

# HORIZONS UNLIMITED

*Pastor Sarah W. Utterbach*  
REDEEMING LOVE CHRISTIAN CENTER

Insights For  
Each Day

December • January • February 2005-2006

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December • January • February 2005-2006

# HORIZONS UNLIMITED

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Insights For  
Each Day

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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.



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

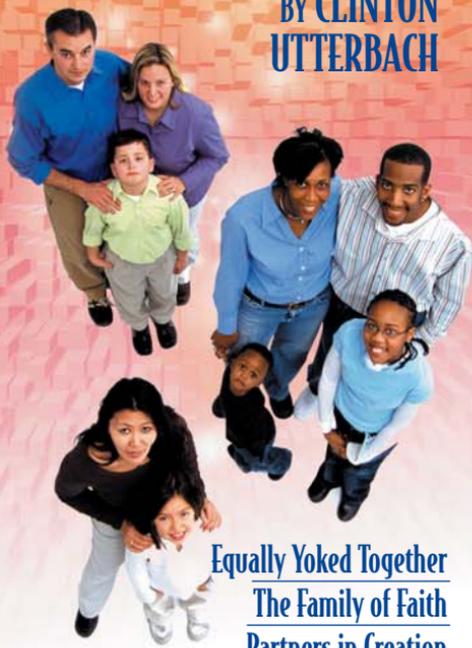
*Give them this day as their daily bread Your words, which will make them free. Feed them, dear Lord, as You did me, a daily supply so that they will return for a new daily requirement to keep us both sustained and maintained for Your glory, in Jesus' Name.*

His Joint Heir,  
Sarah W. Utterbach

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BY  
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**FROM TAPPAN ZEE BRIDGE  
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Continue on the New York Thruway North to Exit 14 Spring Valley. Make a left at traffic light. Travel 4 traffic lights and make a right turn into RLCC's driveway just before the train trestle.

**FROM NEW JERSEY**

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**FROM UPSTATE NEW YORK**

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**TRAIN INFORMATION**

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

# Schedule of Services

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

**SUNDAY**

Sunday Church School . . . . .9:00 a.m.  
Worship Service . . . . .10:30 a.m.  
Communion  
    (1st Sunday of  
    each month) . . . . .10:30 a.m.  
Baptismal Service  
    (1st Friday of  
    each month) . . . . .7:30 p.m.

**WEDNESDAY**

School of the Bible . . . . .7:30 p.m.

**FRIDAY**

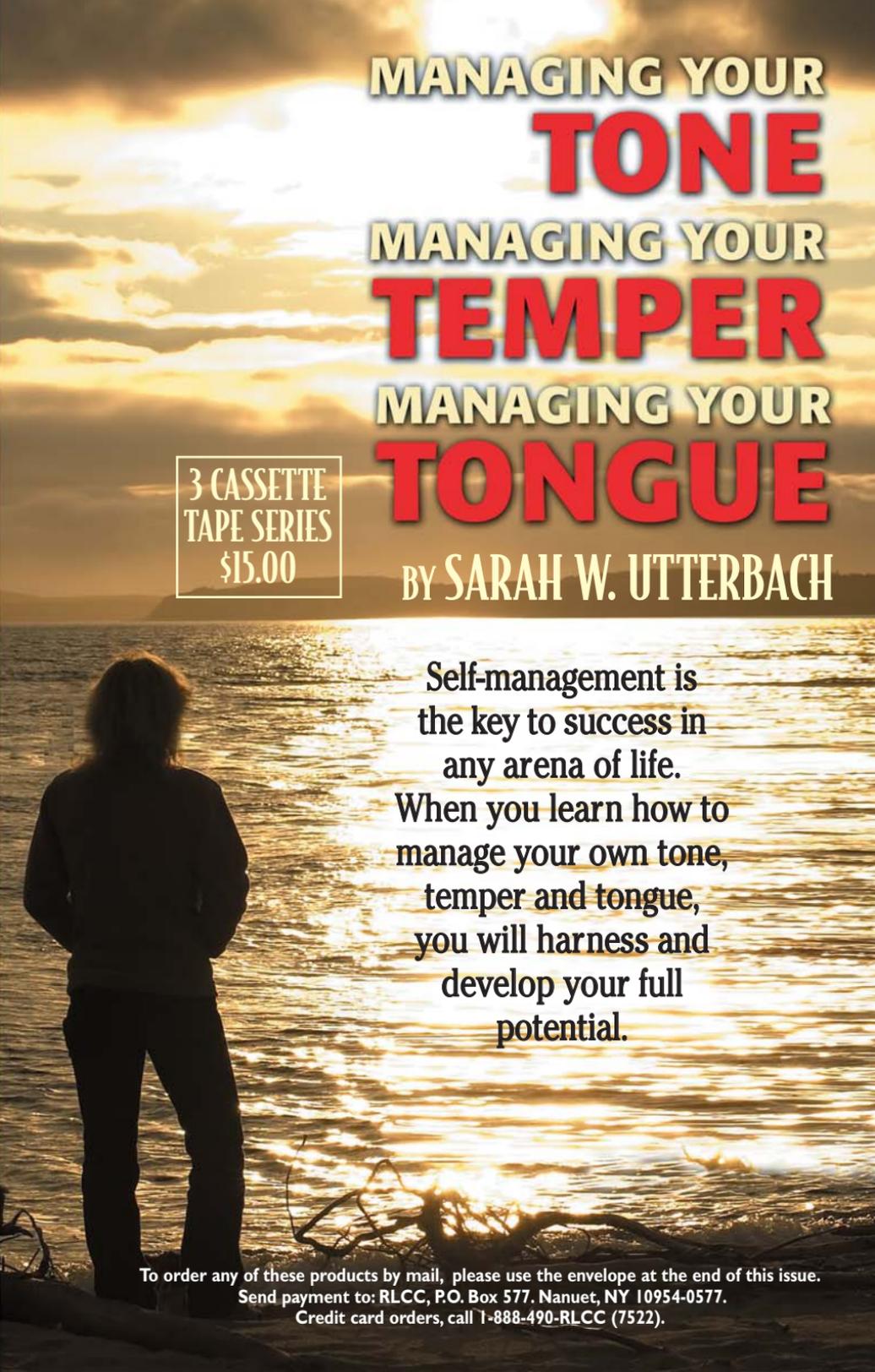
Youth Fellowship . . . . .7:30 p.m.  
Prayer Service . . . . .7:30 p.m.

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

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# How This Devotional Came To Be

Dear Reader,

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

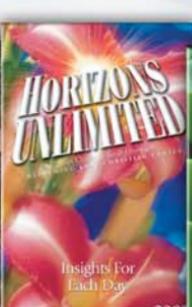
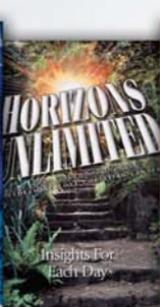
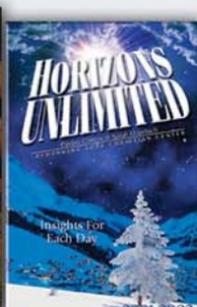
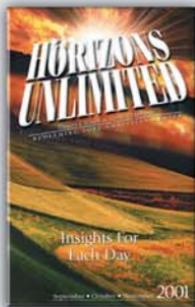
In 1979, I observed in the life of a friend a devotional practice that seemed unusual to me. Every day, my friend would walk into an open field across the parking lot from her office. There she would sit down on a rock to pray and write in what appeared to be a notebook or journal. After several weeks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

*God speaks to people?* I thought.

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

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

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



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

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

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

written in the Scriptures.

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

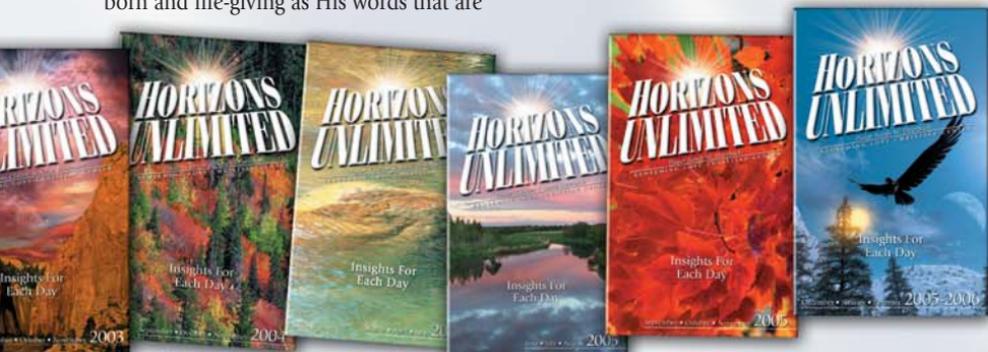
To know one’s individual purpose is the ultimate insight from God. It is divine insight or spiritual revelation which flesh and blood cannot make known to you. Divine insight is beyond the reservoirs of man’s intellect. But it is not difficult to tap. The will and wisdom of God are as near and as available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

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

Keep looking up; Jesus is expected!

His Joint Heir,

*Sarah W. Utterbach*  
Sarah W. Utterbach



Consolidated  
Printing Solutions  
*regrets the incorrect color  
reproduction on two images of  
Pastor Sarah in the previous  
issue of Horizons Unlimited.*

*We would like to apologize to  
the reader, to Pastor Sarah  
and the staff at Redeeming  
Love Christian Center.*

*May God bless the works  
of Redeeming Love  
Christian Center.*

## When God Permits It He Will Fix It

Psalm 126:1 (NKJV)—*When the Lord brought back the captivity of Zion, we were like those who dream.*

**I**t was God who allowed the children of Israel to go into captivity because of their stiff necks and hard hearts, but He always was mindful of His covenant with them. His promise to Abraham was greater than their disobedience.

Disobedience carries with it consequences, but those consequences can never separate you permanently from the love and covenant of the Almighty. Thank God His loving kindness and His covenant with us through His Son, Jesus, guarantee that, at some point, He will bring back our captivity.

I once did a message entitled “Your Test Scores Are Important.” Test scores often determine whether you get accepted or rejected, whether you get a scholarship or have to pay. Too many of us wait until it’s test time to try to prepare. In spiritual things there is no cramming.

Psalm 126:5,6 read: “Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing.”

Too often I see people who, I’m sure know the principles of seed time and harvest, cease to tithe or give joyfully because a situation or circumstance came up in their lives. That is not the time to quit; it is the time to grab your bag of seed and go forth sowing as much as you can into good ground. I always say, “Good ground is the ground God tells you to plant into.”

The situation and circumstance are like Israel’s captivity. If you want the Lord to bring you back, and you want to be delivered with joy, resume singing and sowing, sowing and singing. Not only will you bring joy to the Lord’s heart, you’ll cause the devil to have a heart attack.

The world will declare, “The Lord has done great things for them” (Psalm 126:2). You and I will declare, “The Lord has done great things for us and we are glad” (Psalm 126:3).

## When a Man's Heart Believes, Confession Will Be Made

Romans 10:10 (NLT)—*For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved.*

**T**hat is the principle God made for mankind to be saved. The same principle, along with the fruit of the Spirit known as temperance (discipline), will allow you to win at anything.

We recently watched a video which told the story of a hockey coach with a dream to train an Olympic team to become skilled enough to defeat the team who dominated Olympian hockey for fifteen years.

However, at one game the coach overheard the players talking more about the girls in the stands than the game on the ice. He proceeded to work them and put them through such grueling discipline that even the assistants thought he was being cruel and uncaring. He did not let that deter him.

