

HORIZONS UNLIMITED

Pastor Sarah W. Utterbach

REDEEMING LOVE CHRISTIAN CENTER

Insights For
Each Day

March • April • May **2008**



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

God speaks to people? I thought.

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

In John 10:27, Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow me." Prompted by this verse, I began to train myself to be able to distinguish the voice of the Lord from all other voices. To know Him became more than a mere suggestion—it became my desire, resulting in a way of life. I no longer want to walk any other way with anyone else. Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life I pursue.

The passages in this devotional are drawn from words the Lord has spoken to me in times of daily fellowship with Him. As you begin this devotional, wherever you may start to read, make Jesus your way, your truth, and your life.

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

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

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

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

His Joint Heir,
Sarah W. Utterbach

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A ministry of
Sarah W. Utterbach



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

A *new* Daily Schedule for



SUNDAY

Sunday Church School9:00 a.m.
Worship Service10:30 a.m.

MONDAY

Bible Class7:30 p.m.

TUESDAY

Bible Class7:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY

Doors open for Prayer6:30 p.m.
Service: School of the Bible7:30 p.m.

THURSDAY

Bible Class7:30 p.m.

FRIDAY

Bible Class and Friday Prayer Service . . .7:30 p.m.
Youth Fellowship7:30 p.m.

SATURDAY

Bible Class and6:00 p.m.
Laying on of Hands—Healing

A DREAM COME TRUE

Recently, God specifically called for our church to pray and fast about certain political and social issues, and also for the Body of Christ—both locally and in general. As I prepared for my message on the Sunday after our fast, I became aware of a greater sensitivity to the voice of the Lord. On Monday, which is my day off, I was awakened by the voice of the Lord speaking to my spirit loud and clear. He was sharing so much that I had to get up to write everything down in order to share it accurately with the other two pastors of RLCC.

From the time my late husband and I took possession of the church facility where RLCC has worshiped since 1985, we had a desire to see the church open seven days a week for the purpose of some type of spiritual service.

Well, at 9:20 a.m. on that Monday morning after the church fast, I received from the Lord specific instructions concerning the day and time for each subject to be taught. I was almost breathless. My emotions ran the gamut of “E” words—I was excited, ecstatic, elated, enthused, euphoric and more all at once! The other pastors had the same response when I shared the instructions with them. The church, too, was on one accord with the new schedule. The necessary teachers are all proven and ready for the task. As we discuss this new direction for our church family, our love and care for each other is so evident you could almost cut it with a knife. We are all hungry and humble. It was God’s time for this to come to pass.

Now, I know God is not affected by our fasting, but we certainly are. As a church family, RLCC has become more sensitive to spiritual things and less interested in the natural as we spiritually mature together.

When I read in the Book of Acts how the church gathered together daily, I desired that for RLCC. Today, my desire is “a dream come true.” And, I rejoice that I’ve lived long enough to see it happen and to be healthy enough to be involved and to enjoy it.

It's Your Authority, Not Your Ability

Luke 10:19—*Behold I give unto you power [authority] to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.*

Jesus had authority conferred on Him by His Father. He then delegated that same authority on us, His Body. Of course, we don't have the ability to stop the devil in our own strength. But we do have the authority to do so. It's the same as a traffic cop, who can't physically stop a moving car. But his badge gives him the authority to stop it.

**We permit and suffer too
much from the enemy
because we're waiting
for God to do something.**

The word "hurt" in this verse does not just mean to injure; it also means to be unjust (morally, socially, or physically); to be an offender. The devil is usurping our authority

illegally. Because we are not informed or aware of what has been delegated to us, we allow him to get away with things he has no right to do to a believer. He defeats us temporarily by default because of our ignorance of God's Word. We permit and suffer too much from the enemy because we're waiting for God to do something.

Beloved, God has already done His part. He's waiting for us to execute our delegated authority. Stop waking up to "smell the coffee." Instead, wake up to the One who made the coffee bean! Jesus is in heaven interceding for us before the Father, not only to plead our case when we mess it up, but also to ensure that we keep informed of who we are and what we have. Say, "Delegated authority."

Enthroned to De-Throne

Ephesians 1:21 (NLT)—*Now he is above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else in this world or in the world to come.*

Hallelujah! Jesus is already "...in charge of running the universe, everything from galaxies to governments, no name and no power exempt from his rule. And not just for the time being, but forever. He is in charge of it all, has the final word on everything" (Ephesians 1:21, TM).

I love the fact that it says "now." This means we are complete in Him. When? Now! We, too, are in charge of all galaxies and

governments that are trying to convince or, I should say, deceive us to think they have power over us and that our choices don't count. They have some temporary authority as a result of

citizens voting for them on Election Day. But our authority is delegated and ratified through Jesus' shed blood, and as long as we choose to exercise it, it will always work for us because every angel in heaven, and force beneath the earth must obey the words of a believing believer.

**... every angel in heaven,
and force beneath the
earth must obey the words
of a believing believer.**

We, through Jesus, are in charge now, in this age and in the ages to come. We rule in life and in death. Our physical condition will change one day, but it does not mean we will leave our position of being enthroned in Christ, which means that for all eternity, we can dethrone satan of his position.

We Need The 'More So'

Romans 5:10—*For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*

Smith Wigglesworth's daughter once asked some young men from Africa to describe the difference between being saved and being baptized with, or indwelt by, the Holy Ghost. They replied, "When we were saved, it was very good; but when we were indwelt by the Holy Spirit it was more so."

Reconciliation means to compound a difference. The death of Jesus accomplished that by making us one with God. There is no more God *and* us. When you compound

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a word you take two words and make them one. Now that we are made one with Him, He wants to save us, which means He wants to deliver us, protect us, heal us. He wants to preserve us, to cause us to do well and to make us whole. That is the

"more so." But it takes the person of the Holy Spirit to reveal that truth to us.

Many Christians settled for being reconciled to God, which is certainly necessary. Once we were reconciled or made one with God, the *more so* or *much more* is to live in His divine protection, His divine healing. God will guard me from loss or injury by keeping His eye on me. He will provide a fortress around me — not only to keep me in but also to keep out the enemy. 2 Timothy 4:18, supports that truth. Especially in these last days we need divine preservation all *the more so*.

Will You Be Ready?

Luke 1:17 (TM)—*He will herald God's arrival in the style and strength of Elias, soften the hearts of parents to children, and kindle devout understanding among hardened skeptics — he'll get the people ready for God.*

John the Baptist was able to do this because it was first prophesied in Malachi 4:5, 6 that he would be the one. In preparing himself to fulfill scripture, John spent a great deal of time in the wilderness alone with God. He wasn't interested in the latest games or fashions. He ate what was needed for him to survive. He was focused. He understood his call and was responsible only to the Lord. He was not afraid of the rulers or the people. John the Baptist said and did what was needed as directed by the Spirit of God. Yes, it cost him his life, but he was ready. He was not so busy getting everyone else ready that he forgot that he too one day had to leave here.

To neglect to serve the Lord makes me an unfaithful servant, and the Lord can teach me much in my service to Him.

Jesus said, "Servants are fortunate if their master finds them awake and ready when He comes (Luke 12:37, CEV). He tells us to be ready and keep our lamps burning (verse 35). There are times that I allow my schedule to become overloaded and the Holy Spirit reminds me not to be so in love with the work of the Lord that I lose sight of my priority which is to spend time together with Him. To neglect to serve Him makes me an unfaithful servant, and the Lord can teach me much in my service to Him. But He can teach me more in personal time with Him.

A Place

After prayer service one Friday evening, the Word of the Lord came unto me saying, "There is a place of holiness I long for you to dwell. It is not an unfamiliar place, but a place you visit on occasion. It is the place where I Am, the place where I will always be. I long to fellowship with you there. Don't just come to visit. Make your abode there with Me. It so pleases me and I know your desire is to please me. But you continue to allow the distractions around you to draw you back to the mundane things of this world. Make a choice to stay with Me. I have what you need. I have what you want. Remain with me. I long for you to live a supernatural existence. You must choose to set the things of this world aside because they only hinder your progress, which is never my best for you."

Father, I receive this as Your message for me and to me. My desire is to set aside the time to commune regularly with you. I need Your help. Cause that desire to be fulfilled by assisting me with my scheduling. Teach me to plan and schedule only that which You have selected for me to do. I pray this in Jesus' precious name.

Are You Filled or Do You Just Speak in Tongues?

Acts 1:8 (Message)—And when the Holy Ghost comes on you, you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, all over Judea and Samaria, even to the ends of the world.

The Word of the Lord came to me saying: “The people are not *filled* with the Holy Spirit — most have just enough of Him to speak in other tongues, but that does not mean that they are filled.” I asked, “How will they know if they are filled?” He replied, “Filled people never have to repent.”

I saw it. A person who is truly filled with the Holy Spirit will never lie, cheat or do anything that the Holy Spirit does not lead him or her to do.

Therefore, that individual has no reason to repent. We’re being filled, but most of us are still working on our Christian character in one way or the other. The reason we

don’t see more miracles and power evident in the church today is because we are not filled. We have only been indwelt or baptized with the Holy Spirit but what are we doing with His power and presence within us?

Filled people in the Bible did things out of the ordinary as directed by the Holy Spirit. They discerned situations and altered conditions. When people experience physical attacks, are you so filled with power that they can they come to you for help or do they see you running to the doctor and depending on medicine also? Be filled.

A person who is truly filled with the Holy Spirit will never lie, cheat or do anything that the Holy Spirit does not lead him or her to do.

Bribes Lead to Deceit

Deuteronomy 16:19 (CEV)—*Don't take bribes to give unfair decisions. Bribes keep people who are wise from seeing the truth and turn honest people into liars.*

Bribes are not always an exchange of money or a gift of money to one in position to influence. Sometimes it's a dinner or an invitation to a person's home or the use of others time-share, or second home for vacation purposes. It will be helpful to ask yourself, Why are they offering this? Do I have the Holy Ghost's permission to accept it? Will it interfere or influence my future choices? Will the wisdom God has given me to discern truth be affected? Will my reputation as a representative of God and His honesty result in me becoming a liar?

Watch how a person reacts to your reason for not accepting something from them. When God sends you something through another person there are never any strings attached.

All bribes lead to deceit. I have learned, with the Holy Spirit's help, to say "No thank you" to some offers because I don't need to think of them in the next equation

I make for the Lord. Sure it has cost me relationships and finances, but it has never hindered the blessing of God from overtaking me. Watch how a person reacts to your reason for not accepting something from them. Make sure you are faithful to your role in their lives. When God sends you something through another person there are never any strings attached.

Ambition and Assertiveness

Ambition is good. However, these are forces that must be managed and controlled. Without proper regulation of these gifts working in your life, they will be your ruin. Always know when to include or to consult with others. God knows His plan for you. Resting in Him will insure that in His season you'll be right where He wants you to be.

Remember He said to humble yourself and He will exalt you. Don't let your good be evil spoken of. Ambition and assertiveness out

Don't let your good be evil spoken of. Ambition and assertiveness out of control or not properly managed come across as a potential take over.

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No one can take over permanently what I have orchestrated. Your steps are ordered by Me. I know when you are ready for the next step or move. Never allow yourself to get ahead of My plan or what was intended to be your launching pad could become your stumbling block. I know where you are. I have always known where you are. You are where you are today not because of you, but because of Me. It was your submission to Me that allowed Me to call those things that be not, as though they are. I'm here. Wait, I say, on Me. I have the whole picture, and it includes you.

Look At My Blessing from the Lord

Deuteronomy 22:1-3 (CEV)—*If you see a cow or a sheep wandering around lost, take the animal back to its owner.*

Depending on where you live it's not likely that you'll observe any sheep or cows wandering around lost, but the principle and the commandment remain the same. Make some attempt to return whatever you find to its owner; it's not yours.

Too often I have heard sincere believers say, "See how the Lord has blessed me?" when they have found a thing.

**God does not need to
bless you based on
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misfortune.**

They know it has an owner, but no attempt is made to take it to the police station or at least notify the police that they have found something of value so if the owner inquires, they can be

contacted. If the one inquiring can describe the lost article it must be returned.

God does not need to bless you based on someone else's misfortune. If God wants you to have it, no one will ever claim it. However if you make no attempt to make the owner aware you have it, the devil makes you a thief like he is. Scripture says if you don't know the owner, take it home with you and take care of it. The owner is responsible to come looking for it. But if you never tell the authorities where it can be found, you are stealing.

Never Pretend to be the Opposite Sex

Deuteronomy 22:5 (CEV)—*Women must not pretend to be men and men must not pretend to be women. The Lord your God is disgusted with people who do that.*

Since God never makes any mistakes, pretending is the best you can do if you are not satisfied with the way God made you.

If you have given birth to a baby you are a female, it doesn't matter how much you want to be or act like a male.

If you have sired a child, you are a male. Use all the makeup, female attire, or voice change you want, you are a male. You may not have the mature character that defines you as a woman

or a man because that takes refining, but your gender is either male or female, and God is disgusted when you pretend to be otherwise. Sure,

God still loves you. He can't do otherwise because love is His nature. He is sad that you feel the need to be other than the way He made you, but His love for you never changes.

I have known a few so-called homosexuals in the past, some even produced offspring, but they're dead today because they played with God. God did not kill them; their own lust killed them. God's love permitted them to leave here before He became more disgusted with their behavior. They were not fruitful for His Kingdom, so He allowed them to be cut down.

Stop pretending. Be what the Supreme Creator has made you to be. You'll never be satisfied otherwise.

Stop pretending. Be what the Supreme Creator has made you to be. You'll never be satisfied otherwise.

Wisdom: The Best Thing

Proverbs 4:7 (CEV)—*The best thing about wisdom is wisdom herself.*

Wisdom is so much more than information and education. Wisdom is good sense and it is reflected in your thoughts, words and actions. Wisdom makes you skillful.

Because wisdom is the principle thing, it is, therefore, primary and the first thing you should seek to acquire.

Wisdom, like wealth, is never to be hoarded; it is to be spread around.

Obtaining wealth is not an indication that you have embraced wisdom. Any fool

can obtain wealth, but a person of wisdom knows how to retain wealth.

Wisdom is never a tool to use against others. God allows us to become wise so that we know how to be a blessing to others. Wisdom, like wealth, is never to be hoarded; it is to be spread around. I'd rather spend my life with people who possess wisdom than to live in a palace with those who are merely wealthy. One can learn from the words of those with wisdom. The wealthy, however, often talk only about themselves because of selfishness, which is a sign that true wisdom is needed.

Jesus was made unto us wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:30). He will make a display of fools who claim to be wise, just as it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of all who claim to be wise. I will confuse those who think they know so much" (1 Corinthians 1:19, CEV).

