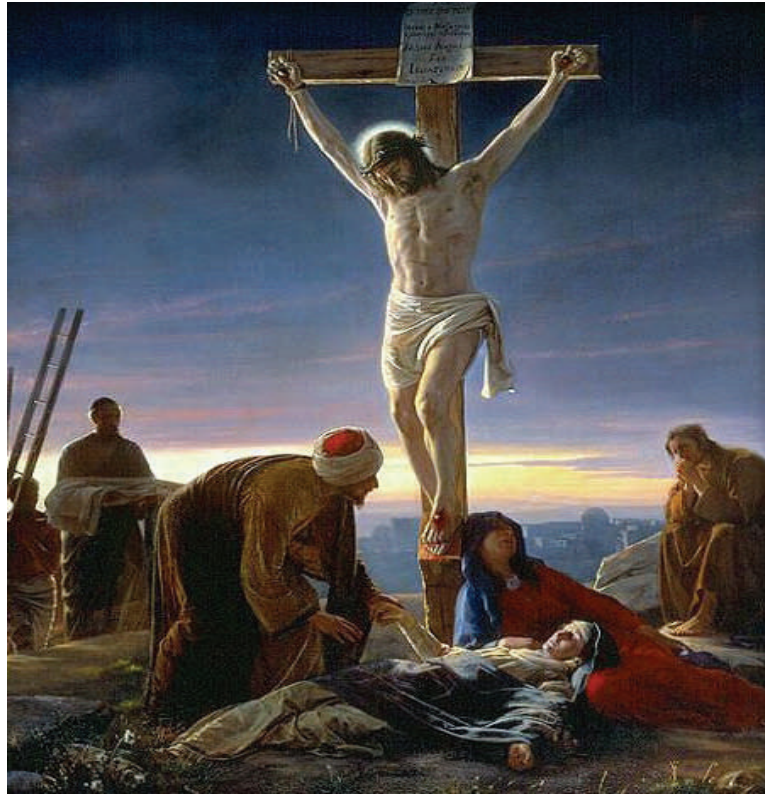
Before the cross,
Jesus (Son of God) knew exactly what was going to happen.

Jesus knew that as the Son of Man,
He was going to physically experience pain, torture, and death.
And He had already made the choice to allow this to happen,
and go to the cross for us.

Jesus as the Son of Man
would suffer the separation from God the Father.
The thought of this separation brought Jesus such agony that He sweat
drops of blood.

Oh that we would be as distressed
when we allow sin to separate us from God.

Jesus knew that He would have to experience this separation while the
sins of the world were placed on Him.
So when this happened on the cross, Jesus was not surprised.



Jesus quoted a scripture verse written hundreds of years before by King David which gave these words:

“Everyone who sees me mocks me. They sneer and shake their heads, saying, ‘Is this the one who relies on the Lord? Then let the Lord save him! If the Lord loves him so much, let the Lord rescue him!’

My life is poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax, melting within me. My strength has dried up like sunbaked clay. My tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth.

My enemies surround me like a pack of dogs; an evil gang closes in on me. They have pierced my hands and feet. I can count all my bones.

My enemies stare at me and gloat. They divide my garments among themselves and throw dice for my clothing.”

“My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?”

(Psalms 22: 7-8, 14-18, and verse 1)

Jesus, our wonderful Savior, whose “*life is poured out like water*”. He told the Samaritan woman, “*If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water....Those who drink the water I give them will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life.*” (John 4:10, 14)

Jesus died to pay for our sins,
and rose from the dead to offer eternal life.
The resurrection is our “receipt” showing that the payment made at the cross by Jesus was accepted by God the Father, who gave His stamp of approval: “paid in full”.



225 How To Stay Spiritually Effective

1 Thessalonians 5: 19-21

“Do not quench the Holy Spirit. Do not despise prophesying, test everything that is said. Hold on to what is good.”

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This one is quite easy to preach.