He continued until one of the players screamed out who they were and who they represented. Without a word, the coach looked at this group of worn-out youngsters and walked off the ice. He finally had gotten the players to the point of believing and confessing only those things important to their winning and becoming champions.

On the night of the big game the coach simply reminded the players who they were, what they would do, and that they would win. Of course, they did win.

Why?

Because he never talked about their opponents or how long they had been champions, their size or age. He made an all-out effort to get the players to confess what they believed in their hearts and believe in their hearts what they had confessed with their mouths.

God wants to do the same thing for us. He is not trying to deny us things we think we need to make us representatives of Him. He wants us to use the same principle that got us saved to keep us winning in this life. Believe and confess. Confess and believe.

"But, Sarah, I am already saved." Great! Now use the same principle that caused you to hook up for all eternity with the Creator of the universe to make you an effective witness and a profitable servant during your stay here on the earth.

## Wheat in His Barn

Matthew 13:30 (NKJV)—*Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of the harvest, I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn."*

**W**e are not the reapers for God, and even they are not called to judge. I sincerely believe that they will not have the ability to discern who the tares are until they are told to go and gather them in bundles to burn them.

When Christians become dull of hearing and desensitized concerning right from wrong or allow things that they have charge over to go on in their homes in the name of peace, not wanting to be disliked by their loved ones, they are confused and ill-informed about this lesson. They will observe men sowing tares among them.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like a man sowing good seed into his field. That is all each of us can do, sow good seed. As a servant of the Lord, my requirement is

**As a servant of the Lord, my requirement is to sow the Word of God and live it.**

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to sow the Word of God and live it. We are too human to judge who are tares and who are the wheat. Therefore, we qualify to sow, not to judge.

I suspect that God does not allow us to be reapers because our standards for judging are not the same for everyone. Few of us are strong enough to require of our family and loved ones what we require of everyone else.

Today, instead of trying to become a judge of the tares around us, ask God to teach you how to help them to become wheat.

I am not suggesting for a moment that we should condone what the tares are doing, just make sure you are not condemning them. The Lord, their Creator, will separate His wheat when it is harvest time.

In the meantime, become the best wheat you can become. Pray for the tares and refuse to try to gather them up beforetime. They cannot contaminate you if you are true grain.

## We Were Told to Worship, Not Complain

Exodus 15:22 (NKJV)—*So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea; then they went out into the Wilderness of Shur. And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water.*

**H**ow often we partially obey the Lord! We miss bringing Him on the scene of our lives because, despite what He does, we still have a problem trusting Him.

Almost every time the Lord sent Moses to Pharaoh to ask him to let God's people go, God required the people to "worship Him" for three days in the wilderness. He never promised them ideal conditions when they got there. They quickly forgot that it was God's idea and that God had just brought them through the Red Sea while walking on dry land.

Is this not the story of our lives?

Because we often do not find exactly what we expected when we arrive where God told us to go, we complain. Instead of worshipping Him and looking for Him in the midst of adversity, we forget to be grateful for what He's done.

When we obey the command to go three days in the wilderness to worship, the next move is God's.

How many times has God spoken to us to go to a certain place to perform a certain task and we insert our expectations of what it will be like when we get there. We say, "God told us to do this so it has to be favorable." But it's less than we thought and we become discouraged and question our faith and our ability to hear the voice of God.

Unless God tells you what to expect when you obey Him, you have no right to complain once you obey. Just sing, shout, and act like everything is perfect because your obedience to His voice will make it perfect for you in His due season.

Remember, where you are is where you are supposed to be for He has directed and fashioned your steps to be properly fitted for His master plan.

## Watch What You Make Light Of

Matthew 22:5 (SFDD)—*But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm and another to his business.*

**T**he parables that Jesus spoke had an additional spiritual meaning to what He seemingly was saying. Therefore, we should never make light of what He said—ever, but we should ask the Holy Ghost to help us receive the real message as it relates to us.

Jesus is telling a parable of the Kingdom of Heaven as a king arranging a marriage supper for his son. He sent his servants out to call those whom he had invited to come to the wedding (the Jews), and they were not willing to come (their rejection of Jesus). All was ready and all they had to do was come to the wedding. They made light of the invitation by choosing their own interests over the king's invitation.

How often we do that today. We say "no" to our King and put off until tomorrow what will make a difference in our spiritual life for all eternity and focus on things that are temporal.

We who are not Jews were those in the highways and the hedges, without hope of an invitation to the wedding of the king's son. Thank God, the King (God) was so intent on the wedding hall being filled with guests that He allowed the good and the bad to attend.

Matthew 22:14, "Many are called, but few are chosen." The Israelites were chosen and made light of it. We, the Church, are the called. I warn you not to be guilty of making light of our King's invitation and provision.

Examine where you are. Is what you are pursuing more important than the sacrifice made for you at Calvary? Will you be able to take with you for all eternity what is available in this life? Will you be found worthy? Or, will you be denied a seat at the son's wedding?

The marriage supper of the Lamb is ready. RSVP immediately.

**Examine where you are. Is what you are pursuing more important than the sacrifice made for you at Calvary?**

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## The Story of My Life

Matthew 13:44 (NKJV)—*Again the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field which a man found and hid; and for joy over it, he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.*

This is what Jesus did for me. When I was not acting much like a treasure or understood that I was valuable to the Father, He thought that I was worth enough to send His Beloved Son to die in my place so that I could live with Him forever.

In 1979, Clinton and I were impressed in our spirits to leave jobs, homes and loved ones to follow Christ in what turned out to be the most exciting period of my life. I did not hesitate because nothing was more valuable than discovering Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

Recently I recalled that I needed to be put under lock and key when I first submitted to the Lord because I was so zealous in telling others about Him. Three decades later, I find that I am still throwing caution to the wind in the company of absolute strangers because I know more than ever that everyone needs to hear about Him.

**Aren't you glad God thinks more of you than you think of yourself?**

I feel so sorry for the many people I see still in search of hidden treasure, or worse, illusive treasure, for they have no concept of the true value of life. Jesus saw something in us that, for the joy of it, He sacrificed Himself willingly for us and it.

Aren't you glad He thinks more of you than you think of yourself? Now, begin to ask the Lord's help in seeing the treasure in others that, in many instances, is hidden.

Unless you are so excited about Jesus that you are willing to sell all and follow Him, you are not a connoisseur of true treasure. Once your affection is properly set on Jesus, the attractions of this world lose their hold on you.

How can you keep Jesus in? He is too exciting not to share.

That's my story. What is yours?

## Watch What You Wish for Others

Proverbs 26:27 (NIV)—*If a man digs a pit, he will fall into it; if a man rolls a stone, it will roll back on him.*

**A**t a very young age, I noticed that the words people used to wish bad things on others would cause me to recoil. I had a knowing inside. It seemed that whatever negative thing I wished on someone else had to pass through me to get to them. The theory may not have been accurate, but the principle was.

This verse is telling me that the seedtime and harvest principle works in the negative just as it does in the positive. Our words contain life and death. The power that God has entrusted to us in the form of words is powerful and creative, but it can also be destructive.

As His children, His representatives in the earth, we are to correct, improve, and positively change conditions and circumstances with the words of our mouths. Out of the abundance of our hearts, our mouths will speak. Our hearts are our spirits, so from our spirits we speak either life or death, blessings or cursings. A fountain is not to give out both fresh and salt water. Neither should our mouths speak life one moment and death another.

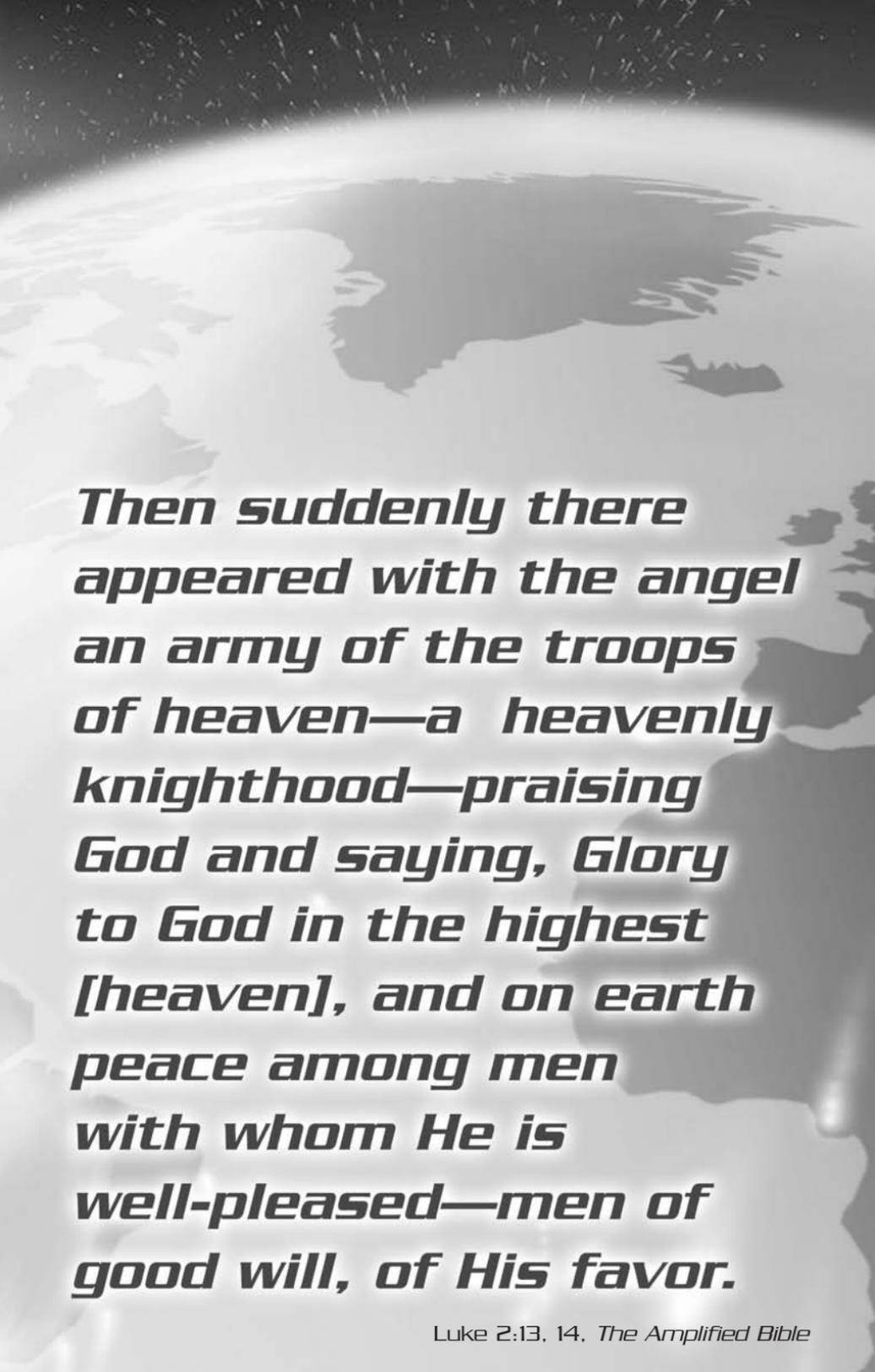
Never dig pits for others you don't want to fall into. Trouble you initiate will revolve back to you. Hurt, harm, or danger you cause will ultimately rest on your head and in your household.