Getting Even Hinders You Getting Ahead

Proverbs 20:22 (CEV)—*Don't try to get even. Trust the Lord and He will help you.*

After receiving an e-mail from a seemingly desperate person who just heard me teach on accountability and responsibility, I was able to help.

Thank God for His wisdom to pray His perfect will before attempting to advise anyone. When asked why she wanted to see me, she flippantly said, "I came to you for you to tell me what I'm doing wrong!" The Holy Spirit said that's not what she wants — she wants a 1-2-3, A-B-C formula that will change everything in her life.

Neither of us was prepared for what happened next. Suddenly a spirit of compassion began to rise in me. As I sat in her presence, the Word of the Lord came unto me saying, "She needs to begin the change in herself." He continued to peel away layer by layer of the tough façade she had developed to protect herself from further hurt. She trusted no one.

With the help of the Holy Spirit, she saw that others were not her problem and that she had some serious work to do on herself. He would not bless or prosper her unless she made the needed changes. She would never change if He allowed her to be blessed as she was. He wanted her to see, that when all else failed, He was not only trustworthy, but His desire was to work all things together for her good (Romans 8:28). Like so many of us she thought she had to do the work. She did, but it was first on herself, before He could use her in other areas. Her tears and demeanor changed. I was assured that she welcomed the change and was willing to learn to get ahead, not just even. Months later, she no longer resembled the person who previously came to my office.

When you trust the Lord with all that concerns you, and obey His instructions when you need to change, getting even will no longer be your concern because you will discover the blessing in getting ahead God's way!

Seeking Benefits Could Cause Your Demise

Mark 14:10—*And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priest, to betray him unto them.*

While the chief priest welcomed Judas' assistance in arresting and destroying Jesus' influence, they did not initiate contact or approach Judas for his help. Judas never learned to protect his heart. As a result, his greed led to his own destruction. John 13:2 reads, "And supper being ended, the devil put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him."

Judas had a chance to put away thoughts of betrayal, but he chose to entertain thoughts of greed and envy until he eventually formulated a plan to act on those

thoughts. Once that plan was embraced, he opened the door for satan to enter into him (John 13:27).

Jesus told His disciples how they would know the identity of His accuser (verse 26). Instead of Judas rejecting

the sop of bread, he took it, knowing his heart was not right towards Jesus. The deception he entertained is what gave satan entrance into Judas' heart. Jesus already knew one of them was a devil even though He had personally chosen all twelve. Once Judas fully yielded to satan's control, what Judas thought would benefit him (the 30 pieces of silver), became his demise.

"What will you give me?" is not a question any of us should ask. When it comes to being loyal to Jesus, our focus should always be, "What can I do for Him?"

Judas' betrayal of Jesus was bad enough, but for him to merchandise their friendship was terrible. Guard your heart against greed lest it leads to your own demise.

Judas never learned to protect his heart. As a result, his greed led to his own destruction.

Your Greatest Treasure

Proverbs 7:2 (CEV)—*Obey me, and you will live! Let my instructions be your greatest treasure.*

Natural relatives may disappoint you or even turn on you because of envy. According to scripture, “Let wisdom be your sister and make common sense your closest friend (Proverbs 7:4, CEV).

During the course of my 70+ years, I have been blessed with many valuable treasures, but none of them compare with the wisdom of God operating in my life. This kind of wisdom profits me and benefits others in ways that academic intellect and personal achievements fail miserably.

**“Let wisdom be your sister
and make common sense
your closest friend
(Proverbs 7:4, CEV).**

Take a moment and revisit your treasure chest. If you see lots of man-made things and find little or no Godly wisdom, you’re in for a much shorter life here on earth. God did not need our input to create man or the world. However, because Jesus has taken His position at the right hand of the Father and is not in the earth, He accomplishes whatever needs to be done by His Spirit within us, the Body of Christ. We petition Him for much and He wants us to have everything that will not draw us away from Himself and the Father, but most likely those things will become ours through our obedience to Him. Our obedience to Him is our greatest treasure—it is a treasure without price.

His Wonderful Kindness Chose You

Galatians 1:6 (NLT)—*I am shocked that you are turning away so soon from God, who in His love and mercy called you to share the eternal life He gives through Christ. You are already following a different way.*

One Sunday, a young man arrived at RLCC and sat on the front row. It was obvious he was not born again. During praise and worship, the Holy Spirit sent me over to him to publicly lead him in the salvation prayer. He prayed and was transformed right before our eyes. Hands raised, eyes sparkling and frowns replaced with ear-to-ear smiles, he soon spoke in tongues, was baptized in water and eventually served as a host.

Keep your ears tuned into the Word of God and the voice of the Holy Spirit, whose kindness drew you out of darkness and into His marvelous light.

Maybe a year later, after being in every service, his seat changed to a row further back. He began to absent himself from some services. I

finally received word that he said that he was not being fed, and would be attending another fellowship.

Immediately I knew the problem. An early departure like that tells me the individual is listening to others who are saying that no one is expected to live by the standards held at RLCC. Paul says there is only one true message, but some people are causing you trouble and want to make you turn away from the good news (Galatians 1:7).

Keep your ears tuned into the Word of God and the voice of the Holy Spirit, whose kindness drew you out of darkness and into His marvelous light. Time alone with the Lord will reveal His will and standard to you. The choice is then yours to follow and obey.

I Believe in His Name

Mark 16:17 (TM)—*These are some of the signs that will accompany believers. They will throw out demons in my name, they shall speak in new tongues.*

When a Christian truly believes in Jesus' name, they walk in the authority to throw out any and all demons. This is not something we just do where others are concerned; we start with ourselves. Because we often come into Christianity with baggage from our past, wrong attitudes, habits and behavior of the past must be eliminated. Our spirits are recreated and redeemed, giving us power over our flesh. Our flesh, which once had total control, will go out kicking and screaming all the way but go out it must.

Humbling ourselves and submitting to the leading of the Holy Spirit has to start somewhere, for without humility we will not grow and progress spiritually. I had an opportunity to tell someone recently who was pretty upset with a close relative's non-Christian behavior, that God was revealing this conduct to them for two purposes. First, to see what they were capable of with no teaching, examples or self-restraint. Second, to get out of the person's face and into God's face on behalf of the person. He was the only Christian that individual knew. If he didn't pray for that relative, who would? He agreed.

Never think that what the Lord has spoken will not be fulfilled.

Regardless of how other's act, be certain you choose to reflect Jesus Christ by praying for them in Jesus' Name. When you do, you *will* see a change!

Fear Makes You Non-Productive

Matthew 25:25 (CEV)—*I was frightened and went out and hid your money in the ground. Here is every single coin!*

Everything God gives us He expects it to be returned to Him multiplied and more developed than in the state He gave it. God made us to be productive people and He's watching to see what we are going to do with His provisions.

I was born during the great depression and was too young for it to affect me personally, but I did get to see the fallout. Those around me would barely enjoy what God blessed them with for fear of losing it in the event

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the depression repeated itself. Very few that I knew hid their resources in the ground, but they would hide resources under the rug and the

mattress, along with a few other places which produced the same results.

If I have learned anything in life, it is never to eat the last of your seed — sow it, especially if God says to give it away. We used to sing a song, "You can't beat God's giving, no matter how hard you try."

God has not given us a spirit of fear and He is constantly trying to give more to us. Therefore, why not look at what you have and trust God for what you need by sowing your last? It's not enough to sustain you anyway. By sowing it, God has to come to your aid sooner because now you only have Him. He is surely more than enough.

Follow the Word

Joshua 3:3 (CEV)—*When you see some of the priests carrying the sacred chest, you'll know it's time to cross to the other side.*

Israel was instructed to keep their eyes on the container that carried their instructions for success, since they had never traveled this way before (verse 4). They were told that the chest would guide them.

Believers have the Holy Spirit to take us where God has ordered our steps. It is imperative that we keep our spiritual eyes on Him and not be distracted by what our physical eyes may see. Faith in what God has said will direct us to our destination. Our Guide cannot be seen with our natural eyes, but divine accuracy is what He does best.

It is imperative that we keep our spiritual eyes on Him and not be distracted by what our physical eyes may see. Faith in what God has said will direct us to our destination.

Too often I hear people say, "I know what the Word says, 'but.'" When we really know God's Word and understand that it only works for us by faith or by believing, there are no *buts*. Every time we allow a "but" to follow what we know, we are in rebellion and disobedience.

Follow God's word. *Period.* You may not always understand what He's doing, but you can be sure of this: He's working it out for your good. To follow God's Word is to follow His Son—the Beloved One in whom He is well pleased. We no longer follow a box, we follow His written and spoken word. When we do that, He is well pleased with us.

What Will You Give Me?

Matthew 26:15 (KJV)—*And said unto them, "What will ye give me, and I will deliver Him unto you? And they covenanted with him for 30 pieces of silver.*

As believers, anytime our question is "What's in it for me?" we're heading for trouble. Imagine having been given all power over all demons and still wanting more. Only greed could blind you to the truths that you are His. You are one with Him and have all of heaven backing you in everything that is godly. Only a deceived

mind could consider all that and still not be satisfied.

The question is not "What will you give me?" but "Lord, what can I do for You to show my gratitude and appreciation for all Your bountiful blessings?"

One of the greatest experiences I've learned to enjoy is being on the giving end. Jesus said it's more blessed to give

than it is to receive. This is a true statement, but the key is in letting God share with you who it is that He wants you to give to. Obedience, not emotion in giving, guaranties a return every time.

You and I can't meet every need, but we can be obedient to meet the ones God assigns to us. Paul said, "But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19).

If you have to ask, "What will you give me?" you have yet to meet my Savior and Lord, the Man, Christ Jesus.

You and I are not capable of counting the many physical and spiritual blessings overtaking us from The Lord. The question is not "What will you give me?" but "Lord, what can I do for You to show my gratitude and appreciation for all Your bountiful blessings?"

Lasting Results, Part One

2 Corinthians 2:4 (TM)—But the message comes through anyway. God's Spirit and God's Power did it, which made it clear that your life of faith is a response to God's power, not to some fancy mental or emotional footwork by me or anyone else.

I have heard some eloquent, exciting preachers from the pulpit. However, the Spirit would reveal that apart from their training to excite the people in the natural, they didn't have faith enough to find their way out of a spiritual paper bag, wet and with holes in it. This helped me to focus on Jesus. I also learned to believe His every word at all times because He and His Word were one and they never changed.

... God's miraculous power contains God's ability, abundance, strength, and mighty, wonderful work.

Without a doubt God's miraculous power contains God's ability, abundance, strength, and mighty, wonderful work.

Paul said faith is a response to God's power. The just shall live by faith (Hebrews 10:38). We walk by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7).

For years, a challenge with my back dictated that I visit the chiropractor every Tuesday evening at six o'clock. I did so with little or no thought for eleven years. The best the chiropractor could do was to bring me temporary relief. One day at a meeting in Madison Square Garden, with no one laying hands on me, I released my faith in the power I saw demonstrated and I received my healing. I located scriptures to support what I believed. I reminded the devil when he tried to return with symptoms that I had received my healing. I have held fast to my confession for over thirty-one years. Why give it up now? The devil is still a liar.

Lasting Results, Part Two

2 Corinthians 2:4 (TM)—But the message comes through anyway. God's Spirit and God's Power did it, which made it clear that your life of faith is a response to God's power, not to some fancy mental or emotional footwork by me or anyone else.

I am not for one second attempting to make light of anyone blessed with various gifts of God's power demonstrated to benefit His people. Demonstration of God's power causes the recipient to develop a life of faith. The power operates as God wills. In order to keep what you received from God, you will have to learn His Word, develop faith in what He has promised you and stop satan in his tracks when he tries his vain imaginations.

Once you embark upon a life of faith, the enemy can only attempt to plant doubt in your mind. If your mind and heart are filled with the Word of God and you are

pursuing a life of being filled with God's Spirit, the enemy knows you won't be fun to play with. If he finds that your response to

When we choose to walk after the spirit we will always win and retain lasting results!

God's power did not result in a life of faith, the enemy will attempt to take charge of your life.

Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh (2 Corinthians 10:3, KJV). We achieve lasting victory when we use the weapons of our warfare to cast down arguments and every high thing the devil sends our way. When we choose to walk after the spirit we will always win and retain lasting results!

You're Praying Wrong

James 5:17 (NKJV)—*Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months.*

Elijah was following directions when he declared it would not rain for three and a half years. This was not his choice just because he wanted to prove his power. His prayer had purpose.

I spent 27 years exercising my God-given authority over weather conditions. Suddenly I began to lose my desire to pray concerning the weather. As a new pastor, I thought praying about the rain and the snow would cause people to respond correctly where church attendance was concerned. I prayed about the weather based on this verse, without conferring with the Lord.

One rainy Sunday evening as I was preparing for service at our Poconos Church, I heard, "You've been praying wrong." This day I had not prayed concerning the weather and a larger than usual group attended both churches on a rainy Sunday. He had my attention. I didn't have to ask Him what He meant; He just began to talk to me. The first question was "Why are you attending service today and excited about it?" I suddenly realized it was not because I was the senior pastor. It was because I hungered and thirsted for Him. That was my reply. He then asked about another lady, who travels two and a half hours one way to attend service and is almost never absent. I suggested that she, too, must be hungry for Him. The Lord then stated: "I wish you'd leave My weather alone and begin teaching the people to pray for hungry hearts. Rain and snow never stopped a hungry person from finding food. Spiritual hunger not weather is the issue. Pray for me to create hungry hearts and watch a change.

Lord, I Thirst for You!

Psalms 42:2—My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?

Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled (Matthew 5:6). Is God all you crave and long for? Do you find yourself seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness? Are your prayers asking God to make you hungrier for Him and to let your spirit always strive for the satisfaction of finding Him?

Prosperity, health and wealth are just a portion of the benefit package Calvary made available to me. Like the rich young ruler, I had all this, but was still desiring and longing for something that was missing.

Do you find yourself seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness?

Poverty certainly is no badge of honor, but neither is health or wealth if you are living without Jesus. It is even possible to be born again, filled with His Spirit, to walk in health, wealth and wisdom and still experience a void in your life. That void translates as a spiritual hunger and thirst.

When things lose their luster and all you want is to know Jesus and His power and resurrection, you're thirsty. When you have access to leading ministers and teachers, but you only want to hear from the Lord on a daily basis, you're thirsty.

Acknowledge and position God as first in your life and you'll start to enjoy a quenching of that thirst, but it will never be fully satisfied until you behold Him face to face.

Take Communion Daily

1 Corinthians 11:24—*Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of me.*

Jesus said “as often as you do this, do it in remembrance of me.”