Number 1

Do not quench the Holy Spirit.

Keep the fire of the Holy Spirit inside of you fueled with the Word.
Don't throw on the dirt of carnality,
or the water of watered down sermons.
Lift each other up, and encourage each other unto good works.

Number 2

Do not despise prophecy.

Seek out and listen to every preached message that you can find.
Don't look at the preacher;
look at the Holy Spirit behind the message.
If the message convicts, make the change that is required.
Be ready to speak a word of evangelism whenever you can.
Live your life always looking for a way to share the Word of God.

Number 3

Test everything that is said.

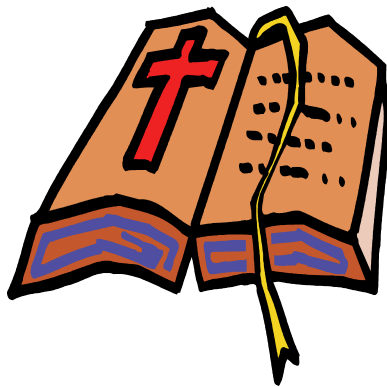
As you listen to sermons preached, test what is said by the Bible.
You can not do this unless you read, study, and know the Bible.
"They searched the Scriptures day after day to see if Paul and Silas were teaching the truth." Acts 17:11

Number 4

Hold on to what is good.

Hold on to those Scriptural messages that preach sound doctrine.
Hold on to the fundamentals of the faith.
Don't fall for man's humanistic perspective.
Take a stand for what God says.
Take a stand for what is right.

Glory to God, take this one out somewhere and let it fly!



- 1) Do not quench the Holy Spirit
- 2) Do not despise prophecy
- 3) Test everything that is said
- 4) Hold on to what is good

226 Party Time!

1 Corinthians 15:12-13, 32-33

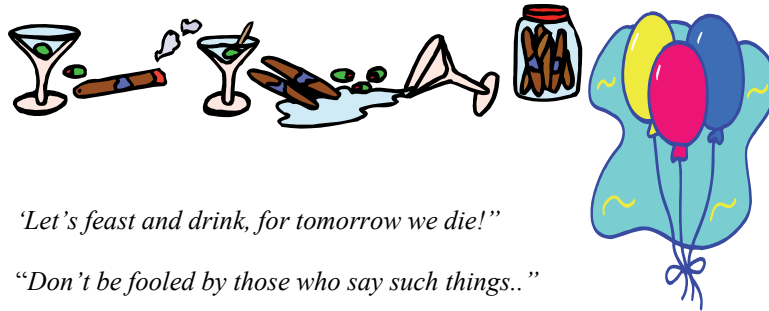
“Tell me this, since we preach that Christ rose from the dead, why are some of you saying there will be no resurrection of the dead?”

For if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised either....And if there is no resurrection,

‘Let’s feast and drink, for tomorrow we die!’” (Is 22:11)

“Don’t be fooled by those who say such things, for ‘bad company corrupts good character.’”

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‘Let’s feast and drink, for tomorrow we die!’”

“Don’t be fooled by those who say such things..”

Are you listening?

Hanging with the party crowd isn’t good for you!

And it’s not about you being drunk at a sexual orgy.

(Don’t even think about doing that)

The problem lies with what the party crowd thinks is important.

They take your mind off of the eternal perspective,

and they encourage you to focus only on the present moment.

Have fun now. Eat, drink, and be merry. Please yourself now.

This is one of the basic ideas behind humanism.

And actually,

it is completely logical, IF you do not believe there is a resurrection.

If you are only an evolved animal that ceases to exist upon your death, then live it up!

If you believe that there is no life after death, and no judgment, then what does it matter?

The Book of Ecclesiastes in the Bible was written by King Solomon to show that life without God is meaningless.

Without God, life is empty.

He gives many examples of what is meaningless, or how this meaninglessness affects us.