This is not a popular subject, but it is a message each one of us needs to fully comprehend. I've learned that God does not always provide truths I want to hear, but as the loving heavenly Father He is, He sends me what I need to know to be victorious, successful, prosperous, and pleasing in His sight.

When I heed His Word, maturity dictates that God is not trying to prevent me from having fun and enjoying life. He is trying to position me and secure me in a path that He has made for me to travel.

*Dear Father God, I thank You for caring for me and sharing truth with me. Your plan for me has always been good. Forgive me for often not seeing You in the midst of what is going on because I'd rather go another way. I desire to do and say what You would do and say because others then will benefit. Bless You, Father, in Jesus' name.*





***Then suddenly there appeared with the angel an army of the troops of heaven—a heavenly knighthood—praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest [heaven], and on earth peace among men with whom He is well-pleased—men of good will, of His favor.***

## The Way of Life

Proverbs 15:24 (NKJV)—*The way of life winds upward for the wise, that he may turn away from hell below.*

**W**hen you operate according to the wisdom of God to make right choices, Godly wisdom guarantees that you need not be concerned with hell as a future residence.

The way of life winds upward. This strongly suggests that you and I cannot afford the luxury of foolishness in our lives, because foolishness is a pathway to death which winds ever downward. Never allow yourself to be intimidated, deterred, or deceived by comments such as “Oh, you are too serious,” or “Why not lighten up a little? Relax. Very few things are fatal.” True, very few things are fatal, but the few that are could very well seal your fate for eternity. Are you willing to risk everything for a few seconds of satisfying your flesh?

Philippians 3:20 tells us that “our citizenship is in heaven from which we also eagerly await the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

### **Our assignment: to live wisely by honoring the Lord above all.**

I frequently visit a number of countries and islands outside of the United States, but I always return home to

America because no matter where I go “there is no place like home.” My naturalized citizenship is here, and I am more than nominally aware of what is going on here. Whatever transpires in a foreign country, I have to tolerate it while I am there because I have no right to change it. My vote counts in the USA. If I do not like what is taking place in another land, I may leave it at will; my opinion or preference holds no weight and carries no transforming power because my naturalized citizenship is elsewhere.

Heaven is the home of every believer; we are merely passing through this world during our earthly excursion. Therefore, it is important for us to operate in the wisdom that insures our future. Much preparation is made by some to live well on earth, yet they appear to have forgotten that as believers, our time on earth is nothing more than a temporary assignment. Our assignment: to live wisely by honoring the Lord above all. Period. The end.

## What Has He Spoken to You?

Hebrews 11:11 (NKJV)—*By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised.*

**J**esus said in John 6:63 (KJV), "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." Please reread this verse over and over until what Jesus is saying sinks into your spirit. When God speaks something specific to you, the contrary conditions in your life no longer matter. If you will dare to judge faithful the One who promised, God's Word to you will come to pass.

God was very specific in His Word to Sarah. He said, "This set time next year I will establish my covenant with Isaac," who was to be born to Abraham's wife, Sarah (Genesis 17:21). The Word spoken to Abraham was confirmed by the Angel of the Lord when he came asking for Sarah (Genesis 18:10). Sarah overheard the conversation and laughed like so many of us do when the seemingly ridiculous and impossible is presented to us, after all she was 90 years old.

We need to ask ourselves, "Is anything too hard for God?" One of the most valuable lessons that I have learned in life is when the Lord has spoken something to me, I do not have to "do" anything except "judge Him faithful who promised." I declare to you this day that every single thing the Lord has ever spoken to me has come to pass. His words to me concerning others are still in progress because their fulfillment involves other humans and their wills. In both cases, I "judge Him faithful who promised."

Stop trying to believe for everything you want and desire. Believe first for what God has spoken to you. This will increase your faith in His faithfulness to you to fulfill what He has promised. You can then begin to exercise faith for what you would like to have. I found that some of the things I desired were not God's best for me, so I stopped asking for anything until I knew it was His plan and will for my life. I can tell you that as a result of that, I have become a happy camper with His desires for me.

Sarah received strength to conceive seed because a baby was promised to her. Receive strength to obtain your promise. Nothing is impossible to Him who promised. Doubt, however, can delay the arrival of the promise.

## What's It to You? You Follow Me

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## What's the Rush?

Isaiah 28:16 (KJV)—*Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.*

All of us need to know how to confer with the Lord and not to act hastily. Few people count the cost or weigh the consequences of their actions. It is almost as though the world has locked into a fast-forward, warped speed, with no ability to handle the controls.

Anyone who truly believes God and His Word can afford to, and usually will, wait for His guidance concerning a matter or a choice to be made. Where there is trust, there is belief. Where there is belief, there is trust.

And, at times, trusting is demonstrated by waiting.

### **Jesus is our sure foundation.**

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Jesus is our sure foundation. Therefore, whatever we undertake must begin with Jesus. He is the stone that we use to build upon. He is the stone that has been tested, tried, and proven. Jesus is the costly, excellent, honorable, and valuable stone that causes the beginning of all our works to be established upon a solid and sure foundation.

When God promises us anything, we never have to rush to possess it or attempt to make it happen in our own strength. He is not trying to extract from us, nor does He seek to detract from us. God's plan is to add, multiply, and abundantly increase us because He loves us and wants us to wait on Him, receive clear direction, and trust Him to perform in our lives that which He has spoken.

It is enough for us to believe Him and to wait for His promise to be fulfilled and for His Word to come to pass in our lives. When we do so, our faith and trust in Him will activate His power on our behalf. Don't be in a hurry to move when God has spoken. Ask Him when and how He wants to do it. Timing is important. Then let Him know that you are confident that He will do what He has said, and that you are unwilling to do anything but wait on Him. He shall bring it to pass—and quickly.

## Where Much Is Given, Much Is Required

Philippians 4:13 (NLT)—*For I can do everything with the help of Christ who gives me the strength I need.*

God can never be accused of being unfair, but His plan for each of us is custom designed. Christ helps to strengthen us when we are on assignment for Him and not in hot pursuit of a personal agenda.

One of the most energy-draining experiences is to observe what others around us do and conclude that we must join in or be left out. First of all, if you have accepted Jesus, you cannot be left out of anything that is valuable to God.

Your marching drumbeat may never have been sounded before; neither will another marcher hear it. You are not weird; you just are not called to march in anyone's band except the one that God has assigned you to. He has a perfect plan for you that does not include anxiety, worry, frustration, or fear.

If God has ever come through for you, He will again. That last victory was not a teaser to taunt you to drop your guard so that the next time you need to trust God, He makes plans to go on vacation. Every victory is another building brick in your castle of faith.

God's gifts and callings for you are sufficient to sustain you in every situation. If His requirements seem greater than before, rejoice and don't faint. It is a sign of His confidence in you. "To whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:48 NKJV).

God asks more of those to whom He has given more, but we can ask more of Him to whom we have committed all things. Never try to hold on to even the smallest part of the task assigned to you. Give to Him yourself and all that you have agreed to do in obedience to what He has required.

This is not a time to run from God. It is the time to run to Him with everything. Accept the fact that you can do all things if they are things you have heard from Him to do. Know for a certainty that doing anything apart from Him is tiresome and will not last.

## Why Try to Hide?

Genesis 3:8-10 (NLT)—*The Lord God called to Adam, "Where are you?"*

*He replied, "I heard you, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked."*

It's silly even to contemplate such a thought as being able to hide yourself from the Omniscient, Omnipotent One. How do you hide from the One who sees all things, everywhere, including into the very hearts of men? Adam soon discovered that God did not ask, "Where are you?" because He was unaware of Adam's whereabouts. God asked Adam that question to allow Adam to locate himself in his relationship with God. God was allowing Adam to practice a principle that man would need from that moment on, which is to confess our sins to the righteous God.

God does not learn of your sins when you confess them. He is looking at you the very moment you involve yourself in them. No force or person can cause you to sin. God lives in you by His Spirit, which is why He knows when you make the choice to sin. But do not feel

**God does not learn of your sins when you confess them. He is looking at you the very moment you involve yourself in them.**

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condemned. Feel sad that you allowed yourself to choose less for yourself than what He would have chosen for you.

God's heart desire toward you is for good only. Every good and perfect gift is released from His hands to yours because He loves you. Obviously, He does not love you because you sin but He loves you in spite of the fact that you chose less than His best for your life. When you comprehend God's great love for you, the little foxes will not spoil your vine and anxiety and worry will fall by the wayside.

Today, make the choice to praise God with your whole heart. As you do, He will cause you to enter into His rest—a special place reserved just for you. Keep your mind focused on Him and He will keep you in perfect peace. Do not try to hide from Him, because nothing can separate you from the love of God ever.

## The Wonder of Wisdom

Proverbs 8:14 (NKJV)—*Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom; I am understanding, I have strength.*

**W**isdom is not a new thing; it is as old as God Himself. Wisdom declares, "I have been established from everlasting, from the beginning, before there was ever an earth" (Proverbs 8:23). Long before man was created, wisdom was in on the decision process of creating man and all that would be needed to keep him functioning. Wisdom accompanied by knowledge hates evil. It is wisdom that causes kings to reign and rulers to decree justice. Wisdom loves those who love her and allows herself to be revealed when she is diligently pursued. Wealth and recognition are with her. Enduring riches and right living are her rewards. The fruit of wisdom and her revenue are superior to gold and even choice silver. She, Wisdom, causes those who love her to inherit wealth so that she can fill their treasuries.

### Ask your heavenly Father for wisdom.

Wisdom watched as God brought forth water when no water was in the ocean. When the mountains and the hills were jostling for space, Wisdom

looked on. Imagine watching God the Creator form the earth and the fields. Have you ever seen dust made? Wisdom has. With His finger, God drew a circle and commanded water not to go beyond the circle. Wisdom saw that take place, along with the establishing of the clouds for their intended purpose. Wisdom stood beside God as a Master Craftsman, daily, His delight.

I have pursued wisdom all my life since I was twelve years old. I did not understand all that wisdom represented but my spirit inside me knew that all I would ever need would be found in her.

Evaluate where you are at this very moment. Surely you must recognize that all the skill, talent, and gifts you may possess are futile without the wisdom to understand how to use them. You have not because you ask not. Ask your heavenly Father for wisdom. He will give it to you because He wants you to succeed. And, without wisdom, there is no success.

## Yes or No— Period

Matthew 5:37 (KJV)—*But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.*

**T**ruth is what makes us free; lies are of the evil one, the devil. Therefore, we as believers must stop hedging around the truth of matters when a simple “yes” or “no” will seal the deal.

Too often we are guilty of regretting our spoken words. We rehearse after the fact: “But that is not what I really meant,” or “I didn’t want to say that.” It does not matter what our intent is. You and I will be judged and recompensed for what proceeds from our lips out of the abundance of our hearts (Matthew 12:34).

As Christians, we should be known for the integrity of our words. It does not matter if others agree with us or approve of what we say. What matters is that we speak words of truth.

**Trust is built on truth.  
One lie can do more than  
almost any other force  
to destroy a relationship.**

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Trust is built on truth. One lie can do more than almost any other force to destroy a relationship. Never allow what you have built on the foundation of truth to be torn down with a lie, a weapon of destruction of the enemy.

A lie is never little, and it is never white. See it for what it is in truth: a lethal bomb that was formed in the blackest pit of darkness to destroy any light (truth) in its path.