When the Holy Spirit spoke to me at the beginning of 2006 to “take communion daily” I knew He had a purpose in mind but I had no idea the spiritual affect it would have on me. Like many Christians, I spent years taking or receiving communion, with regularity on the designated day that the assembly had decided. Of course I knew what the bread and the cup represented. I certainly understood that they were symbolic, and was not the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ. However, it was not until He instructed me personally to receive them daily and began to examine myself and discern His body that Jesus became more alive in me. Jesus did not just want to be manifested to me; He wanted to manifest Himself in me so the world would see Him and not me.

When you find you are no longer interested in anyone knowing your name but you long for others to know Him and Him alone, you are maturing spiritually. Daily communion has done more to aid me in my spiritual growth than all the preaching and teaching I’ve ever heard. Faith came by hearing, but growth occurred when daily examination took place.

The Lord never makes suggestions or requests of me. He gives me directives. When I obey, things happen. Changes occur and they always take me to a new level. He has taught me in order to take me higher, that I must allow Him to take me deeper.

When people say, “You’re too deep for me” take it as a compliment. They are seeing your growth.

Abandonment

Abandonment is not always giving up what I have blessed you with; it is the willingness to release it if I ask you to.

So often My children hesitate to follow Me when I call them because they are reluctant to let go of what they have come to enjoy. They have confused creature comforts with the Creator of all comfort. Never think you'll continue to be comfortable with what I have provided for you if you neglect to move with Me. It is not what you have that brings you the joy and peace you are experiencing.

I am He, the one and only true God that has brought you to where you are. Sometimes I allow you the material things of life as a reward for your love and affection for Me. You get to keep them when you do not forget that I must remain first in your life and your love. I have had to withhold some things from you because you have not matured to be able to recognize what is truly valuable. Your treasure is in Me, not in what I provide.

Can you give back, upon request, what I have given to you, or will you have to "pray about it?" Praying about it will not change the request once I have spoken. Train yourself to hear and recognize My voice so that when I speak, you say, "Yes, Lord!" Abandonment is to give yourself to me so that you get to keep what I allow you to bring with you as you submit and yield to my call.

Force Them Out or Make them Slaves

Joshua 16:10 (CEV)—*Ephraim could not force the Canaanites out of Gezer, so there are some Canaanites who live there among the Israelites. But now these Canaanites have to work as slaves for the Israelites.*

At age 85, Caleb completed his assignment and received the promise God gave him when he was forty. He attacked the occupants of his promised land, forced them out, then started another war (Joshua 15:13,14).

45 years passed between Caleb's assignment and its fulfillment. What do you mean you are going to retire? Not if *you* plan to possess what God has promised. The promise of God to you has nothing to do with your age. However, if you want what He has promised, you will have to apply effort to possess it. How bad is your "want to?" God makes a promise, but His people have to possess it. Caleb and company had to physically fight for what God has promised and given to them.

The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God for the pulling down of strongholds. We can and will receive all that God has promised, if we apply the effort to possess it through faith in His Word, prayer and thanksgiving, exercising patience. That is the will of God for us. And when we do His will, we will obtain His promises.

Caleb waited 45 years, than still had to contend for what was his. Most believers don't want to wait 45 months or days. At 85, a modern day believer would have already been retired for at least 20 years. God told me that I get to retire when He can have a day off.

Are you going to be an Ephraim or a Caleb? If you have not yet learned how to dispossess the enemies of your flesh, at least make them slaves to the promises of God for your life. Wake up, get up, and go get what God has promised you, using your spiritual weapons.

End Your Complaints with Praise

Psalms 89:52 (CEV)—Our Lord, we praise you forever. Amen and Amen.

In this psalm, David had just completed pouring his soul out to God about what he was feeling. He wanted to know why it appeared that God had forgotten His promises to him? But David was wise enough to stop his own venting with a declaration of trust and praise, saying: "I'll praise you forever. Amen and Amen."

God does not mind our sounding off and letting out the steam of discontent and frustration. That doesn't bother Him a bit. What matters is how we choose to conclude our conversation with Him. In all things give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

God never said we were to thank Him *for* everything. You can't thank God for "everything" because everything does not come from Him. You can and must, however, praise Him in the midst of everything.

Do you praise God only when all is going well, or does your heart rejoice in spite of what is happening? I have learned that the quickest and easiest way to get past the depression and despair the devil tries to dump on us is to look for God in the midst of all the attacks of the enemy. Sooner or later it will sink in, that if the devil could destroy you, he would have already. God won't let him, because you and I don't belong to him, and God has not finished His plan for our lives. God does not always stop satan's onslaught, but He always reminds us that His grace is sufficient for us.

In my weakness He is made strong. Therefore, I will glory in my infirmities, attacks, and what appears to be lack. There is no power like praise when you seem down for the count. Praise your way up. End your complaints with praise!

The Fallout of Sin

Joshua 22:20 (CEV)—*Don't you remember when Achan was unfaithful and took some of the things that belonged to God? This made God angry with the entire nation.*

Achan died because he sinned, but he also caused the death of many others. Dying as a result of my own sin is one thing. Causing others to die due to my sin is too difficult to think about.

This is what Jesus did for me and He was the only one assigned to die for my sins. What a relief it is to know that He did not have to remain dead for me. In fact, if Jesus had not been raised from the dead, He would not have qualified to declare me innocent. He made me a new creature in Christ. *Old things passed away and behold all things were made new* (1 Corinthians 5:21).

The fallout of sin still affects others today. Presidents will go down in history books as liars, fornicators and abusers of their office. When we obtain a certain level or status among the people, we no longer belong just to ourselves. Men and women, when you are single adults, you are accountable only to your Maker. When you add spouses or children into your lives, you also add additional responsibility and accountability.

For Achan to die because he stole what belonged to God is different from his entire family, all his cattle and all he had falling into the pit with him when it opened. Who are you attached to? Do you periodically check out what they are up to, or do you look the other way when you know they're wrong? When your inner voice tells you that something is not right do you question it or decide you'd rather not know? Don't get caught in the fallout of another person's sin. The result could be fatal.

Correct Your Children Before It's Too Late

Proverbs 19:18 (CEV)—*Correct your children before it's too late; if you don't punish them you are destroying them. Why? They will not have been trained to be pleasing to both God and their parents.*

When my youngest son was six years old (he is now 45 years plus), he was not thrilled with a response I gave to acknowledge that I did not have the answers to his questions. His reply was, "Well, why don't you know, you're the Mommy?"

I didn't even think about it as I responded with, "Listen, you did not come here with instructions attached

Inquire of God for further direction as you parent your children.

to your rear end. I'm doing the best I can with what I have to work with, which is you. When you learn to be a better child, I'm sure it will help me

with being a better mother." He looked at me and said, "Huh?"

I'd had it with trying to be the ideal mom. I wanted him to know neither of us knew what we were doing and just like being a full time child was a first for him, being a full time parent was all new to me. At least I had the good sense to know that I was in charge and not him.

Parents, you don't have to have all the answers to your child's questions. All you need to know is the One who chose you for the role as parent. Inquire of Him for further direction as you parent your children. Never make the mistake of failing to correct or discipline them because of your sense of inadequacy. God had enough confidence in you to put you in charge. Trust Him to help you with not allowing your child to take over, in Jesus' name.

Act Like It Is So

1 Corinthians 6:3—*Some of you used to be like that. But now the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, and the power of God's Spirit have washed you and made you holy and acceptable to God.*

I don't know about you, but at times I have been both disgusted by what the "old me" used to do, while at the same time I have been grateful, wanting to jump around the room because of the love, patience and compassion God displayed by tolerating me for such a long time. Reading this verse helps me understand the Apostle Paul's commitment to the purposes of God. I'm thrilled as I read that his zeal for spiritual things did not diminish once he met Jesus. In fact I sense it was enhanced.

We don't have to wait for the rapture to act like Jesus. We have been equipped with all we need to start using His name with boldness.

Most of us will not have a face-to-face encounter with Jesus before He raptures us, but we can be washed by the blood of Jesus to be made acceptable to Him. It's time for us to act like it is so. We don't have to wait for the rapture to act like Jesus. We have been equipped with all we need to start using His name with boldness.

The world as well as other Christians are watching what we say and do. Our words and actions should be the reflection of Jesus in the earth. The reality that they are in need of a Savior is upon both them and us. We must be ready, so act like it is so.

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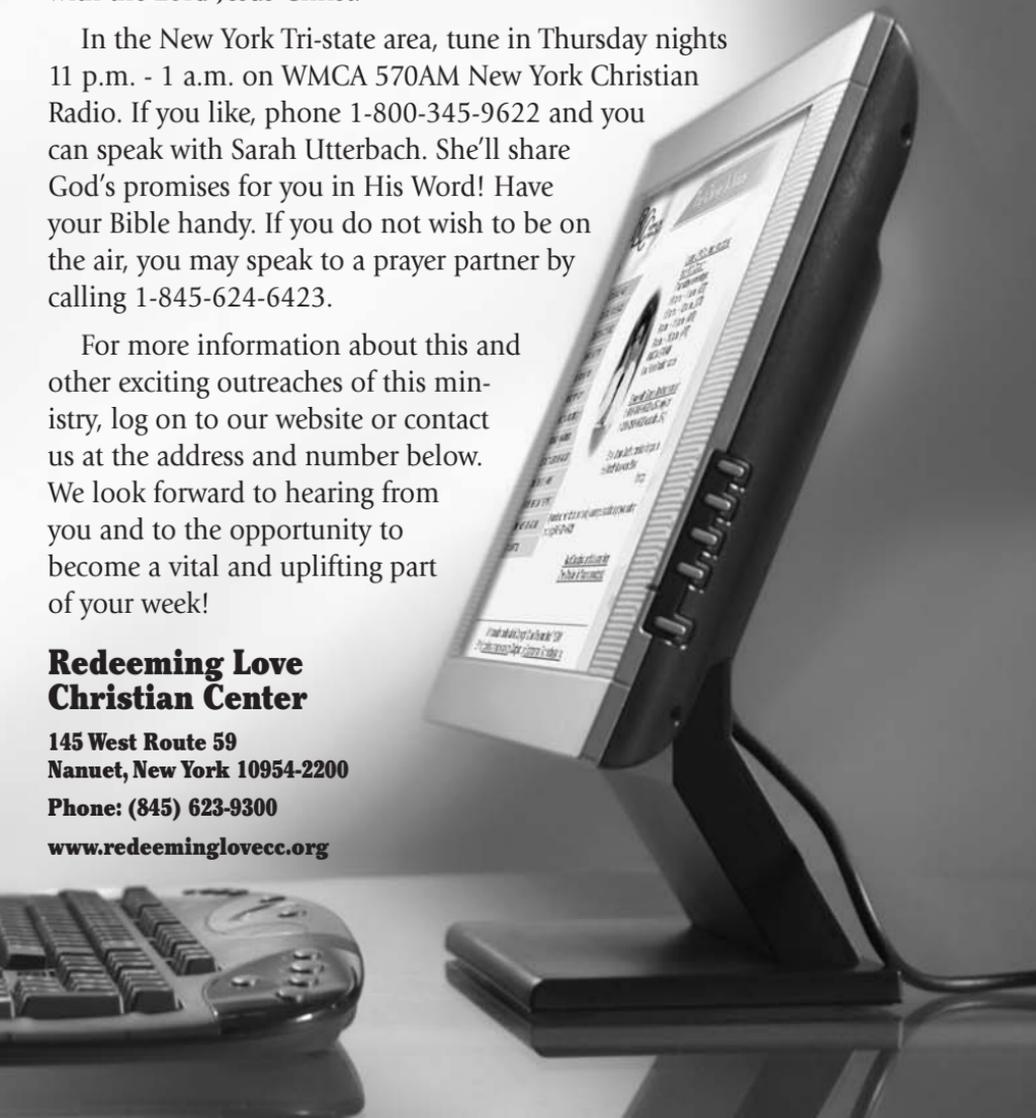
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Keep Your Confidence In The Lord

Judges 4:7—And against you I will deploy Sisera the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude at the river Kishon; and I will deliver him into your hand.

Though Deborah the prophetess, delivered this message to Barak after sending for him, he said, "If you will go with me then I will go; but if you will not go with me I will not go."

This was outright rebellion to the Lord. God had said to Barak, "I will deliver him into your hand." To say you will not go at the Word of God is not a good thing. Barak's confidence was in Deborah, not in the One she represented. Because of his comment (which revealed his own misplaced trust in Deborah rather than in God), Barak would get no credit for Sisera's defeat, but a woman would be credited for the victory.

It was Jael, Heber's wife, who took a tent peg and a hammer and went softly to Sisera and drove a peg through his temple into the ground while he slept. It was in that manner that Sisera died.

How often we try to choose how God must work after He has already spoken? Barak's confidence was in Deborah, a prophetess, judge, warrior, and God decided to use another female with no military experience at all. In fact she didn't go looking for Sisera, he in fact arrived at her tent and she lulled him to sleep with kindness. But because God was delivering him into Barak's hand, she used what she had, a hammer and a nail.

Stop thinking you'll never be used for anything important. You don't need to concern yourself with finances, investments, stock, or property. Just make sure you are obedient and in position to be used at any time by God for His purpose.

Changed

1 Corinthians 15:53 (CEV)—*Our dead and decaying bodies will be changed so that we won't die or decay.*

I am so grateful to 1 Corinthians 15, because it gave me all the answers I personally needed when my late husband passed away. I wanted truth, not tradition, which is what I received from God's Word.

One day we will be in heaven with Jesus. The operative word here is 'will'. Verse 35 reads, "Some of you have asked 'How *will* the dead be raised to life? What kind of bodies will they have?'"

Notice, a seed must die before it can sprout from the ground. Question; have you ever seen any seed planted

and sprouting immediately? It takes time to be changed. Every seed looks different from the sprout that comes up. This is because God gives everything the kind

**As we are asleep in Jesus,
He is preparing a place for us,
which is the permanent
presence of God, forever.**

of body He wants it to have. People, as well as animals, birds and fish are each made of flesh, but none of them are alike. Every thing in the heavens has a body and so does everything on earth. But each one is very different (1 Corinthians 15:36). We'll have glorified bodies. I believe we sleep in Jesus until He comes for His harvest so that we sprout in the form that will be pleasing to God. Sprouts from seeds take time. As we are asleep in Jesus, He is preparing a place for us, which is the permanent presence of God, forever.

The Central Place of Power

2 Corinthians 4:7 (CEV)—*We are like clay jars in which this treasure is stored. The real power comes from God and not from us.*

The *central theme* of the Bible is Jesus Christ as Lord revealing His Father God to each of us who choose to believe.