Ecclesiastes 1:2, 8:15, 12:13

“Everything is meaningless... You might as well just have fun, because there is nothing better for people under the sun than to eat, drink, and be merry...That is the whole story.

Here now is my final conclusion; Fear God and obey His commands, for this is everyone’s duty. God will judge us for everything we do, including every secret thing, whether good or bad.”

The Bible is clear.

There is a resurrection.

For everyone.

All of us will face judgment in Christ,or without Christ.

“Each person is destined to die, and after that comes judgment..”

Hebrews 9:27

“We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are.”

Romans 3:22

So you can party

....Or you can prepare.



227 What Does 'All Things Work Together For Good' Really Mean?

Romans 8:28-31

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, and are called according to His purpose. For God knew His people in advance, and He chose them to be conformed to the image of His Son, so that His Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

And having chosen them, He called them to come to Him. And having called them, He gave them right standing with Himself. And having given them right standing, He gave them His glory.

What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us?”

2 Peter 1: 3

“By His divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know Him, the one who called us to Himself by means of His marvelous glory and excellence.”

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God has given believers everything.
God has given us Jesus Christ.
Forgiveness. Salvation. Eternal life. Heaven.
And we are also being conformed to the image of Christ.
That's the “good” mentioned in Romans 8:28.

To know Christ, become like Christ, and bring others to Christ,
are the reasons why we are here on earth.

This is our purpose to which we are called. Everything that happens to us here on earth is related to gaining and accomplishing this.

The Biblical statement, “*all things work together for good*” means that in our spiritual journey, everything that happens to us is tightly woven together to help us find Christ, live for and serve Christ, and be conformed to the image of Christ.

Nothing happens to us as a singular event.
Nothing is by random chance.
All things are connected,
because our Sovereign God has designed life that way.

Whether we immediately recognize how certain 'bad events' go together with all the 'good' things that happen, is a reflection on our ignorance, not on God's lack of control.

God is in complete control of the "all things working together for good" process. And this process started for believers from the foundation of the world. (Titus 1: 1-2)

This is a HUGE concept to grasp. And an important one. It puts our life in perspective.

Yes, you have a choice to make. To choose Jesus, or not.... Heaven, or Hell. And Yes, God already knows the choice that you're going to make. And Yes, He has chosen you. (Devotion # 128, 'God Chose You')

All things from the moment you were born are working together for good. (Ps 139: 16)

To what end?.... To bring you to Christ, and conform you to His image.

Sometimes the activities used by God to conform us to the image of Christ are hard. In my lingo, I wonder why God allowed me to get "whacked"! I try to live the verse in Romans 8: 28. I love God. I am called according to His purpose. And I am going along being pretty good, and then whack.

Why, I ask?

Here's my answer in picture form.

In Biblical times, when they made a Roman coin, they would take a piece of metal, and stamp it with the image of Caesar.



A metal die that had his image would be placed on top of the new coin, and WHACK. The image was embedded on the coin forever.

That's how I see the 'bad' times that come into my life.
It's God placing His die on top of me, and then allowing the pressured event to forever place the image of Christ on me.

It has always been during those 'hard' times
that I found the Lord closer to me.

It was at those moments that others got a glimpse of Jesus in me.
And it's those experiences that I remember in detail.
I know them well.
And I now know the results of what those experiences did for me.

"...we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, and are called according to His purpose...."

"By His divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life."

*"What shall we say about such wonderful things as these?
If God is for us, who can ever be against us?"*

228 Contend For The Faith

Jude 3

".....I am urging you to earnestly contend for the faith that God has entrusted once for all time to His holy people."

2 Timothy 2:15

"Study to show yourself as an approved worker of God. You will not be ashamed, you will know what God's word means, and you will be able to explain the word of truth."

Joshua 1:8

"Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do."

2 Peter 3: 2-3

"I want you to remember what the holy prophets said long ago, and what our Lord and Savior commanded through your apostles."