*Dear Father of light, I thank You today for the Holy Spirit, the One sent to lead me and guide me into all truth. By Your Spirit I not only hear Your truth, but I speak Your truth as well. May I never be deceived by the enemy's lies or be a channel for him to work through to deceive others. Please give me always the boldness to say “yes” or “no” to whoever requires a reply from me. I believe to receive this now, in Jesus' name.*

## The Commands of the Lord Are Serious

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

I am instructing the RLCC congregation to look more closely at scriptures which state: "And the Lord God commanded the man saying...", "Thus saith the Lord...", "And God spoke...", "The Spirit of the Lord said..."

I have found that such verses are significant to our spiritual maturity.

Though many times God is speaking to the nation of Israel, I find that what He has said is also applicable to the church who is spiritual Israel.

We are no longer under the law, but the grace we are under allows us to experience greater favor with God than the children of Israel ever did. We have a better covenant, established on better promises, with a better High Priest (Jesus) making intercession for us (Hebrews 9). This does not exempt us from our responsibilities to obey whatever the Lord is saying to us.

Adam did not cease to breathe immediately when he ate of the forbidden fruit after being commanded of God to leave it alone. I can tell you, though, he no longer had the wisdom, power, and strength he once enjoyed. The more we disobey the voice and promptings of the Lord, the more the supernatural in us is darkened. We are reduced to being mere mortals with a supernatural task ahead of us.

Just as everything God created was to reproduce itself, we, who are born of the Spirit and not just the flesh, are to reproduce more of us by our witness of what the Lord has done in our lives. The more we tell it, the more the Holy Spirit has to work with in attracting others to Jesus.

We were created to produce, not simply occupy space in the earth. While neither Jesus nor the Father God are going around cursing any of us, as Jesus did the fig tree (Luke 13:6-9), failure to be fruitful and only giving the appearance of fruitfulness is deception, and deception of any kind is a lie.

The commands of the Lord are serious. Pay close attention.

## Your Mouth Determines Your Diet

Proverbs 18:20 (NKJV)—*A man's stomach shall be satisfied from the fruit of his mouth; from the produce of his lips he shall be filled.*

All of us enjoy a well prepared meal. Some of us focus too much on the meal and often fail to recognize the damage we are doing to our health when we neglect to discipline ourselves concerning what we eat. It is so easy to blame the devil, saying we are under attack when we are presented with health challenges, when in fact we have indulged in gluttony, eating beyond the limit of what is conducive to good health.

I come from a long line of excellent "soul food" cooks and I also come from a long line of "buffalo women." I realized that I needed to cook less soul food, and eat smaller portions of what was available, to train my stomach to deal with less. Proverbs 18:20 helped me understand that physical food is not what satisfies my stomach. I am, rather, satisfied by the productive words I speak from God's perspective. I used to have a lot of issues and I never held back from expressing myself regarding whatever issue concerned me at the moment. God began to teach me, however, that the only issues that are important are the issues of life flowing from a heart consecrated to God's control.

The produce at the grocery market may be appealing and can certainly benefit us physically. But it is the produce of our lips that fills us spiritually, causing even our physical bodies to feel satisfied. At times, my stomach called out to be fed, yet I chose rather to feast on the Word of God, or I chose to share God's truth with someone. In either instance, I noticed that I soon totally forgot about physical food and felt as though I had attended a banquet.

All of us recognize the importance of the fruit of the Spirit operating in our lives. We know we are to walk in love, peace, joy and the rest, but are we placing the same emphasis on the last of the fruit of the Spirit, which is temperance? Balance your food intake with the Word of God. If you manage and stay in control of your appetite, you will see the satisfaction that comes from God's Word will help you with your diet.

## Your Words Maintain Your Integrity

Job 2:9 (NIV)—*His wife said to him, "Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!"*

**I**ntegrity is not just what you do. It is also what you say. Job's wife wanted him to speak words about God that could result in his death. In the list of positives that God enumerated to satan about Job, one was that "he holdeth fast his integrity." God was essentially saying, "Job's words are innocent." Job 1:22 says, "In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing."

One definition of the root of the original Hebrew word for "integrity" is *prosperity*. Though disaster, calamity, and misfortune were evident and real in the natural, Job by maintaining his innocent words about God was holding fast to his prosperity. He could not stop the demise of the first prosperity, which was acquired in the natural, but he could ensure prosperity according to God's plan for him. Job did not blame God for the ills that befell him. He did not know he had put in motion a law that would double his wealth, replace his children, and provide a long, full life in which he would see even his great-great-grandchildren.

What a day it will be when we, the children of God, without even thinking about it continue to praise God and honor Him with our words through every kind of trouble. We need to begin to practice and rehearse often who God really is to us, not just what He has given to us, for what He is to us is more important than what He gives. I have heard rank sinners say, "Oh, thank God," when something has gone the way they wanted it to go. I've also heard the same people question God, accuse God, and even blaspheme God when life has dealt them a low blow.

I desire the Lord to help me recall all that I know of Him when a crisis comes. I believe and thank Him often for helping me to be a living witness of Him to others regardless of what is taking place.

*Gracious Father, my thoughts and my deeds do not determine my innocence or my guilt, but my words do. Burn into my heart the value of words. Not one of them is without power. Therefore, I need to practice speaking words of life into every situation. When I don't guard my words, death and destruction follow, regardless of what I think or do. Give to me a spirit of integrity concerning all things.*

## Upward Bound

Proverbs 15:24 (NKJV)—*The way of life winds upward for the wise, that he may turn away from hell below.*

**W**ise living is achieved by living according to Colossians 3:1-2: "If then you were raised with Christ seek those things which are above where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth." You may ask, "What are the things above? I don't know about what I have never seen. Suppose it is all a farce." Believing what is unseen to the natural eye is called faith. And faith in a child of God always gets God's attention.

No one can prove God to you, but are you willing to chance being wrong by not believing His promises? The little I have heard about hell is enough to cause me to not want to go there. No one can give "physical proof" to me that hell really exists but I believe it does. Innumerable testimonies abound of men and women who have seen into eternity and felt the very fires of hell. Furthermore, the Word of God clearly states that there is a literal heaven to gain and a literal hell to shun.

I have faith that according to the Bible, a literal heaven exists where Jesus is and I want to spend eternity with Him. The Bible also says that hell was not prepared for man but for the devil and his crowd. Hell is called the "everlasting fire" (Matthew 25:41). I don't know about you, but that doesn't sound very appealing to me.

Today, take a step of faith and ask God for His wisdom, not only concerning heavenly things but also concerning earthly matters. We need the wisdom and understanding of God to know who and what to avoid here in the earth. Life is like a spiral staircase. The way of life winds upward for the wise. Conversely, the way of life winds downward for the unwise. Examine what you are doing daily. Do you find yourself repeating the same dumb mistakes or are you experiencing more peace than you thought possible? One choice will help you change the course and direction of your life forever. I invite you to join me on the staircase to heaven. It is called "upward" mobility.

## You Were Not Born Gay Part I

God's rules and expectations for the conduct for His people cover every area of life, from matters of physical cleanliness to business ethics. His purpose is to prepare, protect, and preserve His people; to make a distinction between the clean and the unclean, the acceptable and the unacceptable; and to keep His people free from both physical and spiritual contamination.

God is clear in His definition of perverse and abominable sexual practices. "If a man lies with a male as if he were a woman, both men have committed an offense (something perverse, unnatural, abhorrent, and detestable)..." (Leviticus 20:13 AMP).

It matters not whether an individual or a judicial court defines sodomy as an acceptable practice; God has declared it to be vile. When people refuse to accept truth, choosing rather to suppress truth in unrighteousness, they will find themselves on their own and in dangerous territory.

God has never made a mistake, nor would He create someone or something only to declare them to be an abomination to Himself. It is a lie to state that a person is born with sexual preference for the same gender, or that such preference is a God-ordained inclination. All who believe that it is God's doing for them to desire and to practice behavior which God has already defined as abhorrent are deceived.

In Romans 1:21-28 we read that when people know and recognize God as God, yet do not honor and glorify Him as God or give Him thanks, they become futile and godless in their thinking and their minds become darkened with stupid speculations. Claiming to be wise, they become fools. Therefore, God gives them up in the lusts of their own hearts to sexual impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves. When people choose to yield themselves to the degrading power of sin, God will abandon them to it. When they exchange the truth of God for a lie, and worship the creature rather than the Creator, God gives them over to vile affections and degrading passions.

I've been reading *Horizons Unlimited* for several years and find Pastor Sarah has a good word for me. It is straight from the Word of God and straight to the point!

Pastor Sarah teaches practical wisdom that applies to my here-and-now circumstances. More than just practical, [her teaching] is lasting because it is based on God's eternal Word—cutting through trendy teaching and “popular” preaching.

Pastor Sarah's teaching proves true because it has been forged in the trials and tests of life. Pastor Sarah is anointed to teach for today's people, both inside and outside of the church.

J. Autry  
Oklahoma

We want  
to hear from  
you!

Write us and let us know how *Horizons Unlimited* has affected your life. Your testimonies and praise reports are very important to us, so take a moment to write us and share how *Horizons Unlimited* has been a blessing to you!

## You Were Not Born Gay Part 2

Every avowed gay or lesbian made a choice to yield to such desires. Romans 1:26-28 states, "...women exchanged their natural function for an unnatural and abnormal one, and the men also turned from natural relations with women and were consumed with lust for one another—men committing shameful acts with men and suffering in their own bodies and personalities the inevitable consequences and penalty of their wrong-doing and going astray, which was [their] fitting retribution. And so, since they did not see fit to acknowledge God or approve of Him or consider Him worth the knowing, God gave them over to a base and condemned mind to do things not proper or decent but loathsome." (AMP).

If you have given yourself over to such practices, God still loves you. No, He will not force you to serve Him or to follow Him, but He will not reject you should you choose to live according to His ways.

I have watched people I dearly loved die of AIDS, professing they loved the Lord. A half-brother of mine who was a practicing homosexual most of his life submitted himself to the Lord, repented, and turned from that lifestyle about twelve years before his death.

It matters not if a homosexual is your child, your sibling, or another whom you know and love—they must be told that God is not pleased with their lifestyle. It is natural for a man and a woman to be attracted to the opposite sex. Conversely, it is unnatural to want sex with anyone of the same gender.

To believers, the apostle Paul wrote, "Do not be deceived (misled): neither the impure and immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor those who participate in homosexuality...will inherit or have any share in the kingdom of God. And such some of you were [once]. But you were washed clean..." (1 Corinthians 6:9-11 AMP).

You were not born gay. You made a choice. You have time to repent and turn. God Himself will dispatch all the power of heaven and the blood of His Son to help you. Turn now before it is too late.

## Boast in God

Psalm 44:6-7 (NIV)—*I do not trust in my bow, my sword does not bring me victory; but you give us victory over our enemies, you put our adversaries to shame.*

**Y**ears ago when we moved into a secluded location, occasionally when I was home alone, fear and a runaway imagination would attempt to take over my usual confident self. That's when I began to practice the presence of the Lord and rehearse what I might do in the middle of the worst scenario possible.

My head would say, "Arm yourself with a weapon or some means of protection." My heart would simply ask, "Did God give you this home? Would you harm another person to protect stuff and things? Are you and all that you have in the hands of the Lord? Will you fear what man can do to you when your Father has promised to never leave or forsake you?"

When I realized that my flesh wanted me to trust in my own abilities, and not in God, I knew the Lord was showing me an area I needed help in. I needed to submit all to Him and begin to ask Him for the grace to not disappoint Him or damage my Christian witness.