The *central place* of power is not in the natural strength we gain from exercise and disciplined diets, though there is nothing wrong with them. The central place of power for us as believers is in acknowledging our weakness and total dependence on the Lord. Sometimes we focus too much on the vessel or the container, failing to recognize that it is the contents in the container that is the treasure. Wisdom, insight and love properly applied are treasures to which no price tag can be given.

Wisdom, insight and love properly applied are treasures to which no price tag can be given.

God says through the Apostle that “we have not because we ask not.” A faith-filled confession that calls those things which *are not* as though *they are* is right. That is a way of life for me, and it works. But even that is not the central place of power.

As you and I mature, we realize that the discipline of the Lord is also a part of His benefit package to us. Once we accept that, we can rejoice in and through all things. In so doing, we will discover that we have tapped into the central place of His Power.

So stop looking at the container — either yours or others. The greater treasure resided inside you and me. Let’s press on for the gold and whatever it takes to reach our goal.

When You Make Your Bed Hard, Sleep In It

Proverbs 19:19 (CEV)—*Let angry people endure the backlash of their own anger; if you try to make it better, you'll only make it worse.*

The Contemporary English Version reads, “People with bad tempers are always in trouble, and they need help over and over again. God never gives up on a person but sometimes we frustrate His grace. We neutralize, violate and cast off His unmerited favor by the way we choose to conduct ourselves.

I’m sure you’ve heard, if not said, “I feel like giving so-and-so a piece of my mind.” Trust me, you need your mind fully in tact!

We will reap what we sow.

The challenge is to get

your mind renewed to think like Christ thinks, and to rid yourself of ungodly thoughts.

Let us ask for the help we need to grow in grace and to develop the mind of Christ. The more we renew our minds according to the Word, the better equipped we are to cast down any thought which tries to dominate us and lead us in steps other than those directed by the Lord.

Aren’t you glad that the Lord ignored us when in moments of difficulty we foolishly uttered that we wanted to die or that life had no purpose? When I discovered that if I made my bed hard, I had to sleep on it, I realized that the reverse was also true. Life does not get a say in how it will treat me, I determine the outcome of my life. We will reap what we sow. Therefore, depending on what I want to enjoy in life, I decide what to sow or plant. Good will return to me but so will evil when I violate God’s laws. Keep looking up. Jesus is expected.

Living Wisely and Well

Proverbs 19:20 (TM)—*Take good counsel and accept correction — that's the way to live wisely and well.*

Man's correction is sometimes tough to handle, because there are times one can sense some personal input and attitude. I don't seem to have a negative reaction to being corrected by God. "Blessed is the man whom God corrects, so do not despise the discipline and do not resent His rebuke, because the Lord disciplines those He loves, as a father the son he delights in" (Proverbs 3:11, 12). I don't receive correction from everyone however, because I can sense when people just want to have a say in what I'm doing. I always have this clean feeling when God corrects. When God is correcting you and me we can usually find scripture to support it. All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebutting, correcting and training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16).

**You and I will live wisely
and well when we hear
from and obey God.**

Don't let anyone hold you hostage with their opinions and beliefs. Require them to give you chapter and verse for what they say to you. When God corrects it has purpose. He wants His children thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:17). You and I will live wisely and well when we hear from and obey God. Good counsel is always from the Lord and can be easily accepted. It's a no-brainer knowing that disobedience to God carries with it consequences.

Options and Plans Versus God's Purpose Prevailing

Proverbs 19:21 (TM)—*We humans keep brainstorming options and plans but God's purpose prevails.*

Humans always give options and make plans. Life has taught me to forget options because God does not give any. Most of the plans I was required to make when I was in the corporate world were silly to me. Then, because so much changed from day to day, I began to realize man has options and plans; God has purpose. That remains the same, until you have completed your assignment as directed by Him.

Before making any plans, I have learned to confer with the Lord concerning them. Natural planning is a waste of time when God has ordained His plans for you which are spiritual.

Stop what you're doing right now and say to the Lord, "I yield, I yield, I won't hold out any longer." The challenge we have with obedience to God is that we have never submitted to Him. I always say, "You can't resist the devil until you submit to God" (James 4:7).

After I finally submitted to the Lord, my obedience was almost automatic. Because of hard headedness, I persisted in doing things my own way a couple of times. God allowed me to do my plan, only to find His purpose was going to prevail. I soon realized there was no point in continuing to waste both His time and mine. When I finally bought in or sold out (whichever you need to do), life was so much easier. That was the case even in the so-called rough spots. God has the bigger picture and I just needed to learn of His love and trust Him to work it all together for my good (Romans 8:28). The same is true for you.

Check On the Inside

Proverbs 20:5 (TM)—*Knowing what is right is like deep water in the heart; a wise person draws from the well within.*

If there is a message that I have been called to teach, it is this: “Listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit within your own recreated or born again spirit.”

The world is full of psychics, gurus, fortunetellers, and the like who cannot come up with answers for themselves. Many in New York have storefront offices, and they reside in the back. Why in the world would I want to give my money to someone who is guessing at what concerns me when I can quiet myself and listen for the voice of truth on the inside?

Folks, if we are going to draw truth from within, we are going to have to shut off some of the noise and electronics in our lives so we can go for a swim in the deep waters of our heart. Why pay someone for the wisdom you need when a well of wisdom is within you? I preach and teach all the time about the value of checking on the inside. The devil may be able to send his suggestions to your head, but he cannot turn the dial of your heart if you have received Jesus as your Savior and Lord.

I tell my congregation to “listen on the inside” even when I know that I’m sharing truth and godly insight with them. Much grief and heartache would be spared if we’d listen to the inward voice as opposed to all the nonsense and “yakety yak” on the outside. We hear so much of that, it often drowns out the sweet gentle voice of the Holy Spirit who is trying to do His job — which is to lead and guide us into all truth and show us things to come— both good and bad.

The Effectiveness of the Invisible

Hebrews 11:27—*By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the King's anger; he persevered because he saw Him who is invisible.*

We've all seen the effects of the wind, yet no one has ever seen the wind. Jesus said so in John 3:8. The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it's going. Jesus said so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.

The realm of the spirit is a real place. We limit ourselves when we fail to accept that another realm exists other than the natural or seen realm. Some things are a mystery to the world and always will be, but nothing should be a mystery to a believer. God reveals the invisible to us by the Holy Spirit, who is called the Spirit of Truth. The Old Testament people never used the word mystery, because they were limited in what they knew, and what was made known to them was revealed by what the prophets said to them. As strong as they were in faith, they could not be compared to us, the New Testament ones.

The word of The Lord came unto saying, "The invisible is effective and can be both negative and positive. Words spoken cannot be seen, however, their affect is beyond the explainable. Words are invisible but they are the single most effective force in the universe. Every word you speak is like the wind, except you can control their force whereas you can't control the wind. Once you release them they are out there to be a blessing or a cursing. They will not return void or empty, which is why I want you to only say what I've given you to say."

It's not true *Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.* Words are invisible, but they have power to hurt or help, to give life or to destroy.

The Final Word

Proverbs 16:1 (CEV)—*We humans make plans but the Lord has the final word.*

Over the years, I have learned the futility of making plans without conferring with the Lord. Years ago when I was a manager at IBM, we were encouraged to make five-year plans. Because it was our job and we were paid to obey this directive, we did. What a waste of time this was for me, because the Lord made changes in my life on a daily basis. By the time I got to the fifth year, my life had been altered so much. This happened mainly because I had learned to allow the Lord to take the lead in my life. He ordered my steps. He knew His plan for my life. He had the whole picture and He was always working all things together for my good. Proverbs 19:21 reads, "We may make a lot of plans, but the Lord will do what He has decided."

Some people feel threatened when they discover they are not in control of their destiny. I pray that you become secure enough in your relationship with the Lord that you trust Him enough to always have your best interest and well being in mind. We are His children, His Son's bride and His plans are for our good. He is concerned for our welfare, to insure that we fare well, not be on welfare. There are times when I wish I could bottle the peace God has provided for me, so I could just sprinkle it on those I observe who seem always to be struggling and juggling, striving to enter into the rest of the Lord. One of R.L.C.C.'s other pastors told someone that God did not call him to juggle; if he knew how to juggle he could join the circus and earn a lot of money. God does not juggle things; He lays them in place, according to His plans and purpose. Please learn to allow Him to have the final word in your life.

From Evildoers Come Evil Deeds

1 Samuel 24:13 (NIV)—*As the old proverb goes, “From evildoers come evil deeds;” so my hands will not touch you.*

David was innocent both in attitude and in action concerning Saul. He clearly understood what “God forbid” meant. He understood the reward for obeying God. He was not a wicked person and his prayer to God was to keep him from profaning a thing. He could not prevent Saul’s action, but he could obtain the favor of the Lord if he refused to violate what God had forbidden.

David understood that as wrong as Saul was about him he could not defend himself against Saul, nor could he in any way harm the one who had been chosen and anointed by God. His total response to Saul’s behavior was to rest on God to defend and protect him in his innocence. He knew God was faithful to remember His covenant forever. Just as He allowed no one to oppress the children of Israel as they wandered from one nation and kingdom to another. God had decreed: “Do not touch my anointed ones and do my prophets no harm (Psalms 105:14, 15).

David’s heart smote him for even cutting off a piece of Saul’s robes. Never listen to those around you when they want you to retaliate against those intending to harm you. Stay innocent and enjoy the blessings and benefits of the Lord. When we elect to protect ourselves, we fail to represent God and all He stands for. Like David, we must allow God to judge between us, and those motivated by the enemy to be against us (1 Samuel 24:12).

I honestly believe that because I learned to endure the attacks of the enemy, the Lord has taught me how to respond to my enemy, as He responded to me when I was His enemy (Romans 5:10). Luke 6:27, tells us to love our enemy and do good to them. Romans 12:20, commands us to feed them if they are hungry. This is a way to overcome the power of the enemy. Luke 10:19 tells us to let our deeds identify us as children of God, who act like God, not the father of evil.

There Are Times You Must Do What Is Right

1 Samuel 25:19 (CEV)—*And told her servant to “take this on ahead, and I’ll catch up with you.” She did not tell her husband Nabal what she was doing.*

Secrets should not occur between married people, especially between New Testament believers. If, however, your mate does a foolish thing that could cause the harm of innocent people and you fail to prevent it, you are not guiltless. If you are married to another believer, you should ask why they are doing what you know is contrary to God. If they insist in their actions, inquire of God what you can do to prevent it.

Two things happened in the matter concerning Abigail and her husband Nabal. First, Abigail knew her husband was a wicked person. Even his name indicated what his character was like (1 Samuel 25:25). Trying to reason with him would be like attempting to get a non-believer to understand spiritual truths (1 Corinthians 2:14). Second, her concern was both for David and the innocent people of her husband’s household (verse 26). In addition, God wanted to reward her and remove her from this awful relationship. She sowed the seed that resulted in her becoming David’s second wife.

Submission is a good thing because it is of God. However, often submission is preached today as men having the lordship over women regardless of what they do. The Bible tells us in marriage to submit one to another out of reverence to Christ (Ephesians 5:21).

If your spouse is doing things you know are not right and you are a child of God, you are not to support them in wrongdoings. Go to your Father and ask what you should do, then trust Him to give you the necessary grace while He works it all for your good. This goes for both males and females.

The Presence of The Lord

Psalms 114:3 (NLT)—The Red Sea saw them coming and fled hurriedly out of their way! The water of the Jordan River turned away.

Never be moved by what your five physical senses tell you, because they only speak of natural things. But I tell you, those on fire for God and His plan recognize that the enemy of Christ sees us — the Church, His bride — coming and he is hurrying out of our way. The Church Triumphant is coming forth in power and authority, knowing that the “gates of hell shall not prevail against us.”

I say unto you today, “Get up in Jesus’ name. Move out as directed by the Holy Spirit. Let nothing hinder you from fulfilling what God has told you to do.” Act like who you really are; you are the sons and daughters of the most-high God. Never fear your assignment or you’ll forfeit your right to trample your enemy under foot.

Faith is of God and fear must hurry out of your way. The deceit and lack that have held you back all this time will, like the Jordan River, turn back.

All of creation awaits the time we are manifested as the son of God (Romans 8:19). We have been children of God since the day we invited Jesus into our hearts. Now we are the sons of God, manifested in all His glory and power to take back what the enemy has stolen from us all these years through deceit. We became hungry for more of our Father God. We regulated our lives to understand who He is and discover in the process who we are. We no longer have to fight. Jesus already won the battle. We have learned to stand with His promises as our foundation. Everything not of God must promptly get out of our way as we move forward with no reverse mode.

Prayer and Kicking

Philippians 4:6 (TM)—*Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praise shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns.*

Prayer is a requirement for the life of a believer? You and I can't make it without prayer. It's more than a request or a petition or supplication — prayer is worship. When we go to God with our requests, petitions or supplications, we're acknowledging our need for help from a superior force. We recognize our dependency on God for the peace He gives as He answers our prayer.

Prayer is essential to our success as a believer. However, there is a point where after we have worshiped God with our prayers, we need to get up from our knees and begin to take action.

There are things we permit in our behavior and attitudes that will only leave when a conscious effort is made to assault them when they surface. They only return repeatedly because we refuse to deal with them once and for all. Now that doesn't mean the enemy won't probe to see if he can bring it back disguised as something else. The Bible states he only left Jesus for a season, so he could return at a more opportune time (Luke 4:13). But notices that Jesus always used what worked when dealing with the devil: "It is written." Scripture is clear that we are to pray. Jeremiah 29:3 says, "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."

If you are praying, yet seemingly to no avail, there is a reason. Stop kicking against the pricks of the Holy Ghost, which cause failure in our prayers. Disobedience, secret sin, indifference, neglect of mercy, stubbornness, instability, and self-indulgence, are just a few of the things that prayer won't get rid of, so begin treating them as your enemies and kick them out of your life for good.

Divine Impulse

Acts 9:5 (KJV)—*And he said, who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.*

When Paul recounts his conversion, he repeats what Jesus said, "It is hard for thee to kick against the goads or the pricks." The Bible definition of a *prick* is a sharp pointed instrument used to prod and ox to move in the direction where you want him. Jesus is likening His will and plan to this tool. We've all heard the expression, "stubborn as an ox," which is why the Bible tells us never to yoke an ox and a mule together to plow (Deuteronomy 22:10). They will never cooperate to get the job done. Too often we attempt to work in partnership or marriage with an unbeliever, or a believer who wants to go against the grain of God's will for your life. It won't work!