1 Timothy 6:12

"Fight the good fight for the true faith."

Man oh man, these scriptures make me want to stand on top of a table, and preach. Hand me my sword, I'm going in!

Let me ask you something.

What happens when you are with several people who start questioning spiritual things?

They pick their subject, and off they go.

Maybe they're open to Biblical truth, maybe not.

But it is clearly your opportunity to "*earnestly contend for the faith*"

To show that you "*remember what the holy prophets said long ago*"

What do you do?

Do you turn invisible and hide?

Or do you show yourself ready to

"*Fight the good fight for the true faith.*" ?

Can you present the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith?

Can you quote scriptures that you've memorized to prove your point?

Can you explain what the Bible says on certain subjects?

Can you Biblically point someone to Jesus, and to Heaven?

Or warn them about Hell, and the judgment which is coming?

I hope your answers were yes, yes, and triple yes.

If they were not, here is what you need to do.

First of all, know Christ as YOUR Savior.

You can not personally and effectively contend for the faith, if you don't know Jesus.

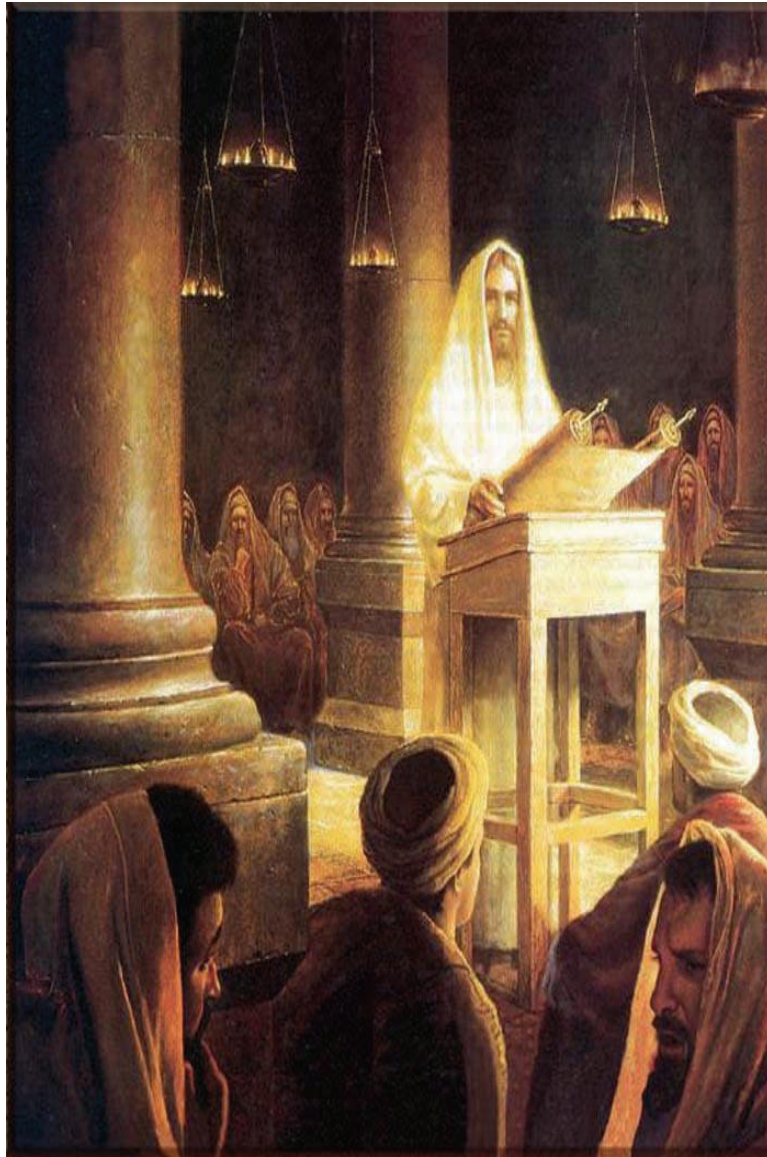
Secondly, STUDY the Bible, so you can contend for the faith knowledgeably. Put the effort forth, so you can proficiently and skillfully expound on the Scriptures.