This is not a one-time decision. It is a daily consecration of submission to His care and His keeping. I confess that I do not trust in my bow, my sword, or any other carnal weapon because victory for me will never come from them. I must continually remind myself that victory over the enemy, the adversary, is a gift from My Father that I must receive and enjoy all the time. The enemy may have superior carnal weapons, but he cannot defeat me when I use the love of God and trust in Him to bring to me victory in every situation.

We all must learn to say, "In God I make my boast all day long, and I will praise Your name forever."

*Dear Father, Creator of my life, help me return to You everything that You have provided for my pleasure and my comfort. I will not assume the responsibility of protecting anyone or anything. I desire to enjoy all that You bless me with but to keep my attention and affection on You. I trust You because I have seen Your manifested glory and power. Thank You, in Jesus' name.*

## Called Alone

Isaiah 51:2 (NIV)—“...When I called him he was but one,  
and I blessed him and made him many.”

When God called Abram, Abram elected to bring his nephew Lot along for the trip. However, Lot was not called to the vision God was giving to Abram.

God calls each of us independently of others. We may become called to work our individual calls together, but the original call is to each individual.

Crowds can be either good or bad, depending on how they are perceived and received. If the majority responds when God speaks to an individual, then who becomes accountable to God for the call? Also, whom is God going to bless and make to increase?

More than 25 years ago, my late husband and I simultaneously experienced the prompting of the Holy Ghost to leave the security of our home and our circle of friends to obey and pursue the call. Nevertheless, the call was so individual for each of us that it was as though the other did not exist.

I believe God does it this way because each of us should be able to receive the blessings of God and His increase based on our individual relationship with Him and our obedience to His call.

Clinton and I were called to do the same thing and at the same time, but each of us received the prompting of the Holy Ghost independently. And as we followed the Spirit's directions, we saw God's blessings on us as a couple and as individuals.

*Heavenly Father, I'm so glad that You know best and that You do things Your way. I know beyond any doubt that You alone called me. Therefore, should anyone else decide to pursue another path, it would have nothing to do with Your call for me. I am also glad that Your blessings abound toward me as I obey Your individual call for me.*

*Although You may produce growth in our ranks and blessing beyond measure, we are still responsible and accountable to obey Your call on our lives. We have a part to play, and You have a part to play; and our parts never cross each other in the fulfillment of Your plan. May we always remember our callings and glorify You as we do Your will individually and corporately, in Jesus' name.*

## Chastened for Our Profit

Hebrews 12:5 (KJV)—*And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.*

**H**ow would I ever know what I could endure if I never endured anything? Many of our earthly fathers, doing the best they knew how, disciplined us for a few years. But God's discipline is always right and good for us because it means we will share in His holiness.

All of God's children need to be tutored, educated, corrected, and trained. The Greek word translated "chastening" carries the implication of punishment as a part of education and training. This does not suggest for a moment that the punishment consists of sickness, diseases, poverty, or chaos. On the contrary, we are chastised as children by a loving, caring Father.

Would you make your child sick or diseased? Would you extract everything from your children and have them walk around lacking of the basic needs of life? Of course you would not. And neither will our God do that to His children.

Just as children do not arrive in this world with instructions attached to their bottoms, we as new believers require some instruction and education.

Self-discipline certainly has to be learned, and usually this training comes with practice. Denying ourselves, taking our cross, and following Christ can only become a habit when we break the habit of doing what we want to do, when and how we want to do it.

God's chastening is for our profit, not for our pain. The pain occurs because of our lack of discipline. We even seem to have forgotten that His discipline is an exhortation and a promise to all of His children.

Fainting is not allowed during the training time. Fainting in the day of adversity is an indication of weak faith (Proverbs 24:10).

God did not cause what you are going through today that looks like defeat and disaster. He will help you turn it around if you don't blame Him for it. Believe me, His chastening is by choice, not by chance.

## Choose Today

Psalm 1:6 (NIV)—*For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.*

**H**appiness and prosperity will be ours if we will not listen to the advice or purpose of the ungodly—those morally wrong and actively bad. When we refuse to abide in morally wrong and actively bad things, our happiness and prosperity are positively affected.

When I learned that prosperity included but was not limited to money, my entire life changed. I know financially sound people who are not prosperous. They participate in and condone what is morally wrong. Consequently, they are unhappy.

I am neither to dwell nor to remain with those who speak words that are foreign to my spirit and contrary to the purpose of God for me. I am to willingly desire, have pleasure in, incline my ear to, and bend myself in the direction of the law of the Lord. I am to meditate (ponder and mutter) His words day and night so that I become stable and confident to bring forth a full reward (in my season) continually.

My increase will not fall away, faint, nor appear foolish. There will be no dishonor or disgrace to my increase. It will not come to naught. Whatever I do will push forward, break out, go over mightily, be good, and be profitable. It will affect others and other things. The ungodly and the sinners will not stand when the favorable verdict is pronounced. The ceremony of the privileged, the divine decree, will not be favorable for them. Their way will negatively cross over; it is transitory; it will perish. God knows, however, the way of His children and rewards them accordingly.

The more we know the way of God, the more He knows our way. We know His way by meditating on His Word day and night. He knows our way by observing us day and night. Righteousness, happiness, increase, prosperity, reward, and advance are the promises and provision for us, the children of God. Not so for sinning, wicked, ungodly, morally wrong, and actively bad people. Their lives are fruitless and a waste. They are unhappy and bring misery to others.

Today, if you have not previously made a choice to go with Jesus, I strongly encourage you to do so now.

## Complete Those Things I Have Assigned

**T**he Lord is saying, "Concern yourself not with the things of this world. Have I not abundantly provided for your every need? Did not I make available to you the desires of your heart? My child, I desire only your whole heart. The division of your heart is a stench in My nostrils. You are no longer your own. I paid a high price for you. Come unto Me often, for My wisdom is at your beck and call. I know the beginning from the end. Why waste time trying to comprehend that which I already have resolved?"

"Seek Me early; seek Me late; seek Me often. My words to you are always 'yea and amen.' Inquire of Me before you make a move. You, My beloved, can never make Me weary with your inquiring. That is your old nature trying to limit your accomplishments by telling you to not bother Me. But you will not listen to that old nature, for you have learned to recognize My voice.

**You may lack education,  
but never wisdom,  
for you have My supply.**

---

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

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

## Content with My Weaknesses

2 Corinthians 12:10 (NLT)—*Since I know it is all for Christ's good, I am quite content with my weaknesses and with insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

**W**hen I discovered that Jesus' gracious favor is all I need and His power works best in my weaknesses, I became quite content with my weaknesses.

What a joy it is to no longer feel the need to be superwoman for everyone. I no longer have to be first, best, more than, the one-and-only, with answers for everyone's every question. This does not mean that I quit trying to be the best Sarah Utterbach ever created. But I am no longer trying to impress anyone by what or how I can do certain things. I am not in competition with anyone. You don't compete with yourself.

Knowing that I am loved and accepted in the Beloved has anesthetized me to insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. What strength arises in knowing that I don't have to be like anyone but me. I am only to be concerned with pleasing the One who is my Judge. "To thine own self be true" works when you know who you are. The guesswork is done away with and the promise that His power works best in your weakness is made real to you. Your attitude changes about everything and everyone.

We are called complete in Christ. Never are we called to complete another person. Walk in His completeness and proclaim His love to all so they too might become complete in Him. If others attempt to become complete because of your role in their lives, God will allow you to fail their expectations because you were not created to fulfill anyone's pleasure but the Lord's.

Be the best spouse, parent, friend, sibling, and employee that you can be. Just make sure it is in His strength and your weakness. When called upon, do not be afraid to say, "I am not impressed to do that." Much more is accomplished in and through one who is inspired. When you aren't inspired to do or be, don't force it. Everything ceases to be fun without His inspiration. The "work" of the Lord, when it is *inspired of the Lord*, is not really work at all.

## Dancing to His Music

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

**B**efore I sold out to the things of God completely, I enjoyed dancing, and anything I enjoyed I became good at. But there is no musical note quite like the sound of the principles and the promises of God's Word.

The Psalmist said, "Your promise revives me; it comforts me in all my troubles" (Psalm 119:50). It is so foolish to expect to avoid trouble. What a waste of time! The more you serve God and the closer you get to Him, the more inclined you are to attract trouble.

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

Someone once said, "I only dance with the One that brung me." In that same context, someone else stated, "I never stopped dancing; I just changed partners."

Where are you today? Were you dancing with God, singing the praises of His faithfulness, mercy, and goodness in your life, until that recent report—and now you are dancing with the wrong partner, the enemy? Are you looking at the statistics before your eyes, or are you looking beyond the facts to behold the truth of what God has spoken to you?

Have you changed what you were confessing because a fast curve ball came your way? Have you gotten so used to being walked by the devil that you've lost your batting swing? You thought God was walking you. No, it was the devil. He knows that if he gets you used to walking, you'll forget how to hit homeruns when he throws you the right ball. Throughout the years of your pilgrimage, keep the principles of God's promises as the music of your life. It will keep you hitting homeruns while you continue to dance.

## Delivered but Not Rescued

Daniel 6:27 (KJV)—*He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.*

God does not always remove us from the circumstances and conditions that we feel are our problem. Men put Daniel in the den of lions, and men had to remove him. Though everyone was focused on the den, the den was not the problem. God promises to make our enemies be at peace with us. Therefore, the lions became God's problem, not Daniel's. Daniel only had to be innocent and continually trust, or believe in, his God (Daniel 6:23).

There have been times I wanted God to rescue me from certain pits, but He didn't. He wanted me to learn that His grace was sufficient in the pit and that He would give me peace in the presence of enemy forces. God wants His children to recognize His presence with them when they are scraping the bottom of the barrel and everything around them smells of destruction and defeat. The question is never *What will God do when it appears that my number is up?* The question is *What will I do?*

While I may not be able to escape the pit, I can believe in my God in the midst of it. I may not be able to conquer the lions in my life, but I don't have to. My job is to be innocent and to continually serve my God. I may not be able to stop legislation from being enacted against me, but I can kneel in prayer and thanksgiving before my God, regardless. We need to stop exhausting ourselves by fighting the enemy and conditions around us. They are too many. Because of our position with God, we need to enter into His rest, worship Him, and be innocent of all charges hurled at us. I don't need to be rescued from the enemy, because Jesus has already rescued me from his power (v. 27).

God didn't rescue Daniel from the pit; He delivered him from the power of the enemy in the pit. Notice that the enemy was still in the pit when Daniel was removed, and the lions' power was still present to destroy those later thrown in. Yet, they had no power over Daniel.

Daniel went on to prosper in the kingdom of Darius and Cyrus. How much more are we to advance in the Kingdom of God and His Son, Jesus Christ?

## Do Right to Those Who Depend on You

Malachi 3:5 (NLT)—*"At that time I will put you on trial. I will be a ready witness against all sorcerers and adulterers and liars. I will speak against those who cheat employees of their wages, who oppress widows and orphans, or who deprive the foreigners living among you of justice, for these people do not fear me," says the Lord Almighty.*

**T**oo many Christians live as though there will not be a day of reckoning for their deeds done in the body.

God is observing our faith and is watching our love walk, which causes our faith to function.

Years ago when I was a manager at IBM, I awoke with the thought of Malachi 3:5 in my mind. I knew God was speaking to me because that very morning there would be a budget meeting where salary increases were to be decided.

Corporate headquarters had allocated the money for us to use to reward our staff for a job well done. However, my third-line manager had ordered us to provide smaller percentages because she had a personal project she wanted done; she hoped to impress her superiors by staying within her budget and still completing the new project.