The pricks of Jesus Christ are those divine impulses we get and try to ignore. Paul was working very hard to stamp out Christianity before it got started. Jesus flatly told Paul that "he was persecuting Him." Jesus also said it was *hard*. The word "hard" here means *dry, tough, severe, and fierce*. When Jesus begins to prick us, which means to thoroughly pierce, agitate violently, and sting to the quick, the sooner we submit the easier this Christian walk gets. When His divine impulse locates you for His service, you can make it easier on yourself by willingly submitting to the call. If you don't, you will never succeed or be happy doing anything else.

Take your life and all it's ambition and turn it over to the Lord. Resisting His divine impulse is fighting against His Will. You can't win until you lose that fight.

Skating On Thin Ice

Psalms 103:10 (NLT)—*He will not punish us for all our sins, nor does He deal with us, as we deserve.*

To insure that His creation would not be lost forever, God the Father stopped trying to get men to obey and follow Him and He sent His sinless Son Jesus as our substitute. Jesus Christ took our place in judgment and offered Himself to be the Lamb of God, slain before the foundations of the world to take away the sin of mankind. This willingness to obey the Father fully earned Jesus the right to sit at the right hand of His Father, where even now He ever lives to make intercession for you and for me.

Because of Jesus, God does not see our sin anymore. He sees only the Blood of Jesus. Imagine if God was still dealing directly with us today. We would not make it through the morning watch. But because of Jesus, the Father's love will never be separated from us. Who wouldn't want to yield to a love that powerful and pure?

In case you are not aware of the time we are living in, we are closer to the return of Christ than we've ever been. You're skating on thin ice if you live your life oblivious to the truth that any day now Jesus might crack the clouds and come for His Church. It will be over and done so quickly. There will be no getting ready time. Today, I ask you to honestly assess where you are, then ask yourself if you are ready for His appearing? If not, fix it.

Everything in creation snaps to attention at God's Word—everything except humans. We say we love Him then give our attention and affection to others and things. He asks us—His creation—to follow Him, to confer with Him, but we want to schedule in the Creator when it is convenient for us. That attitude is both reckless and ridiculous. Holding the Creator in contempt by ignoring Him is to skate on thin ice. It's dangerous.

God Reveals What I Need to Know

Geneses 4:26 (NIV)—*Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh. At that time men began to call on the name of the Lord.*

The *Message Bible* translates that verse as saying that's when men and women began praying and worshipping in the name of God.

Occasionally the question will surface concerning where Cain's wife came from (verse 17). I don't know the answer to that. But I do know that Cain went from the Lord's presence and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden. The Lord has not yet revealed to me where Mrs. Cain originated, so I go with what He has said, which is at the time Seth, who also had an unnamed wife, had a son whom they named Enoch, and in his lifetime prayer and worship was introduced.

I say all that because at times we spend a great deal of our time majoring in minors and miss what we need to know. I don't understand the virgin birth or the resurrection of my savior, but I believe both. It's not my job to get you to understand every event of the Bible. My job is simply to teach you what I do understand.

I know prayer and worship are essential to the life of every believer. I am confident that when I pray I receive from God all I ask for, because I obey Him and do what pleases Him (1 John 3:22). There is evidence of far too many people receiving answers to their prayers for me to ever doubt that God is a prayer answering God. I'm encouraged when I read accounts of the Old Testament saints who received answers to their prayers. God is the same yesterday, today and forever.

If the Bible was still being written, you'd find the name Sarah Utterbach, along with Moses, Gideon, Hannah, Samuel, Solomon and many others. While I may not know everything, I do know that God answers prayer and He will reveal to me what I need to know. Period.

I'm Not Immune, Just Attuned, Part I

Hebrews 6:17 (NIV)—*Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of His purpose to the heirs of what was promised, He confirmed it with an oath.*

When it was revealed to me many years ago that I was an heir of God and a joint heir of Jesus Christ, my outlook on life changed. In the natural, I was never an heir before. However, when my husband fell asleep in Jesus, all that we had accumulated together was now mine and mine alone. Had I fallen asleep first, he would have become sole owner of all we possessed together. Because he was a songwriter and music composer, I became the owner of all the contracts he had with ASCAP and Universal. This was interesting because I can barely carry a tune in a bucket, yet for the rest of my life I will receive royalty checks from these music companies simply because I am his heir.

This helped me to better understand what I have with God, because of my relationship with Jesus. I may never raise the dead, walk on water, or feed multitudes with a limited lunch, but that does not change the benefits that I am entitled to receive because of my relationship with Him. I neither sing nor write music professionally, but I can still cash Clinton's royalty checks. In like matter, because of who I am in Christ Jesus and the life of His Spirit within me, I can cash in on all Jesus' benefits. I am a fellow heir and co-participant together with Jesus both in His suffering and in His glory. I was not Mrs. Clinton Utterbach in name only. I lived with Clinton, cared for him, worked with him, and endured his suffering to the end.

We cannot be Christians in name only and expect to experience all the benefits of God through Jesus. Are we prepared to obey, submit and endure the persecution of identifying with Jesus? If so, expect the rewards and benefits that accompany your assignment. It works in the spiritual as well as in the natural.

I'm Not Immune, Just Attuned, Part 2

Hebrews 6:17 (NLT)—*God also bound Himself with an oath, so that those who receive the promise could be perfectly sure that He would never change His mind.*

“**W**hen people take an oath, they call on someone greater than themselves to hold them to it. And without any question that oath is binding” (Hebrews 6:16). Since there is no one greater than God, when He swore by Himself, He would have to self-destruct before He failed to keep one of His promises. He has promised me health, wealth, and peace of mind through Christ Jesus. All it requires of me is obedience to do what He asks me. That may mean at times stepping out of my comfort zone, or giving up natural things that don't contribute to my spiritual growth, or spending more time alone with Him.

The Lord did not promise us immunity from the troubles of life. The Message Bible translates what the Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 4:8 saying, “We’ve been surrounded and battered by troubles, but we are not demoralized. We’re not sure what to do but we know God knows what to do; we’ve been spiritually terrorized but God hasn’t left our side; we’ve been thrown down; but we haven’t broken.”

What was done to Jesus is done to us — trial and torture, mockery and murder. What Jesus did among them, He does in us. Remember we’re joint heir both in His suffering and His rewards. Let’s look at 2 Corinthians 7:5 and 6 (KJV): “*For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus....*”

God knows who or what He will use to comfort us. We’re not immune to stuff, just attuned to Him.

You're Not God

James 3:1 (TM)—*Don't be in a rush to become a teacher my friends. Teaching is highly responsible work. Teachers are held to the strictest standards.*

Often we're good at training others with what *Thus saith the Lord*. However, we fail miserably when it comes to applying it to our own lives or to the lives of those whom we love. The thought of them enduring pain or suffering is more than most of us can handle. You use your faith to believe God for healing and finances, but don't ask me to require that of my spouse or offspring. How we hinder their faith when we assume the responsibility of their care and keeping. God wants them well and wealthy because of His plan for them, not because of our ingenuity or investments.

**Are you neglecting God
in order to play God
in the lives of others?**

Many have lost their anointing and even their lives because they stop trusting God to take care of those they love. When we begin to wonder, "What will happen to others if something happens to me?" it usually results in two things. One, we take on a messiah complex. Two, we neglect to obey God to the fullest because our focus and attention is no longer on Him but on those He brought into our lives to be a temporary blessing not a burden.

Are you neglecting God in order to play God in the lives of others? That deception is a trick satan uses to prevent your progress in God. When satan can't stop you, he'll deceive you to think more highly of yourself than you ought. Stuck in that kind of pride, you will stall and stagnate until you repent. You'll stay humble and you'll stay effective as long as you remember you're not God.

Believe Me for the Works

John 10:37,38—If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.

Sometimes we try so hard to have faith that we forget to fulfill our assignment. I am not making light of faith. But there are times when what we do for God as He inspires us is the greatest proof of our relationship with Him. While you are waiting to have a “faith feeling” to

perform a godly task, you may be neglecting to operate in the “gift” God has given you. Do the miracle, and then teach the faith on how to maintain it. Some are blessed, responsible, and endowed to do the unex-

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plainable. Someone is in need of the gift that God has given you. Use it for the glory of God and for the good of others.

Jesus had no reputation to maintain but He had a God-given assignment. It mattered not to Him if people placed their faith in Him. What did matter was that people believed that He moved by the direction of the Father.

Reflect on the last thing God did for you that no one can take credit for bringing to pass in your life. He’s the same yesterday, today and forever. Act on your faith while you trust and believe His work. He will be pleased.

Don't Forget the Past

Philippians 3:13—*Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,*

Paul was not teaching us that we should never think of the past. What he was saying was that we should put out of mind anything that prevents us from stretching forward in order to obtain what's before us. To never think of the past is to guarantee that we'll make the same dumb mistakes we once made. I don't dwell on my past but remembering it inspires me to move forward. God uses the Old Testament to provide examples of what not to do as we walk in our new covenant. I never want to forget my past; I just don't want to live there again.

I never want to forget my past; I just don't want to live there again.

My past stimulates and motivates me to move upward and go forward in Christ Jesus. Thinking about the condition I was in before I submitted to Him inspires my hunger for His word as much as my victories and successes since I became serious about Him. Yes, my past is behind me, but God uses it to energize me, and to keep me reaching forward.

I'll never forget what Jesus has done for me. But I will also never forget what the devil did to me. And I will exercise my choice never to allow the devil that kind of opportunity in my life again.

Fear Is Contagious

Deuteronomy 20:8 (NLT)—*Then the officer will also say, Is anyone terrified? If you are, go home before you frighten anyone else.*

You can catch faith by surrounding yourself with people who believe that faith comes by hearing and hearing and hearing. What are you hearing? If they are people of faith you will always be hearing what the Word of God says and what the Lord is doing.

The same is true of fear. When you surround yourself with frightened people, words of fear are all you will hear. They only believe what God cannot do, so that's what they talk. Before you know it,

what little faith you had will disappear until you, too, are repeating how in your opinion God missed it and failed you.

God never misses it and He cannot fail. Nothing is impossible to Him, even those things you didn't know He promised you through Christ Jesus. Why? Because He spoke it and His words never fall to the ground without having accomplished what He sent them to do. I have good news for you: **The Lord God will make you strong in Him, not in yourself.**

Learn to quickly discern those around you that have a "faith deficit" and believe for the strength to put space between them and you at once. Terrified people have not learned to trust God. They measure God by themselves and they specialize in their endeavors.

Never Bite Off the Hand That Feeds You

Deuteronomy 20:20 (CEV)—You may need wood to make ladders and towers to help you get over the walls and capture the town. But use only trees that you know are not fruit trees.

If God wants to use you to accomplish a thing, you can rest assured that He knows the whole story and has the entire picture in mind. If you chop down a fruit tree because you think it's in your way, what then will God use to provide for you once you possess the land? You may have just bit off the hand that was to feed you! God knows we need lumber to build. This is why He made some trees for that purpose, but never a fruit tree. The only time you cut down a fruit-bearing tree is when it ceases to bear fruit. Never cut down anything that is positively productive in your life. As long as God is using it, let it live. You never know when you will have need of it.

I hate killing ants because there are so many lessons to learn from them. Perhaps one of the reasons I don't

**God wants to help you, not
chastise or condemn you.**

plan picnics anymore is because I haven't figured out how to have a picnic without those unwelcome guests. But I genuinely admire how they manage to achieve their purpose and reach their desired goals, despite their small size and overwhelming opposition. We can learn from the ant's ability to build and endure.

Build what you need to possess whatever it is that God has promised you; just make sure you don't kill that which is alive to obtain it. Since it's God's, ask His help or input before you violate His Word. He wants to help you, not chastise or condemn you. Pause, and calmly think about that.

The Origin of Health and Strength

Proverbs 3:7, 8 (CEV)—*Don't ever think that you are wise enough, but respect the Lord and stay away from evil. This will make you healthy and you will feel strong.*

Even though I do light exercise and eat well, I believe I look and feel the way I do because I personalized this verse. I stopped being a know-it-all and I increased in my respect and my awareness of God. Evil had to go the way of spoiled food — Out!

People spend mega bucks each month on personal trainers and exercise equipment in their efforts to keep the natural body in shape or just to look good. Once you're in a coffin everyone looks the same — dead. I've

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Master to become what
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seen too many beautiful corpses. One friend of ours even died reading his Bible! He was a perfect specimen to behold, but he died before age

55. That let's me know that health and strength are not guaranteed by the pursuit of natural means and exercise.

At age 70, I am as strong and even healthier than I was at age 35. Obedience to God and His word made the difference. Like everyone who has ever been born, one day I will shed this earth suit and take leave of this world until I can take flight. What a glorious day that will be! But in the meantime, I can enjoy life in a healthy body, strong and free of this world's sin. I am a living example. Allow obedience to the Master to become what you exercise most. It does wonders for you.

If The Lord Lets Us Live Part I

James 4:15 (CEV)—*You should say, "If The Lord lets us live, we will do these things.*

There is nothing wrong with feeling secure in the Lord. Particularly since so many do not. However, are we becoming so self-assured and confident that we no longer feel the need to include the Lord in our choices, or to consult with Him concerning His plan—not only for our lives, but also for our day?

Both my husband and a very close associate who was gifted to help relieve people of pain and debilitating diseases without the use of drugs or medicine of any kind, died pursuing the writing of books that may never be published. God allows us to complete what He assigns us to do if we remain obedient and in His perfect will.

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God told my husband to learn Spanish and waited four years for him to obey. Instead, Clinton pursued what he thought God was telling him to do, which was to write a book. Perhaps God did tell him to do so, but learning Spanish was not to be ignored, especially since God had spoken that clearly to him.

Our close associate stopped sharing the wisdom he had so freely received with hurting people in order to write a book that was never completed. Maybe God did tell him to write it, but not at the expense of the hurting people.

If The Lord Lets Us Live Part II

James 4:15 (CEV)—*You should say, "If The Lord lets us live we will do these things."*

Some of us have been given specific assignments, while others have been given special gifts. These things should never be neglected while we work on or pursue other matters.

The Lord has spoken specific instructions to me concerning what He wants me to do. This devotional is just one of them. Walking 30 minutes three times a week is

another. He wants me to do both. I can't choose which one I prefer to do as the other is left

The one thing I don't want to ever do is leave this world having left undone what God has told me to do.

undone. I must stay in close contact with the Holy Spirit to assist me in doing both. I need His help to make sure my life is not so cluttered with "nice things to do" that there is no room for the "God requirements." May we discern the value of obedience and esteem the role that the Person of the Holy Spirit fills in assisting us with all that God speaks to us personally.

The one thing I never want to do is leave this world having left undone what God has told me to do. When we don't obey Him, life is a struggle. Furthermore, He may not allow us to continue in disobedience. He orders our steps, not waiting for us to squeeze Him in at our convenience.