And thirdly, rely on the Holy Spirit who directs us and empowers us.



"Study to show yourself as an approved worker of God. You will not be ashamed, you will know what God's word means, and you will be able to explain the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15)

TO CONTEND YOU MUST STUDY AND EXPLAIN THE WORD OF TRUTH.



229 Jesus Reading And Fulfilling Isaiah 61

Isaiah 61: 1-2

“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, for the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to comfort the broken-hearted, to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, and the oppressed will be set free. To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God.”

Luke 4: 16-21

“When Jesus returned to the village of Nazareth, His boyhood home, He went as usual to the synagogue on the Sabbath and stood up to read the Scriptures. The scroll of Isaiah the prophet was handed to Him.

*He unrolled the scroll and found the place where this was written:
The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, for the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to comfort the broken-hearted, to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, and the oppressed will be set free.
To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.*

*He rolled up the scroll, handed it back to the minister, and sat down. All eyes in the synagogue looked at Him intently. Then He said to them,
‘The Scripture you’ve just heard has been fulfilled this very day.’”*

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This shows an example of the exquisite accuracy of the Lord’s use of Scripture. Jesus stopped at *“the acceptable year of the Lord”*, which is connected with the first advent and His gracious offer of Himself. The *“day of vengeance of our God”* belongs to the second advent and judgment.

Isn’t it interesting how Jesus stopped reading in the middle of the passage of Isaiah?
Some might say,
‘Hey, you’re taking one piece of the Bible out of context!’
But Jesus knew exactly what He was doing.

He is the context.

Yes, judgment day is coming. The second coming of Christ is near. And with it, the Bible says there will be a *“day of vengeance of our God.”*

But on this day,
Jesus was standing there to offer Himself as Savior and Messiah. Everyone in the synagogue heard what He said, and understood what He meant. Every eye was on Him. Some believed Him. Some did not.

The evidence is still being presented to this day.
Jesus is still offering Himself as Savior and Messiah.

Some will believe on Him.
Some will not.

As of this moment, there's still time for you to choose Christ.
We're still in "*the acceptable year of the Lord*".

What choice will you make?

230 You Are Forgiven

Psalms 25: 18, 11, 7

"See my sorrows, feel my pain, and forgive my sins." *"For the honor of your name, O Lord, please forgive my many, many sins."*
"Remember me in the light of your unfailing love, for you are merciful, O Lord."

Colossians 2:13-14

"...God made you alive with Christ, for He forgave all our sins. He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross."

Hebrews 8: 12

*"And I will forgive their wickedness,
and I will never again remember their sins."*

"He forgave ALL our sins"

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Listen up.

God forgives you.

Do you hear me?

This is a life changing message for all Christians.
It can set you free.....And it can keep you free.

The message is: The Lord God forgives you.....Completely.
For last year, for yesterday, for today,..... and for tomorrow.
He completely forgives you.

God “*canceled the record of the charges*” that were against you,
“*and took it away by nailing it to the cross.*”

Jesus has ALREADY COMPLETELY PAID this sin debt.

God will remember you only in light of His unfailing love.

He will not remember your sins.

(Devotion #149, ‘God’s Chosen Amnesia’.)

God has forgiven you.

And on this Biblical fact,you stand.

Within the knowledge of this truth,you can live.

In His promised forgiveness, ...

....you can serve God today, in Holy Spirit power.

Forgiveness is the scriptural foundation
for the beginning of fellowship with your God.

His forgiveness

is the divinely established continuity of your fellowship with God.

Don’t listen to the lies of the Devil.

He just wants to keep you down, and ineffective.

Claim the promise of God.

Right now, accept His forgiveness again!