At the meeting, I remembered this verse and announced that I could not and would not defraud those assigned to me of their earnings. I took out my Bible, read this verse, and stated that as a Christian I could not comply with this ungodly request.

The silence was so thick you could have cut it with a knife. Of about fifteen managers, I was the only one who refused.

Why did I take such a stand? I knew God had given me this verse for that purpose. But it was not just because I was convicted by this scripture. When I had attended an employee development class years earlier, we had role-played this very situation, and I had been promoted to management because I had refused to sell out an employee under pressure from upper management.

We are going to have a day in court when we will be judged by how we handle our leadership privileges and by their effect on others who trust us to do right by them. Do you want to be acceptable to Him? Then do what is right for those who depend on you to represent their best interests.

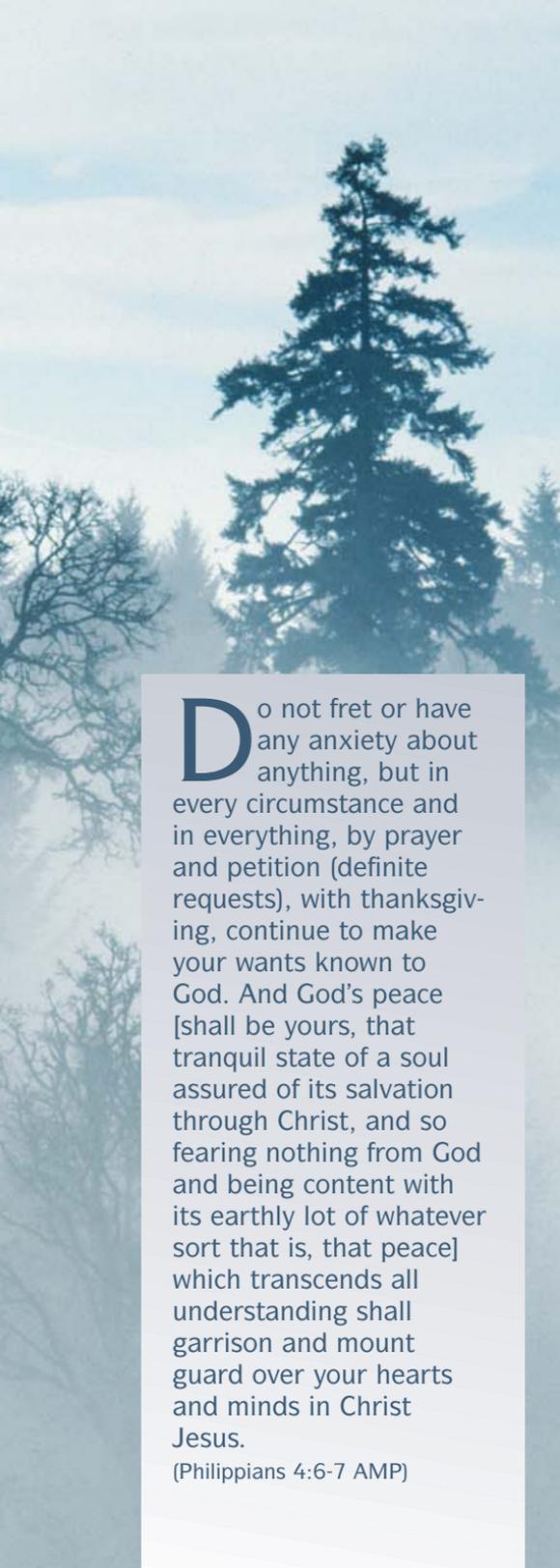
# Peace: The Solution for Confusion

**T**he work of righteousness will be peace, And the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever. My people will dwell in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places. (Isaiah 32:17-18 NKJV)

**Y**ou will guard him and keep him in perfect and constant peace whose mind [both its inclination and its character] is stayed on You, because he commits himself to You, leans on You, and hopes confidently in You. (Isaiah 26:3 AMP)

**T**hese things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)

**A**re you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly. (Matthew 11:28-30 MSGB)



**D**o not fret or have any anxiety about anything, but in every circumstance and in everything, by prayer and petition (definite requests), with thanksgiving, continue to make your wants known to God. And God's peace [shall be yours, that tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and being content with its earthly lot of whatever sort that is, that peace] which transcends all understanding shall garrison and mount guard over your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

(Philippians 4:6-7 AMP)

**T**oday, as never before, make a determined act of your will to choose peace instead of anxiety. In the midst of chaos and confusion, God offers us His rest—which is a deep, abiding peace that the world cannot give and the world cannot take away. Meditate on God's promises of peace and rest to His people. If you are a born-again child of God, divine, supernatural peace is your inherited right as a recreated spirit because you have peace with God through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. If, however, you have not yet chosen to accept God's offer of peace by accepting Jesus Christ, there is no better moment than the present to make that choice and to accept His offer of exchange: His peace for your frustration, His rest for your turmoil.

## Don't Run—Put the Devil Out

Mark 5:40 (NKJV)—*And they ridiculed Him. But when He had put them all outside, He took the father and the mother of the child, and those who were with Him, and entered where the child was lying.*

Jesus was at Jairus' home to heal his daughter. He wasn't going to be distracted by ridicule. He was there to bring glory to God and to demonstrate the devil's defeat.

What assignment are you on for the benefit of others and for the glory of God? Often, as we find ourselves on our way to do what is good, right, and pleasing to God, we discover that the enemy is present, scoffing at what we are there to do. But if we will do what Jesus did, we will have the same results.

We cannot stop people from ridiculing us. However, we can choose to put them outside—in the spirit, if not in the natural. How? We do so with our attitude and by our spiritual maturity.

A man who left the scene of an accident he caused was asked why he left. He stated, "I had to." When pressed further, he said that the female driver of the car he bumped became irate and was cussing and threatening him. He concluded that it would be best to leave before reacting violently to her behavior because he had been challenged by anger issues in the past.

He made the wrong choice. He was behaving as much in the flesh as she was. He thought he had been delivered from anger, but God allowed this to take place so that he could see that, though he had given mental assent to being anger-free, his actions revealed the monster still alive in him.

When we are truly free of our past weaknesses, we respond spiritually rather than physically remove ourselves from problems. As Christians, we are expected to love, do good to, bless, and pray for those who spitefully use us (Luke 6:27-28).

Have we missed a great opportunity to obey? Anyone can remove oneself from a negative situation. As believers, however, we are to learn and practice using the fruit of the Spirit, as directed by the Holy Spirit, to confront the difficult situations in our lives.

Make a choice today to stay and not leave the scene of a challenge. If you don't, it will be waiting for you at your next destination.

[For my determined purpose is] that I may know Him—[that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, perceiving and recognizing and understanding the wonders of His Person more strongly and more clearly]. And that I may in that same way come to know the power outflowing from His resurrection.

—Philippians 3:10, AMP

## You Are Here to Produce

**T**he story of baby Jesus in a manger filled with hay is one that even sinners tell this time of year. However, the news of Jesus Christ, the man who has been given all authority and power, is an entirely different message. I believe the world is in need of hearing about Him and His love for them because their hope is fading fast.

One of my most rewarding recollections of this past year was to reflect on the faces of the many I was privileged to see acknowledge Christ as their Lord and Savior. One reason God allowed you and me to enter this New Year is to give sinners—for whom Jesus was born and crucified—an opportunity to receive Him. We are to take advantage of every opportunity to tell someone what and who He is in our lives.

When you make your resolutions, be certain to esteem that which is valuable, resolving to give it priority in your life months and years to come. In fact, I challenge you to become so ambitious in your walk and work with the Lord that it will take a lifetime to complete it. Resolve not to quit or slow down until it is done.

Psalm 2:8 states that the heathen are given to us as a part of our inheritance. I take that as a serious challenge to get with the Lord's program—not only to accept His blessings to me personally but also to acknowledge His bigger picture for mankind.

What do you want that is not already yours in Christ Jesus? Do not be like the prodigal son's brother who failed to understand that all that his father owned was already his to enjoy even though it was designated to him as an inheritance.

Folks, we are left here to begin this New Year not merely to grow older. God wants additional fruit from our lives and from the seed we will be allowed to sow. Please take a moment to confer with the Lord as to why you are here. One thing I know for certain: Your presence on earth indicates that you are still expected to produce.

**Say to them** that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence: he will come and save you.

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.

Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.

And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water.... And an highway shall be there and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness: the unclean shall not pass over it... but the redeemed shall walk there:

And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

—Isaiah 35: 4-10



## So He Cried Out to the Lord

Exodus 15:25 (NKJV)—*So he cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a tree; and when he cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet.*

I don't know if anyone ever taught Moses to cry out to the Lord when the people complained against him, but it is something that always works. Cry out to God when others complain against you instead of trying to find out why or getting even.

Look at how their complaint was handled. They complained against Moses. He cried out to God. The Lord showed him a tree. He chose to cast the tree into the water. The results were supernatural.

How many of us would have thought to talk to the Lord first?

Moses' attitude must have been, "I didn't want this assignment in the first place. Now that I have accepted it, I am here to remind You, God, that these are Your people; therefore, their provision has to come from You. Water is a need.

"A tree, Lord? You didn't hear me. The water is already bitter, and You are showing me a tree!"

Moses knew by the Spirit of God what to do, though not a word was spoken by God. That's the way to live! Become so intimate with Him that you know how to respond to what appears to be an unusual answer to the problem.

Would you have known to throw the tree into the bitter waters in order to change its taste? You would have if you and God had a thing going for the good of His people.

When you cry out to the Lord, especially concerning His people, never be surprised at what He may say or do in regard to them.

Never stop to defend yourself or prove the complaint against you wrong. Tell the Lord and watch Him move.

I warn you, though, He may not come the way you expect Him to; but He will come because He loves His disobedient, scared, complaining, forgetful children. We qualify.

## Perfect Proven Promises and Protection

Psalm 18:30 (NLT)—*As for God, his way is perfect. All the Lord's promises prove true. He is a shield to all who look to him for protection.*

**W**hat an example we have to follow and rely on! Don't know which way to go? Follow the way of the Lord. No one has ever been able to prove God a liar; therefore, listening to what He promises guarantees protection. The truth of His Word can and will never deceive you or steer you down a wrong path.

Man comes with metal, steel, and stone; but we come with prayer, blessings, and the fruit of the Spirit against which, as Galatians 5:22 states, there are no laws. When we apply the fruit of the Holy Spirit in a negative situation, God gets involved and turns it into a positive outcome for His children. He also gives us the grace to endure and withstand until the change occurs.

**We simply have to look to God for our protection.**

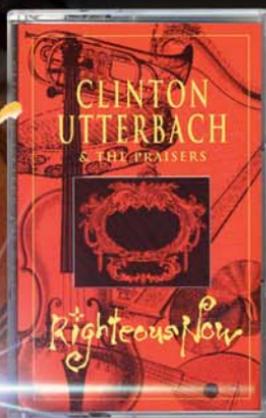
As Christians, we have an enemy of our souls and cannot protect ourselves from the variety of his attacks. Thank God we don't have to. We simply have to look to Him for our protection. We cannot focus our spiritual binoculars on the many attractions and distractions around us that appeal to our flesh. Instead, focus on Him. When I found out that I did not have what it took to defend and overtake the enemy, I learned to rest in Him.

I certainly can get in step with the One whose ways are perfect. He has never made a promise that has failed or has proven to be outmoded.