If the Lord Lets Us Live Part III

James 4:13 (CEV)—*You should know better than to say "Today or tomorrow we will go to the city. We will do business there for a year and make a lot of money."*

I observe Christians adopting the world's thinking in insisting you must have goals and long-range plans. They even condemn you when you don't. Scripture says "How can you be sure about your life? It is nothing more than a mist that appears for only a little while before it disappears (James 4:14)." Verse 16 says, "It's stupid to brag and it's wrong to be proud."

Many who say they are filled with the Spirit are not. Some have just enough of His Spirit to speak in tongues, but where is the power not only to resist life's temptation but also to help

improve the lives of others? That's what being filled with the Spirit does in the life

**Start living in the fullness
of His power today.**

of a believer. When I sought the Lord concerning how we could become filled to overflowing with His Spirit, I believe I heard Him say, "Pray more in tongues. Build yourself up on your most Holy faith praying in The Holy Ghost (Jude 20)."

Faith comes by hearing the Word of God. But we must learn to build on that faith as the Holy Spirit helps us pray. Don't concern yourself with tomorrow. Start living in the fullness of His power today. You can increase what you have received of His Spirit by expanding your spiritual capacity through the exercise of yielding to Him more in your life in every area.

Speakers for the Lord

James 5:10 (CEV)—*My friends, follow the example of the prophets who spoke for The Lord. They were patient even when they had to suffer.*

Today's prophets are to confirm what the Holy Spirit has already spoken to you. They confirm in you what the Lord has already said to you. The prophets of God are not to fleece God's people for their personal gain. Prophets are yielded vessels confident that the Master Potter will mold them as clay into a vessel for His use.

Prophets understand that God, the all time architect, knows His plan and has no need to explain Himself to every worker. He has, however, obligated Himself to those He is using to build what He has designed.

Prophets perceive with accuracy what the Spirit is speaking to the church. They communicate it in the form of judgment, comfort and hope. Prophets are not sent to discourage or destroy God's people. They are to train and warn them. Prophets are not permitted to doubt when God speaks. They go forth with confidence and authority. The called work of a prophet is imposed on them along with the power to perform God's will successfully.

Prophets do not always get a vision or hear an articulating voice. Often their assignment carries with it an indication that by faith they are to work with what God wants to accomplish. Prophets are on call for the unexpected. They are seldom asked to execute the prearranged, but are provided with agencies and energy outside themselves. When the consistency of an assignment is evident and does not let up, a prophet concludes that God is speaking. True prophets speak for the Lord and not themselves.

Your Foes Shall Be of Your Own Household

Genesis 37:28 (CEV)—*When the Medianite merchants came by, Joseph's brothers took him out of the well, and for 20 pieces of silver they sold him to the Ishmalites who took him to Egypt.*

There is a difference between a dream and a nightmare. Hearing from God in a dream will give you insight into the greater picture of your circumstances and surroundings.

It was immediately evident that brotherly love was not being displayed toward Joseph by his siblings. First, they removed his fancy coat and threw him into a dry well (Genesis 39:23,24). The great lesson in this story is when taken from the well to be sold, Joseph, like any of us, offered resistance and protested his treatment. But because of the dream he had, he eventually trusted what God had shown him and chose to rest in the adverse condition. He knew God was with him and would make his dream come to pass. He later found the trip to Egypt and being away from his relatives was right on target with what God had in mind.

Where are you today? Are you so attached to your relatives that God has difficulty completing His plan through you because you won't let go? Never protest God's test for you, it could jeopardize the future of many. Do you trust what God has spoken to you, or are you too emotional about others to obey God?

Regardless of the manner in which God speaks to you — be it visions, dreams, an inward witness or a preached message — God cannot lie. So find peace in His promises and quickly move forward. God does not merely want to bless you — He wants to move through you to be a blessing to others.

Jesus Did Not Make A Mistake

John 6:70 (KJV)—*Jesus answered them, have not I chosen you twelve and one of you is a devil.*

The selection of Judas as His disciple and treasurer was not the only choice Jesus made that could cause you to wonder. Peter was also a questionable choice. He not only denied Jesus, but he cut off the high priest's servant's ear, which was not a very spiritual response. What about Thomas? He would not believe until his carnal requirements for belief were satisfied. James and John agreed to play politics with the help of their mother in an attempt to manipulate their way into key positions in His Kingdom.

These five men were more than a fourth of Jesus' closest disciples. Since Jesus never did anything without conferring with the Father—and, obviously, the Father God is never wrong—did Jesus miss it? No, of course not. The Father wanted us to learn through the example of these individuals not to doubt what He tells us to do. Furthermore, we don't need to wait around for the "perfect person" to assist us in fulfilling God's plan. No perfect person exists—and that includes you and me. God wants us to understand that He will get the job done if we stay focused on Him.

You are not responsible for anyone else's choices. If God selected your spouse and they mess up, neither you nor God made a mistake. The same is true of employees or friends. Stop questioning yourself when other miss the mark. You did not make a mistake, they did.

The devil would like nothing better than to have us always wondering about our choices. If he can do that, after a time we'll stop making any, which gives him a victory where he should have none. Life includes choices, and all choices carry with them risk. If you have no risk, no choice was made. Trust in the Lord, lean not to your own understanding, make your choice with His direction and then trust God with the outcome. He never makes a mistake.

Turn Your Life Around

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

Father in Heaven,

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

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

Hold Fast

Hebrews 4:14 (KJV)—*Seeing we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.*

We would not think of giving up our profession of faith in Jesus Christ concerning our salvation. Why then are we unwilling to contend for all the other promises?

When we are told to “hold fast,” this is not a suggestion or request, it is a directive from the Father. To hold fast is to keep in memory, possess, take, and withhold, seize, retain, keep and obtain, what is ours as a fulfilled promise.

The devil knows he can’t touch the promises, but if he can prevent believers from confessing those promises repeatedly, they’ll never walk in or experience them.

Aren’t you tired of winning some and losing some? It’s time to become as adamant about all the other promises as we are about our salvation! But you can’t believe for what you don’t know about. Brothers and sisters, say it loud and draw a crowd: “Every promise in God’s book is mine!” Learn every promise God made to you, and keep them in the forefront of your mind. Possess them by seizing them with your words. Use your words to withhold the enemy’s influence. You and I can’t prevent his attempted onslaughts, but when we hold fast to our profession or confession, our High Priest dispatches every angelic being needed to insure that we receive what His covenant assures is rightfully ours.

Jesus is in heaven. He is not coming to earth to do what He has authorized His Church to do. I dare you to act upon the Word of God and refuse to let go. When you do, you will see immediate and significant change.

Life and Light

John 8:12 (KJV)—*Then spoke Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.*

We often try to separate light and life when they are actually the same. Jesus said the words I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life (John 6:63). The life is in the Spirit and the Spirit is the life. Jesus is the Word, and He is the light. The illumination we receive from what Jesus speaks, either through the written word or in our hearts, brings light and life. His words are light and His Spirit is life. His words are a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. We need to reflect Him to the world.

Jesus' words are a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. We need to reflect Him to the world.

When God makes his thoughts known to us and we speak those thoughts, instantly both light and life occur. Jesus is not only the light *of* the world; He is the light *for* the world. Our job is to convince the world that they do not have to walk in darkness of any kind. Jesus, the Word of God, is the light of life. You receive His light when you receive His words. Jesus, His words, His light and His life are all the same. Without His Spirit indwelling us, we see through opaque lenses.

We believe unto salvation. We receive unto illumination, resulting in examination, avoiding condemnation. Can't you see you need all of Him? Why section Him off when you can be completed in Him? Receive His Light and His Life; receive His Spirit to lead you into all His word of truth.

Cloud Watchers

Deuteronomy 33:26 (CEV)—*Israel, no other god is like ours. The clouds are His chariot as He rides across the skies to come and to help us.*

I don't think I'll ever see a cloud the same again. They are not just beautiful and wispy, soon to vanish cotton-like balls. They are God's chariot that He rides across the skies to rescue you and me. Surely, there is no god like our God.

From now, when you look up and see clouds in the sky, think on this verse and be encouraged. See each cloud as

We don't see clouds as well by night but we know they are there with purpose. So it is with my Lord. He neither slumbers nor sleeps. He rides the skies looking to see where He is most needed.

a part of one huge supernatural chariot. Then remember that the Living God, your God is riding across His sky, looking to assist His people — the Body of Christ.

In the past I did not consider myself a cloud watcher, but that's changed. From now on, I will observe the clouds with spiritual eyes, looking for my Creator's assistance. Clouds not only fill the sky in the daytime, they are present during the night, too. We don't see them as well by night but we know they are there with purpose. So it is with my Lord. He neither slumbers nor sleeps. He rides the skies looking to see where He is most needed.

Get Up

Joshua 7:10 (CEV)—*Stop lying there on the ground! Get up.*

Thirty-six Israelite soldiers lost their lives because one person disobeyed a God-given direction.

God shared two things with Joshua to explain why after such victory at Jericho Israel then lost to Ai, a much smaller group. First, there was sin in the camp. God considers disobedience sin.

Achan had coveted and stolen what God said was to be destroyed. Second, God was not at all interested in

Joshua's prayer until he dealt with the sin.

Spiritual leaders cannot choose to overlook something when God has spoken. We cannot assume that because God was once with us to ensure our victory that He will always be there. Most of us miss it by failing to confer with God before we make choices. God said, "I cannot help you anymore until you do *exactly* what I said (verse 12)." He will not hear prayers of the leader when disobedience is permitted.

Someone wrote me anonymously with this question, "Can we have less rules at RLCC and more love?" I replied, saying, "The rules were in place when you arrived, yet you chose to stay. We (the pastors) are not free to leave. We've been called here to enforce the rules God has inspired us to have. You have a choice to stay or go. God has given us a choice between death and life. Everything else He says is a command or a requirement."

When Achan and all he had, including his family, were destroyed, God stopped being angry and the neighbors and friends spent no time mourning or being sad. They simply prepared for another battle. And they won.

**God considers
disobedience sin.**

Stop Running and Take Your Stand

Joshua 8:21 (CEV)—*The men of Ai looked back and saw smoke rising from their town. But they could not escape, because the soldiers they had been chasing had suddenly turned and started fighting.*

Israel was in a physical fight. We are always being challenged by the adversary. Often we have attempted to flee from him, but he is the one that should be on the run. Since our weapons are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, what are we doing to instill fear in the devil? Stop in your tracks, face him and fight. How is this done? Through prayer and praise in the midst of his assaults. We do not have the strength, might, power or promise to win a natural war against the devil. Fighting him in your own strength will keep you always running. Fighting him with God-directed prayer, however, signals his defeat and hems him in with nowhere to run.

When was the last time you've attended a prayer service? What so occupies your time that you won't set aside two hours a week to do battle for others in the spirit realm? The devil has observed too many believers who fail to believe. A believer shares their belief because they understand the power of the spoken Word. They know if they believe a thing and say it, it shall come to pass. The devil has no problem with us believing, as long as we don't say it. There is no power in believing, apart from saying. Your salvation occurred as a result of saying what you believed (Romans 10:9,10).

Stop running from the devil. Turn your life around and fight the good fight of faith by declaring truth from your mouth. When you do, you'll defeat the devil every time.

Even Death Has No Effect on My Faith

Proverbs 14:32 (CEV)—*In times of trouble the wicked are destroyed, but even at death the innocent have faith.*

If the Lord were to tell you the date of your final departure from earth, would you do anything differently? You shouldn't need to. When we live our lives the right way, Jesus can come at any time for those of us that are innocent.

I used to always obey the speed limit, then I allowed the devil to sucker me into going over the limit by five miles. Thank God, He taught me that I was not pleasing to Him and I added unnecessary pressure on myself. When I see flashing lights behind me now, because I know I'm innocent, I quickly conclude, "He's not after me." So then I start to pray for the one he is after because they're going to possibly need God's intervention!

I suddenly realized why I started speeding. For the last several years I lived a good distance from the church, so I justified breaking the law as well as displeasing God because I sought to make up time spent traveling due to the location of my home. Now, I have removed the unnecessary schedule obligations and plan to leave home 15 minutes earlier to be innocent of all accusations. It has done wonders for my stress level, blood pressure and concern with the highway patrol. It takes faith to obey traffic laws. After years of being innocent, I am not even aware of the couple of extra minutes it takes to be innocent and walking in faith.

How Are You Inspired to Pray?

Joshua 10:13 (CEV)—*“Our Lord, make the sun stop in the sky over Gibeon, and the moon stand still over Ajalon valley.” So the sun and the moon stood still until Israel defeated its enemies.*

What confidence Joshua had in his relationship with God to even ask such a thing. It had never been done before or since (verse 14). Joshua had no example or role model for this. Moses had never prayed this way. Where did Joshua get the nerve to make such a request? But, because of his prayer, verse 15 says, “The Lord was really fighting for Israel.”

What are you in need of today? God will gladly fight for you when you believe Him to do it. Dare to believe. Sure, some may call you arrogant but so what? Don't allow their lack of faith and trust in the Lord to sway you. Your determined faith or trust will thin out the crowd around you. Good! You don't need their doubt and unbelief to pollute your atmosphere anyway. It doesn't matter that no one has ever done what you are impressed to do, do it anyway. If God has spoken to you, He will do whatever is necessary to help you perform His will.

I have lived long enough to witness some things we now take for granted; things invented or discovered that were never done before. My church has no choir, because I was impressed to ask them to sit down. Unless and until I hear Him say, “They know how to worship Me, not just entertain the congregation” there will not be another one. We have the most inspired worship services we've ever had using taped music. If you are ever going to do anything for God or receive anything from Him, you are going to have to go where you've never been and do what you've never done.

Are Your Feet on the Demon's Neck?

Joshua 10:24 (CEV)—*After Joshua had called the army together, he forced the five kings to lie down on the ground. Then he called his officers forward and told them, "You fought these kings along with me, so put your feet on their necks."*

Jesus defeated the devil for us when we had no strength to fight. How much more should we keep satan under our feet? Luke 10:19 is one of my favorite verses in the Bible because it tells me of my authority and responsibility as authorized by Jesus himself.

As long as we're in these earth suits, even though we're being filled with the Spirit, the devil will challenge us. The reason he challenges us, though he's already defeated, is because from the beginning of time he's known what the spirit of deceit can do to those who are not quite sure of who they are and what authority they have. Notice what he did to Adam and Eve?