No weapon formed against you shall prosper. It can be formed, but it is futile when your eyes turn toward the Lord for help. Whatever threatens to harm you will prove powerless to defeat you when you make God your armor and your shield. Learn and believe that no carnal weapon stands a chance against the mighty spiritual weapons found only in Christ Jesus.

CLINTON UTTERBACH  
& THE PRAISERS

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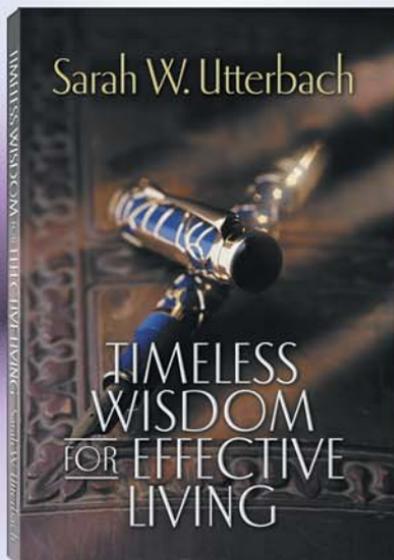
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## Made Rich

Proverbs 11:25 (NLT)—*The generous prosper and are satisfied; those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed.*

Verse 24 in the New Living Translation says, “It is possible to give freely and become more wealthy, but those who are stingy will lose every thing.”

I thank God that since I was a small child He gave me a gift of giving. I have always had a willing heart to obey God when it comes to being separated from what I have.

The Lord started me out at about the age of five. Mother’s Day and my mother’s birthday were never more than two weeks apart. I did what I had to do to give my mother a gift on those occasions. The first of my two initial gifts to her was a ninety-nine cent mother of pearl pin from W. T. Grant’s five and dime store, which she thought was the

**A giver is one of the highest callings you can have.**

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most treasured thing she owned. The second gift was a glass candy bowl with four smaller bowls in it that, I believe, she kept until she went to sleep in Jesus more than forty years later. Mother often was, but not the only, recipient of God’s generosity through me.

You are not to give all you have to everyone who asks or has a sob story. A quick way to become a statistic yourself is not to be able to differentiate between God’s voice and the voice of those on assignment to remove you from what God has provided for you. I trained myself to hear the voice of God concerning giving.

A giver is one of the highest callings you can have. A giver is a free person owing no man anything but to love Him. Other than souls coming into the kingdom, my request of the Lord would be that people would develop a willing heart and become givers.

The more I gave, the more I prospered and the more I would give. You really can’t beat God in giving, no matter how hard you try. See for yourself.

## Let Your Heart Keep My Commands

Proverbs 3:1 (NKJV)—*My son, do not forget my law, but let your heart keep my commands.*

I wrote in my Bible years ago, “Before your flesh can apply it, your heart must keep it.”

Most failures occur trying to keep the commands of God in the flesh without regard for the heart being the “power ball” to perform what “thus saith the Lord.” We are asked to guard our hearts (Prov. 4:23). We are told to control our flesh and renew our minds (Rom. 8:13; 12:2). God talks to us through our hearts, and our hearts must be the keeper of what He says to us.

**When our heart is trained  
to keep God’s commands,  
our minds think clearly  
and our flesh behaves Godly.**

Failure to guard our heart and filter out that which never should be allowed in, will result in destructive choices in life. Destructive choices not only affect the ones making the choices; others can be negatively affected too.

To “not forget” God’s laws suggests that one must first be exposed to them. They must be taught accurately and read intently and regularly. Ignorance of His laws is no excuse for the defeat we experience by default. When our heart is trained to keep God’s commands, our minds think clearly and our flesh behaves Godly. I have yet to meet a Christian who has purposed to keep the commands of God being mean to others and stingy with His blessings.

“How do you practice the presence of the Lord?” you may ask. Learn what He has said, apply it to your life, and continue to move forward regardless. God is not a God of reverse unless you didn’t get what He said the first time around. Even then, He tells us to forget what is behind and press forward. The high calling of God in Christ Jesus is always before us. Everything He is and every word He has said is attainable and shall come to pass for all who forget not His laws and let their hearts keep His commands.

## Follow the Leader

Matthew 16:23 (KJV)—*But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offense unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.*

All of us have our opinions, preferences, and prejudices, and they are not all bad in and of themselves. However, anyone who allows himself to be used of the devil to cause scandal, which is the Greek meaning for the word “offenses,” will be in conflict with Jesus.

Jesus was saying to Peter, “You have become a bent sapling—a snare, a cause for displeasure, a stumbling block.” This was the same Peter whom Jesus had applauded for having received directly from the Father the revelation of who Jesus was. Now Jesus was indicting him.

How many times have anointed men and women of God, used mightily in ministry and international relationships, suddenly fallen from their lofty positions? Why? They have forgotten the plan of the One who anointed and revealed Himself to them in the first place.

**Too often, we are so busy trying to get God to reveal Himself to us that we forget that His plan is to reveal Himself in us.**

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Too often, we are so busy trying to get God to reveal Himself to us that we forget that His plan is to reveal Himself in us.

Jesus was doing His best to prepare His disciples for His departure and was telling them the reason for it. It did not fit in Peter’s thinking. Imagine rebuking the One God just revealed to you as His plan for mankind’s redemption!

In Matthew 16:23, Jesus is telling Peter, “You are about to join the ranks of the enemy. You started out in the right camp, but your mind is on your plans and affections, on the things of the world.” In verse 24, Jesus is saying that if any man will come after Him, he must choose to deny himself—set aside his desires, passions, and pleasure—and follow the Leader. That has not changed.

SONG POEM

# KNOW

by *Clinton H. Utterbach*

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There is a silence in which I hear  
    You speak to me  
There is a quiet time when I hear  
    You say to me  
Know this, if there be no one else  
    who loved you  
Know this, that before you were formed in  
    your mother's womb  
I loved you then,  
    I love you now  
    And I will always love you

# THIS

In those quiet times, sometimes  
it seems You  
enfold me in Your arms,  
Saying, I love you (*I love you*)  
I love you (*I love you*) with an  
undying love,  
a divine love that will never die  
Hope in the Lord, for He will  
never forsake you,  
It's in those quiet times, that you know,  
that you know  
He cares.

## Freed to Help Others

Exodus 3:11 (KJV)—*And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?*

God did not answer Moses' question, "Who am I?" He did, however, tell Moses who He was.

God does that often, especially when we feel inferior or uncertain about who we are. God has never revealed to me who I am, but He has shown me in His Word who I am in Christ. Then He has revealed Himself to me not only by what is written about Him and about Him in me, but also by His power.

God did not answer Moses' question, "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" However, God *did* say, "Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain" (v. 12).

It doesn't matter who we are. When God tells us to do anything, He already knows He must accompany us to perform it. This is why I willingly give God all the glory for the inspiration of His truth through me: I know that I am not wise enough to think of it on my own.

We can also see from this passage that God will ask you at times to confront people or things that you have been avoiding, as He asked Moses to confront Pharaoh. Always remember that He does not assign the task to you to cause you to be defeated. He does it because there is a need. His people have cried out to Him, and He has seen their affliction and oppression. It is His season for making a change.

Don't forget that Moses was no longer experiencing the oppression of Egypt. Unlike many of his fellow Hebrews, he was not trying to make bricks without straw. He was very comfortable keeping the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law. If you are comfortable, secure, and free from the enemy where you are, then get ready. God will probably call on you. After all, what could you do if you were oppressed? He freed you to help others.

It is not about who you are. It is about what God made you to be: *free!*

## Get Them, Lord!

Psalm 140:9-11 (NLT)—*Let my enemies be destroyed by the very evil they have planned for me. Let burning coals fall down on their heads, or throw them into the fire, or into deep pits from which they can't escape. Don't let liars prosper here in our land. Cause disaster to fall with great force on the violent.*

When I read this prayer, I wonder why God called the writer, David, the apple of His eye. I am not suggesting that the governing authorities should not execute the laws against criminals, especially when it involves their hurting others. Yet, I just can't pray for the destruction of another human.

I suspect that statistics would prove that more deaths occur daily from substance abuse brought on by greedy, uncaring drug dealers than have ever occurred in a single terrorist attack. Yet, no one seems to be pursuing drug dealers with a vengeance.

### **Pray for the happiness of those who curse you.**

When people terrorize others, the world says, "Get them!"

Christians in America are now repenting for their "bad attitudes" in the aftermath of recent terrorist attacks on our nation. They have desired that evil would befall the terrorists. Did not Jesus Himself say, "Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. Pray for the happiness of those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you" (Luke 6:27-28 NLT)? He also said, "Your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for he is kind to the unthankful and to those who are wicked" (Luke 6:35 NLT).

Wrongdoers should be brought to justice. I would rather follow the command of Jesus, however, and call those things that be not as though they were (Romans 4:17). Since I believe that vengeance is the Lord's and He will repay, I choose to pray that all men would be saved and come into the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4).

*I pray that the love and peace of God would fill you to the fullest and that His gracious words would bring comfort to your troubled heart and mind. I pray that because of your love, the love of God in you, others will know Him. In Jesus' name.*



**RLCC**  
REDEEMING  
LOVE  
CHRISTIAN  
CENTER

AT THE VILLAGE

We invite you to join us for Sunday evening services at our new facility in the Poconos!

## Directions to REDEEMING LOVE CHRISTIAN CENTER at the VILLAGE

**T**ake Route 80 West across the Delaware Water Gap (\$.75 toll) into Pennsylvania. Exit at 302 (Bartonsville). After exiting, proceed to the traffic light and turn right onto Route 611. Passing the Howard Johnson Hotel, proceed to the second street on the left, which is Wigwam Park Road. Turn left onto Wigwam Park Road. In a short distance you will come to a stop sign. Make a left turn (you are still on Wigwam Park Road). Continue on Wigwam Park Road for approximately 2 miles until you see the sign "Redeeming Love Christian Village." Turn left onto Cranberry Road. Proceed several yards to the entrance of the Village on the right. The Village is at the intersection of Wigwam Park and Cranberry Roads.

### **FROM GEORGE WASHINGTON BRIDGE**

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

### **FROM THE TAPPAN ZEE BRIDGE — WESTCHESTER COUNTY**

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

### **FROM SOUTH NEW JERSEY**

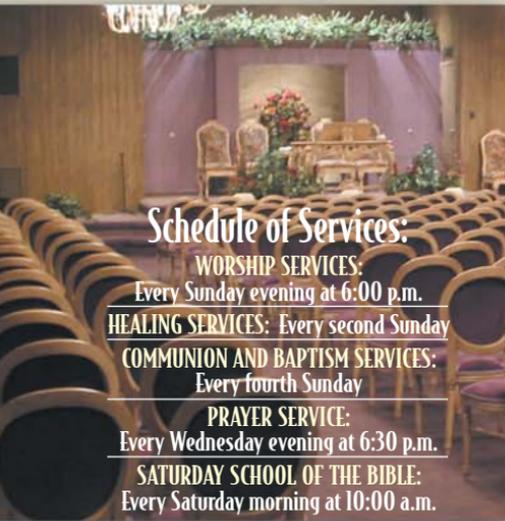
Take the Garden State Parkway North to Route 80 West. (Follow the directions above from Route 80 West to RLCV.)

### **FROM NORTH NEW JERSEY**

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

### **FROM UPSTATE NEW YORK**

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



## Schedule of Services:

### **WORSHIP SERVICES:**

Every Sunday evening at 6:00 p.m.