At age 36, I began to be made aware of who I am in Christ Jesus and I refuse to let the blood He shed when He died on Calvary for me to be in vain. Because of Calvary, I make every demon and their family my footstool. I don't just wait for them to attack me; I keep my feet on the devil's neck. My champion fought for me and won. Why would I do anything but stand fast in the liberty He gave me? One of the things I love about the Lord is that He gives me gifts and does not return the next day to take them back.

Today are you feeling on top of the world, or are you feeling as though you and satan have reversed places? If you are feeling "under the circumstances," get out from under them, walk in your authority over them. Honor God by taking your rightful place seated in Christ Jesus in heavenly places. Discover who you are in Him, and every battle you face, you'll win!

Get A Life!

Galatians 2:20 (NKJV)— *I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

Usually when someone tells you to “get a life” it’s a put down. They are implying that you’re out of touch with reality or that you have become so spiritually minded that you are of no earthly good. Actually, Paul said this was necessary in order to have unity through humility.

Philippians 2:1,2 reads, “If there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord of one mind.”

When someone, even a Christian, says to you, “Get a life,” they are suggesting that you be more like “normal people.” Normal people are like this world. I don’t want to be normal. I have chosen to set my affection on things above and not on things of this earth (Colossians 3:2). I have lived the carnal life and it’s a road that leads nowhere.

“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God (Colossians 3:1).” I got a life. It is the life of God in me, and I’m enjoying it to the fullest! As the song says, “The things of the earth have grown strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.” I have chosen to turn my eyes upon Jesus. What’s the point of salvation if it does not equip us to live for Him and to experience being an overcomer in this life through Christ? Thank God, as He is, so are we in the world! (1 John 4:17)

Are You Certain of What You're Asking?

1 Samuel 8:7 (CEV)—*“Samuel, do everything they want you to do, I am really the one they have rejected as their king.”*

Although Israel's desires for a king upset Samuel, God said, “Do it for them” but tell them the consequences of their choice (verse 9). Leaders are selected differently in the New Testament than in the world. He purchased us with an awesome price in order for us to continue to bring Him the pleasure He created for us to bring Him.

Often in our quest to be like others and to fit in we neglect to focus on the full story. As believers, we are not supposed to just fit in. With the help of the Lord we are to learn to take the lead. We're no longer the blind leading the blind. We have God's own Holy Spirit to lead and to guide us into all truth, and to show us things to come (John 17:13).

Why risk being displeasing to God merely to keep peace with other people?

Samuel had set a good example for his sons to follow. However, they chose to do contrary things (1 Samuel 8:5). It grieves me when over the years I've observed good men and women of God, even pastors, adjust or overlook sin in the camp just so they “don't make waves.” Folks, wave making goes with the territory. Why risk being displeasing to God merely to keep peace with other people? When we make enough waves, and things settle down, what washed ashore could be that jewel you have longed for.

Begin to Know

Colossians 4:6 (KJV)—*Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.*

A believer does not gain his real knowledge through academic education. You can memorize the Bible from cover to cover, and still not comprehend the wisdom it contains. But when the Teacher of the Church, the Spirit of Truth indwells you and begins to illumine your inner being, He sheds light on truth you've read in the Word, or the truth that He has spoken to your spirit. That is when you begin to know.

Knowledge that is granted by the Holy Spirit makes you bold and confident. When your spirit is directed by the

**If your life has been in a
topsy-turvy state, it's time
for you to begin to know.**

Holy Spirit within you, your speech will always be seasoned with grace that ministers grace.

Answers will come before the question is completed. If your life

has been in a topsy-turvy state, it's time for you to begin to know.

Some people allow such a gap to grow between themselves and spiritual things, that they are no longer sure what it is they should know. Others wonder if they really want to know more of God and His ways because they fear what they think God may expect or require of them. You can be assured that God will never expect or require anything of you that He will not first equip you to accomplish. It's the not knowing that has made you fearful and kept you in bondage. But Jesus said, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."

God Is Not Responsible for Our Stupidity

Proverbs 19:3 (TM)— *People ruin their lives by their own stupidity, so why does God always get blamed?*

The last known bit of wisdom my husband scribbled on a small piece of paper found on his desk was, “The curse of this age is that people will not assume responsibility for their actions. But worse, they always want to blame someone else.” Pause and calmly think on that.

The King James Version of the Bible never refers to anyone as stupid. However, when you look up the word foolishness, it means in the Hebrew, “stupid or silly.” People often say, “God made me this way.” I beg to differ with anyone that will accuse my God of contributing to his or her stupid, silly or foolish behavior. God made us in His image and likeness and nothing in His character is foolish, stupid or silly.

We have surrounded ourselves with the things of this world and the people of this world who are void of wisdom. Furthermore, they don’t even seek to understand spiritual or godly things. Two verses in Proverbs 15 explain well why some are in the shape they are in. Proverbs 15:14 states, “The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge: but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness. Proverbs 15:2 reads, “the tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.”

What you feed on is what you pour out. Let’s stop blaming God. Instead let’s start asking Him for His wisdom in order to halt the stupid things we have entertained in life.

One of God's Many Gifts

Proverbs 19:14 (TM)—*House and land are handed down from parents but a congenial spouse comes straight from God.*

In many other cultures and countries marriages are arranged by the parents. That does not necessarily mean the couples are more in love or more respectful of each other. I don't know that I agree that parents should arrange a marriage, but can a parent's selection be any worse than some of the choices individuals make on their own?

I wish I had known that God wanted to be involved in my marriage when I first said "I do" over 50 years ago. I said, "I do" with absolutely no clue as to what to do once I left the altar. We had no discussion nor received any spiritual advice from anyone. In fact the priest who performed our ceremony attempted to seduce me when he did have an appointment to talk to me. I was seventeen, immature, and my only point of reference was what I had seen in movies, magazines and the periodicals. Someone should have known that I didn't know what I was doing? But like many of you, I thought I was "in love," having never been taught what real love was about.

Parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, friends, pastors, please prepare young people for a Christian marriage, not just a ceremony. Marriage and a congenial spouse is a gift from God. Before you enter into marriage, spend some time with God, seeking His mind and His thoughts on the matter. Never enter into a marriage based on your emotions or what you think is in it for you. You may find yourself surprised. Houses and land are gifts from parents, but a congenial spouse is from the Lord.

Addicted to Thrills

Proverbs 21:16 (TM)—*You're addicted to thrills? What an empty life! The pursuit of pleasure is never satisfied.*

A friend and I recently talked about the emptiness of things which we both have had. We discussed how we had discovered the true value of having time to sit quietly alone and read a book, or to choose to go to bed at 9:00 p.m., or to go for a walk in the park, or a stroll along the beach. One day, I discovered that I was addicted to thrills. All the thrills in my life lasted only for a moment. To others, I suppose my life looked full and satisfying, but to me it was empty and meaningless. I knew I had to change.

The only pleasure I pursue anymore is to find ways of saying thanks to God for all He has done in my life personally. And most of all, I thank Him for finding use for me on behalf of others.

Natural pleasure is never satisfied and you become weary in its pursuit. However, the pleasure you derive from seeking first the Kingdom of God

and His righteousness is something you never want to end. There is nothing in the natural that I am addicted to, but I am truly guilty of being addicted to Spiritual things and loving it. I can comfortably say I am addicted to life in Christ. I look around at my acquaintances, some with more, some with less, and I praise God for where I am today in His perfect will. I am only accountable to the Lord, and He's a lot easier to please than people.

Is your life full of a lot of *nothing*? Pursue God and I assure you, your life will overflow with pleasures beyond compare.

Pursue God and I guarantee your life will overflow with the greatest pleasure ever.

I Owe Him

Leviticus 19:36, 37 (CEV)—*I am The Lord your God. I rescued you from Egypt and I command you to obey my laws.*

Sin was my Egypt. While I may not be required to live under the Mosaic law, I am never exempt from God's law. God's law is the law of love. In fact, love is the only debt we should have. Belief in God's Covenant promises will provide everything else needed.

We are never out of God's debt, yet He never charged us for or with anything. Sometimes we want to give credit or recognize others for helping us to do or be what we are today. That's okay, as long as we keep them in their proper place and never worship them or think life cannot go on without them. Since God is the one who has rescued us, He alone has the right to command us to obey Him.

One definition for command is *to order, to direct, to bid, to change*. When one demands means to ask or call by authority as one who has a claim. He sent Jesus to pay the price for our ransom. He owns exclusive rights to us. God can both command and demand absolute obedience from us.

We could never repay God for what He has done for us through Jesus. The price was too great. We can, however, give Him honor. Yet the only way we can honor God for what He has done for us is to give Him our obedience. He is repaid, so to speak, with obedience. Think about it: Is there anything additional we can do for the Lord? What can we give Him that He did not first give to us? Is there anything additional He requires of us? Yes, we do owe Him. The only way to pay on this debt (since it can never be paid off) is to love one another as He has loved us. There is no final payment on this debt. We will throughout eternity owe God for the great gift of love He gave us through Jesus Christ.

Can Your Progress and Advancement be Observed?

1 Timothy 4:15—*Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them, that thy profit may appear to all.*

Our life and work should be all the evidence needed to identify us as a follower of Jesus.

Are you conscious of the fact that people are watching and being influenced by you? In my earlier spiritual walk, when someone did not like or agree with me I used to dismiss them by saying, "They have a problem." One day my pastor who was also a personal friend, risked our friendship by saying to me, "Not so, my little sister; you could damage their faith and that would not please the Lord." Immediately I discontinued making that statement and I began to watch both my words and my actions. Displeasing the Lord was a no-no for me. I had spent too many years doing that and did not want to go there ever again.

Are you conscious of the fact that people are watching and being influenced by you?

Have I missed it since that day? You better believe I have. But I found out that although God would have preferred I not miss it, He was more interested in what I would do to fix it when I missed it. That made me more conscious of trying not to miss anything. I'd love to tell you I never miss it. That would be a lie. The missing it and the mistakes are fewer and fewer. It seems they occur only when I forget to include Him in my choices. Thank God, I can see the progress and advancement.

Never Settle for Less Than He Promised

Joshua 19:47 (TM)—*But the people of Dan failed to get rid of the westerners (Amaritis) who pushed them back into the hills. The westerners kept them out of the plain and they didn't have enough room.*

When you fail to possess what God has promised, you may conquer another area but it's not a true conquest until you take over what the Lord promised.

Naturally you can't fight in the hill country as you can in the plain. Don't be pushed into confinement, where your space is limited. The enemy wants to crowd you with

We are the soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

activity and not godly accomplishment, to stifle your time with God and your obedience to Him. When that happens, you will find yourself settling for less

than His best. Just because you gain the victory in a less difficult place where the opposition is not as strong does not mean you have pleased God or done His will. Never rejoice in what you've done until you've done what was required of you.

This is God's show. He established the price to enjoy it. But He also paid in full with the blood of Jesus what ever we owed. Possess all God's promises that are yours. I have asked God to help me take back everything that the devil has either stolen from me or hindered me in my effort to obtain.

What was yours is still yours, but you have to believe for the strength to contend for it.

We are the soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ. He has conferred upon us the authority to win every battle. And win you shall if you never settle for less than He promised.

Thought Test

Proverbs 17:3 (CEV)—*Silver and gold are tested by flames of fire; our thoughts are tested by the Lord.*

Fire removes the impurity from gold and silver and makes it pliable for molding. The Holy Spirit is given to do the same for us. When we are assailed by the wicked one, the Holy Spirit enables us to renew our minds and to think as God thinks. He also helps us to conform to what God intended for us to be.

Most translators say our hearts are tested by God. To me, the thoughts and the heart are the same. My heart will not allow me to think or hold on to any thought that is not pleasing to God. My heart and my thoughts are to be united, which is why anything that tries to occupy space in my head must be cast down if it's not of God. I cannot entertain and embrace anything that I don't want to reach my heart, for I will speak what is in my heart.

For so long, Christians have allowed culture, tradition, and habits, to dictate our actions. We celebrate holidays with no thought as to how they came into being. We play, and watch games religiously, and wonder where the power of God is in our lives. The early church was bent on becoming single minded to spiritual things and God rewarded them with His power (Luke 10:19).

Choose this day if you want the power of God or the play of the world. Play is easier and superficial. It does not require discipline and sacrifices. It allows you to do whatever makes you feel good, but it is of no benefit to others. I don't want a "feel-good religion," I want a "do good religion." I have not been allowed to remain here in the earth to just feel good. As His representative I am here to do good by working with Him in training others for His work. Please allow the Holy Spirit to assist you. You are being tested and God is trying to get the right answers to you before the test is over.

Glad or Sad, the Choice Is Yours

Proverbs 17:22 (TM)—*A cheerful disposition is good for your health. Gloom and doom leaves you bone-tired.*

Choosing to maintain and retain a merry heart will not make you popular with those around you who thrive on being sad. Misery truly does love company. Do you want to feel good or hurt all over? It's a choice you make to be cheerful or to be sad (Proverbs 17:22, CEV). The important thing is not so much what happens to you, but how you choose to respond to what happens to you.

At the airport recently I was about to take a flight. My Bibles and other essentials made my luggage extremely overweight. The skycap was the picture of someone having a "bad hair day." When my turn came to check in, I simply handed him a \$20 bill and made his day. Before that gesture, he looked as though it would hurt for him to smile or say a kind word. I decided he deserves better for himself and I can help him with his adjustment. The grin (not smile) was all over his face and his words to me could not have been more pleasant and helpful.

Who can you help today with what you have in your hand?

I benefited from his change of attitude, and I suspect all those who came behind me received better treatment than those in line before us.

I am a Christian. I desire to let others know who I am without uttering a word. I choose to smile because my heart is happy. I will not allow it to be otherwise. It costs me nothing, but it can bring great dividends. A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones (Proverbs 17:22 (NIV)).

The joy of the Lord is my strength daily. Are you despondent? Get a smile in your heart then remember to tell your face. You'll help yourself and others.

Does It Matter That No One But Jesus Knows Your Name?

Romans 16:5 (BNIV)—*Greet my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia.*

Though he was a dear friend of Paul's and the first convert to Christ in Asia, his name is not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible and it would appear that no monuments were built to honor him for his role in being the first. I often say this to other believers who think certain choices you and I make should carry with them a memorial or plaque. Surely a room if not a building or an avenue or street should bear your name according to them. Does your name or mine matter except that it is written in *The Lamb's Book of Life*?

The congregation of RLCC has been asked to abstain and refrain from naming anything after me when I depart this life. If I had an impact on your life while I lived, that was my duty and I am grateful to be used by God in that way. If I did not impact your life for Jesus and His Kingdom, I failed all of us, and don't deserve to be remembered. If I led you in the salvation prayer, or imparted to you some of the wisdom that was freely given to me, you will never forget me no matter where you go and what you do. Though none of us know the name Epenetus, Jesus does, and that is all that matters.

An inmate shared with me that he did not want to die and have no one attend his funeral. Thank God I was able to get him to see that it won't matter to him at that time and that he was wasting a lot of valuable time worrying about something that won't concern him later. Today, make sure Jesus knows who you are. Being first or last in His book is not the issue. Being *in there* is crucial. Do what's necessary to get your name written down in the *Lamb's Book of Life*, and do it now!

Paul Was Not His Family's First Convert

Romans 16:7—*Greet my relatives Andronicus and Junia who were in jail with me. They are highly respected by the apostles and were followers of Christ before I was.*

Don't be surprised if one of your relatives does more for Christ than you did. Though his relatives knew about Christ, before his conversion Paul got to know Him.

What does it matter if you are the last one of your relatives to come in? What will He require of you once you're His? In verse 11 of the same chapter, Herodion, a kinsman of Paul's, was also mentioned to be saluted. What an influence he had on some of his relatives. It's good to reach the world for Jesus, but what about those of your own blood?

These verses have helped me to stand concerning the salvation of some of my relatives. Don't be discouraged. They are watching you. Everyone is not going to have a Damascus Road experience like Paul; but that does not mean they won't be used of The Lord? Remember, where much is given, much is required. Are you willing to go through what Paul encountered? I don't envy him at all. Yes, he was especially chosen to reach the Gentiles, but the price he paid was very high. Thank God, Jesus' grace was enough to sustain him.

While we are in a spiritual race, we are not competing with each other. We are to encourage the effort of another sister or brother and allow it to encourage us to keep going for Jesus. Vince Lombardi once said, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going." Jesus could have chosen Paul's relatives, but instead He chose him. Don't be threatened by the length of time your relatives have been saved. The Lord will choose you and use you in His plan it pleases Him.

Eat What You Kill

Psalm 20:4—*If you are too lazy to plow, don't expect a harvest.*

Everyone is given seed to sow (2 Corinthians 9:10). The bread you are given to eat is the fruit of what you have sown. Any farmer worth his salt knows you may have a barn filled with seed, but failure to plow the ground and plant the seed will not provide a crop for future use.

Technology was intended to be a good thing and for those with wisdom it is good. However, technology has in many ways robbed our youth of learning some wonderful principles that would assist them for a lifetime. They know nothing, or very little of the seedtime and harvest principle. The laws that govern technology have made them dull to practical information. They don't know how to save or invest with the help of the Lord. They live from paycheck to paycheck. They have nothing to show for all their brilliance. They live with relatives, renting rooms. They own nothing of value. Collateral is an antiquated word to them. They max out their credit cards constantly, paying high interest on what they purchase at a so-called bargain. They often ignore the voice of the Lord when He speaks about giving, because any additional giving would shatter their budget. They do not know the joy of an immediate "okay," when God asks them to do something.

When God speaks, say yes, even if you don't appear to have what He is asking for at the moment. God often brings in a harvest from places where you have never sowed.

Lazy people wait until they have to sow. Diligent people plow and sow to keep the principle operating. Which one are you?

Zip Your Lip

Proverbs 17:25 (CEV)—*Even fools seem smart when they are quiet.*

Our conversation is not to be as those who are trying to qualify for a debate team. Some colleges train young people to debate and then teach them to say nothing. When you speak, are your words empty, or are they filled with wisdom?

The mind of Christ and the wisdom of God already reside within you. Release them through your words. If what you are saying draws attention to you, it is not the

**Wise people listen twice
as much as they talk,
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wisdom that comes only from God. When God's wisdom is shared, it will positively affect the lives of those around you. Furthermore, they will recognize that it did not proceed from you because you are not smart enough to come up with such insight. People

may remember what you said, but they will understand that what you said was spoken to them directly from the Lord.

If you have nothing of value to impart to others, just remain quiet. When you permit yourself to talk when what you say has no relevance or significance, it is usually an indication of your insecurity. Your words reveal who you really are. Wise people listen twice as much as they talk, which is why I believe God gave us two ears and one mouth. Those who are led by the Spirit are attentive to His voice. They give expression to His words and not their own. Make a practice of speaking under His inspiration only. When you speak God's words and not your own, you will find that the results are amazing.

Do You Know Enough?

Acts 18:28 (CEV)—*He got into fierce arguments with the Jewish people, and in public he used the scripture to prove that Jesus is the Messiah.*

We can never prove Jesus to anyone apart from faith in the scripture. Our emotions, our experience and our zeal, are not wrong in themselves, but they function more for our personal encouragement. Emotion and zeal alone are of little help in spreading the gospel. The gospel itself is the power of God unto salvation. Preaching and proving Jesus according to scripture has in itself all that is needed to convict and convince sinners of their need for a savior, and saints of their need to hold fast to Him no matter what.

Apollos was a great speaker and knowledgeable of scripture (Verse 24). But without the person of the Holy Spirit revealing to him truth, he was limited to his information. When the husband and wife team of Aquila and Priscilla heard him preaching with zeal, they were assigned to him to help complete what he was lacking. They were aware Apollos knew a way to Jesus, but they possessed revelation knowledge to express the truth of Jesus in a better way (verse 26).

**My desire is to know more,
not for my benefit but to be
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I strongly suggest that you listen to what the Spirit is saying to you about what a person is saying, and allow the spirit in you to tell you if you need to teach them or to pray the Ephesian prayer for them.

My desire is to know more, not for my benefit but to be used of God to assist others in their efforts for the Lord.

Spiritual Food Service

Acts 6:2 (CEV)—*The twelve Apostles called the whole group of followers together and said, "We should not give up preaching God's message in order to serve tables."*

There is nothing wrong with serving tables unless, of course, you have been called to serve "spiritual food." There is tremendous pressure on the five fold ministry gifts to comply with the desires of the sheep as opposed to obeying their call concerning the sheep.

Pastor, don't fool yourself or waste your time by producing gimmicks and games, and permitting behavior and conduct in your services that you know cannot affect your young people in a positive way. The book of Acts is a good guide for spiritual leaders to follow as to how their assembly should operate. When we fail to follow Acts as

our example, the preacher and the assembly diminish in power and effectiveness a little at a time.

**God wants us to
increase in His power
and in our effectiveness.**

God does not just want us to increase in finances.

He wants us to increase in

His power and in our effectiveness. The book of Acts will teach us how to do that.

I used to think I had to socialize somewhat with the people, and had to attend all the current crusades, seminars and Campmeetings, only to find that based on my call, I needed more time in His presence.

Christian leaders, I encourage you to stop serving tables and allow the Holy Ghost to regulate your calendar to include more prayer, more study of God's Word, and more time before His face. We have not been called to serve tables. Pray for the right people to fill that job so you can retire your apron.

Behold Thy Mother, Behold Your Son

John 19:26, 27 (CEV)—*When Jesus saw His mother and His favorite disciple with her, He said to His mother, "This man is now your son." Then He said to the disciple, "She is now your mother." From then on that disciple took her into his own home.*

Jesus trusted His Father God to provide for the care and keeping of His mother. He trusted God to make the necessary arrangement for her future, which is why that Jesus chose one of His faithful disciples rather than any of her own children to care for His mother.

Jesus had other brothers and sisters. Jesus was the only one who was divine because He was conceived by the Holy Ghost, but Jesus was not Mary's only child. I had never thought of that before. However, as I meditated on the above verse, I realized that Jesus never asked His Father to change His assignment so that He could take care of His mother. He saw the bigger picture. He saw all of us being restored to His Father if He continued in what He came to earth to do.

How many have lost the opportunity to work with God in fulfilling His plan because we felt a need to care for a loved one? Can't we trust our loved ones to Him by setting aside our Messiah complex? I overheard a very elderly lady saying to her friend as we shared an elevator, "Much to my surprise I know how to pay my bills, write out checks, and do what I need to do." It appeared that when someone was alive, they had shielded her to such an extent that it nearly crippled her ability to be self-sufficient. She was excited that she was as capable as anyone else.

Don't miss God by assuming your responsibility is something He did not assign you to do.

Desire, Obedience, Discipline and Sacrifice

These are the words the Holy Spirit gave me as I watched a young lady in our congregation go from a size 26 to a size 10 in about two years.

Anyone with these four ingredients working for them could do the same. She lost 140 pounds, that's the weight of a whole person. Thank God, He surrounded her with people wanting to encourage her all the way. I thank God for the part I helped to play in teaching her principles from His Word. But she was the one who had the desire first to be pleasing to God, then to herself. She then obeyed both the Spirit and her trainer. She believed for and exercised discipline, which meant she was training herself for the next thing.

Sacrifice means you deny yourself things your flesh craves for. Flesh will fight you every step of the way but we have been given power over all demonic forces and their influences.

What is your desire today? Is it to please yourself or the Lord?

When you choose to walk after the Spirit you will not fulfill the desires or lust of the flesh (Galatians 5:16).

We have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty for an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another (Galatians 5:13, NKJV).

What is your desire today? Is it to please yourself or the Lord? You won't make it unless everything you say and do is for Him. Will you be obedient to His Spirit and to those on assignment to help you reach your goals? Will you ask the Holy Spirit's help with the necessary discipline? Are you prepared to make a few sacrifices? How badly do you want what you desire? Make that determination and take action. He will help you.

To Seek Above Things Is to Worship God

Colossians 3:1 (NKJV)—*If ye then were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God.*

This verse paints a spiritual picture, while at the same time describes our responsibility to regulate our mind to worship God. When we train ourselves with the help of the Holy Spirit, we will discover that our mind and thoughts have shifted gears. There are things we once did and thought about—the attractions and distractions of this world—that no longer appeal to us. They bring no glory to God and our new mindset is no longer concerned with self pleasure. A renewed mind seeks to please God not self. That desire to please God is the beginning of true worship of God. To set our affection on heavenly things is to turn our mental dial away from carnality (which the world says will make us happy) and to turn our dial toward spirituality (which the Word says will give us joy). True happiness is found by faith, knowing that everything you say, do and think about is worship to God. Worship is not the songs we sing, nor is it the amount of time we spend in prayer. Worship is a chosen lifestyle we live twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Unless all that we are and do is focused in adoration of the Father God and His Son Jesus, we are not worshipping. When we are consumed with being God inside minded, we are in pursuit of heavenly things.

I have often said that God will allow us to have anything we can manage. He does not want us to fail in our effort to be like Jesus. Walking as Jesus walked means to think, speak and respond as Jesus responded, with our focus on things above. Believer, are you yielded to the mind of Christ within you?

God Ignores Tradition, Habits, and Cultures

1 Chronicles 3:1—*King David ruled from Hebron for seven years and six months, and during that time he had six sons, who were born in the following order:*

Solomon's name was not mentioned among the first six of David's sons. In fact, he was the last of four children that Bathsheba bore (verse 4). Yet when it pleased God, Solomon was the one chosen to build His temple. David himself was the youngest of the son's of Jesse. However, when it was time to find a successor for disobedient Saul, David was chosen.

The tradition and culture of that day dictated that the older son, the first born, was to be top man on the family "totem pole." Scripture reads that God raises them up and puts them down. You may be the "runt of the litter." It matters not with God. He knows who will serve and obey Him.

I was awakened this morning to these words, "I save the wood and the clay, but I work with the gold and silver (2 Timothy 2:20). Wood and clay are in the great house but they are vessels of dishonor, which means they are vile, disgraceful, full of reproach and shameful. Of course there are garbage cans in a house, but you'd never serve your guests from one, nor do you show it off as something to be proud of. In fact I have never met a person who calls anyone's attention to their garbage can when they are entertaining a guest.

Inanimate objects have no ability or aspirations to be anything other than what they were created to be. In a similar way, when God puts His hand on something or someone and declares it good and fit for His purpose, the matter is settled. God doesn't care about one's gender, color, education, or lack of it. His criteria are never based on man's traditions, habits or culture. That should make you very glad.

Don't Keep Traveling That Road

Titus 3:4, 5 (CEV)—*God our Savior showed us how good and kind He is. He saved us because of His mercy, and not because of any good things we have done.*

The salvation of the Lord is not earned, deserved, nor based upon our worthiness. Jesus died to save us because of the Father's own divine tender compassion. We call it mercy. He imparts to us His mercy so that we can imitate Him by expressing compassion to others. As a result of His divine compassion, we now have been washed by the power of God. He has given to us a fresh start through the new birth, making us new creations through our Savior Jesus Christ, then sending us His Spirit to indwell us.

Jesus treats us better than we deserve. He has made us acceptable to His Father with the hope of eternal life (Titus 3:5-7). Although your life should be devoted to showing compassion to people, know that there are troublemakers out there trying to hinder all the good you do.

Warn troublemakers once or twice, and then have nothing else to do with them. Their minds are twisted, and their sin is evident to all. When you have attempted to help someone draw closer to God, and to turn their life around, and they still want to do things their way, and you know their way is not of the Lord. He will get no glory and no one will benefit from their actions. Warn them, and then get in the wind, because their minds are twisted, and only an encounter with God and the Holy Ghost can straighten them out. Don't keep traveling that same road over and over.

Continue to respond to the divine tender compassion of God to direct you to pray for others, but never allow anyone to get you off course with the Lord so that you fail to accomplish what the Father has called you to do. Jesus didn't do that, why should you?

Let the Redeemed of the Lord Say So

Psalms 107:2 (NIV)—*Let the redeemed of the Lord say this—those He redeemed of the foe.*

One of the oriental laws of kinship allows the next of kin to marry the widow of his kin. I understand that that is a man-made law, but the principle was based on a principle of the word of God.

Jesus Christ is my next of kin. He has purchased me, ransomed me, and delivered me from the hand of the foe, satan. I received this blessing when I accepted salvation as a child. It was reinforced when I became a widow, for I have been “espoused to one husband” (2 Corinthians 11:2).

Clinton was my husband in the flesh. Jesus has become my husband in the Spirit and He is the one with the power to redeem me from all foes. Am I the only one? Decidedly not. But I am certainly one who understands it and believes it. I entrust my life to Him and lean heavily upon this truth. Therefore, perhaps it is more real to me than to others.

There were some fun-filled days with my late husband. But not one of those days compared with the days I have experienced with Christ. In your heart, set apart Christ as Lord, the one worthy of all devotion. See that what you have heard and learned of the Lord from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you will remain in the Son and in The Father (John 2:24).

Always be ready to testify of your redemption. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope you have, declaring His faithfulness to others with all gentleness and respect.

We are not merely fans of Jesus Christ. He is not just our champion; He is our kinsman Redeemer. That being said, Let the redeemed of the Lord say so. Decree and declare with gusto who you are, and what the Lord has done in your life, victory that will last throughout eternity.

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