**HEALING SERVICES:** Every second Sunday

**COMMUNION AND BAPTISM SERVICES:**

Every fourth Sunday

### **PRAYER SERVICE:**

Every Wednesday evening at 6:30 p.m.

### **SATURDAY SCHOOL OF THE BIBLE:**

Every Saturday morning at 10:00 a.m.

For more information, please call the church office at

**(570) 424-2300**

or Redeeming Love Christian Center  
in Nanuet, New York: (845) 623-9300.



## Make the Effort To Be Your Best Self

Acts 24:16 (KJV)—*And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men.*

If you are anything like me, you have to work at not offending God and, especially, people. God is not as easily offended as are humans. God knows our frame—He knows we are dust—but He also reminds us that He has given us all we need to be like Him.

Most humans have either not read or understood the message of Psalm 119:165: “Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.” An offense is a stumbling block to others. We need to keep our consciences clear as to what we say and do that could cause others to stumble. God isn’t going to fall off His throne over what we do. However, each of us is to train oneself and strive to have a conscience, which means a moral co-perception, that does not offend.

Are we faultless before God and man? I am sure God had a reason for leaving us in these human bodies following our new birth experience, but some of us are amazed to find ourselves still challenged by certain things. It’s not the challenge that we fear; it’s the possibility that we may yield to it. It takes effort not to offend God or man. It is not automatic.

The thought of disappointing God does not always prevent me from sinning, but it certainly does act as a strong deterrent. A choice to sin is always one’s own choice, and those of us who are serious about a life with the Lord quickly repent and stop ourselves from allowing the human side of us to dominate for a moment.

I shudder to think what terrible things I would be capable of without my ever-present desire to please Him. Please don’t become discouraged with yourself. The devil would like nothing better than for us to give up on ourselves. He knows God won’t do that, so he’ll try to get us to quit. Refuse to cooperate with him. Reunite with God, and operate in the ways that will cause you to do what is right before God and man.

My children may say and do things that disappoint me at times, and vice versa. But they’re still my children, and I’m still their mother. Could God do less for us?

Begin to be your best self. It will become easier the more you do it.

## The Ministry of Reconciliation

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

**H**ow often we think we know the true meaning of a word only to discover that our definition is superficial and shallow. Reconcile is one word we often define this way.

When God reconciled us to Himself, there was a full reversal of the separation, departure, and cessation that occurred because Adam and Eve had made some wrong choices. The original sin took us in the total opposite direction of God's intended plan for His creation.

Though it looked hopeless and bleak, as things sometimes do in the natural, God decided that because all things are of Him, He would make an exchange and adjust what was in the natural so that restoration to His divine favor could occur. He provided atonement first. When it became evident that more than a covering was needed, He produced remission at a price that only He could pay. He wanted us back in a complete relationship with Him, so He made the change necessary to bridge the gap that existed between us.

Then He gave us the ministry of reconciliation, which simply means we are privileged to serve others with this wonderful gift. We are not an elite, exclusive club of only a chosen few. We are the Father's representatives here in the earth, offering to others on His behalf what He has freely given to us: Jesus Christ and His shed blood.

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

## The Most Valuable Inheritance

Psalm 119:111 (NLT)—*Your decrees are my treasure; they are truly my heart's delight.*

**W**hat has been passed down to you? What have you collected that you consider valuable? What deposits are you making? What are you leaving to others? What will you be remembered for?

These are all questions we should ask ourselves. Hopefully they will stimulate us to reevaluate our lives and make the necessary corrections or adjustments.

My mother did not do everything right when I was a child, but one of the best and most perfect things she did was to make sure that my brother and I attended Sunday school and church every Sunday, even when she was unable to attend. A love for God's Word was made real to me, and at seven years of age I became born again.

I did not always live the life of a Christian, but the Spirit in me kept drawing me back to Him until that relationship became the necessary part of my life.

Movies, television, and magazines caused me to want to have "stuff"; so I began my quest to acquire things. Love for Jesus and God's Word, however, never allowed me to be satisfied with my material acquisitions for more than a moment.

When I yielded to the fact that I could do without everything and everyone except Jesus, I became secure and peaceful. Time with Him was the most valuable thing I had, and I could not get enough. There was no end to my desire to be with Him through His Word. I learned about Him and about myself because of time in His Word.

Those not interested in God's Word will find me uninteresting and boring. Every opportunity I have, I want to share about the goodness of the Lord—especially in the middle of a person's chaos. My heart longs for Truth found only in the Bible, and I devour it as often and as much as I can.

When I recently updated my will, I realized how much God has blessed me. The most valuable thing I have to leave, however, will not be found in a safe; it will be on the tapes from sermons I preached and in these devotionals I have been privileged to write.

# The Choice Is Yours

**LIVE Call-in Radio Talk Program Now Available in  
Real Time Simulcast Via the Internet**

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

We invite you to visit our website [www.redeeminglovecc.org](http://www.redeeminglovecc.org) for more information about this exciting broadcast and to learn the times you can listen and, if you like, to call in. A number will be provided for you to call in and speak with Sarah live on the air and to have your own question answered and your need specifically addressed. Or, if you do not wish to be on the air, you will be directed to speak with a prayer partner who will agree with you in prayer according to the Word of God concerning your need.

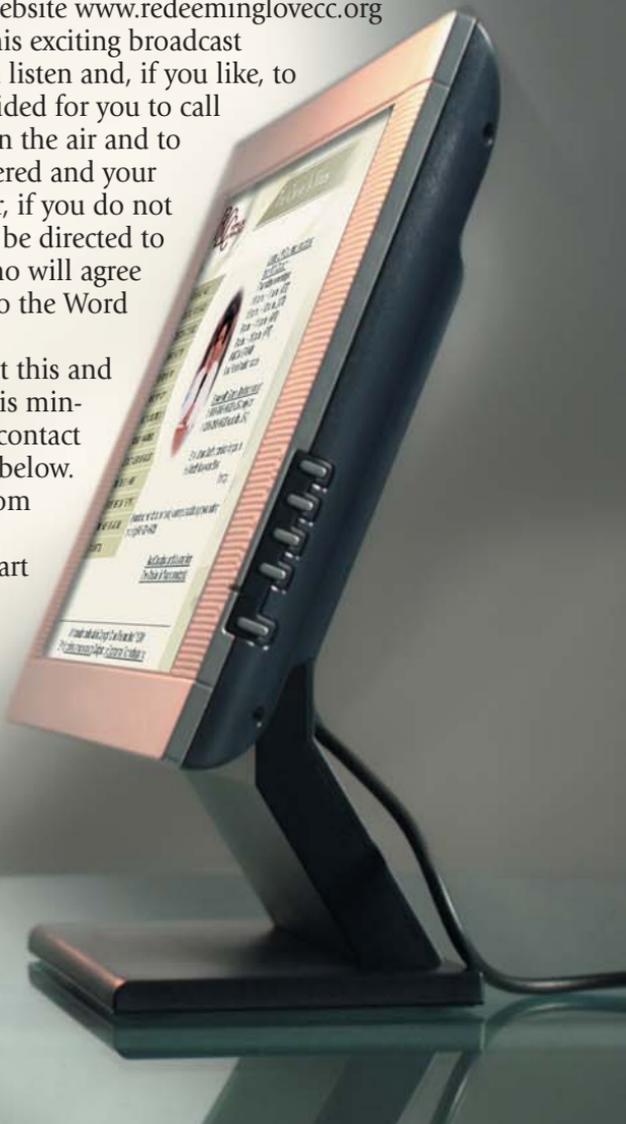
For more information about this and other exciting outreaches of this ministry, log on to our website or contact us at the address and number below. We look forward to hearing from you and to the opportunity to become a vital and uplifting part of your week!

## **Redeeming Love Christian Center**

**145 West Route 59  
Nanuet, New York 10954-2200**

**Phone: (845) 623-9300**

**[www.redeeminglovecc.org](http://www.redeeminglovecc.org)**



# 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!

## No One Can Be God but God

2 Peter 2:7 (NLT)—*But at the same time, God rescued Lot out of Sodom because he was a good man who was sick of all the immorality and wickedness around him.*

**I**n Genesis 19 we find a disturbing story. Two angels come to Lot's home to save him and his family from the destruction of Sodom, but the perverse men of the city try to force Lot to send his male guests out so they can sexually violate them. For a long time I was mad at Lot because he offered his two virgin daughters to the men of Sodom.

The Holy Spirit had to help me with this one. I believe the Spirit said to me, "It was not that he thought so little of his daughters. On the contrary, it was that he had such high regard for the messengers from God that he offered his best to ensure their safety and well-being."

Lot was sick of the immorality and wickedness all around him. That must have counted for much because Lot didn't seem to have much else going for him. He was not called; he clung to Uncle Abe's covenant coat tail. He lived off of Uncle Abe for a long time, then disrespected him when choosing his homeland by making the first choice, though he was younger. He did not confer with God about his choice, but took the land richest in soil but most destitute morally. He is not listed in the faith hall of fame as a pilgrim. Nowhere have I found that Lot prayed for the city of Sodom or its people. His choices cost him everything except his daughters' lives; yet, their time in Sodom most likely influenced their shameful acts with their father.

Yet Peter said God rescued Lot because he was good. Verses like this help me understand why no one can be God but God. While my flesh wants to revisit Lot's faults and weaknesses, my spirit reminds me how he respected God's servants and was grieved at the sin in the city. With that in mind, there is hope for you and me, but not an excuse or license to not work at being better. If that was all Lot needed to do to be received as good, we just might make it.

## The One and Only

Judges 18:9 (NLT)—*The men replied, "Let's attack! We have seen the land, and it is very good. You should not hesitate to go and take possession of it."*

**T**he tribe of Dan chose five men to scout out the land of Laish. God said their journey would be successful, peace was theirs, and He would go before them. The five returned with a good report, and 600 men went to take over. However, the five spies had set their eyes on a sacred ephod, household idols, a carved image, and a cast idol from a shrine they had found.

Just because the five spies were warriors did not mean they had wisdom. They missed the obvious and obeyed their flesh. No one told them to spy out the shrine—they were told to spy out the land. (Watch what gets your attention when you are on a mission. It will be the first thing you return to when you forget your focus.)

The people of Laish had led carefree, peaceful, and seemingly secure lives. However, they had been outside of God's covenant and, therefore, were without real protection. Worse yet, they had what God had promised to His people.

Though their god was helpless against the one and only God, the tribe of Dan brought it into their camp. Then they set up the carved image and worshiped it. Why did the people of God want to worship an idol that could not protect the others who worshiped it?

There is nothing worse than to know what is obviously the right thing to do, yet to ignore it. How many times has God eliminated forces to give His people property so they can rebuild it for His glory, only to watch them allow it to be used for ungodly purposes?

If unbelievers want to come and participate in our program, let's welcome them. But let's never let an abomination to God attach itself to us, especially when we are on the verge of our greatest victory.

Please examine where you are and what you are doing with God's gift. The God who provided it can maintain it for you when you trust Him to complete what He has begun.

Do not limit or short-change the Almighty God. He is the One and Only.

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is now heard from Manhattan to Malaysia  
and the uttermost parts of the earth!



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*Tune in Thursday evenings  
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New York Christian Radio*

Phone 1-800-345-9622 and speak with Sarah Utterbach.  
She'll share God's promises for you in His Word! Have your Bible handy.

If you do not wish to be on the air,  
you may speak to a prayer partner by calling 845-624-6423.

## The Privilege of Serving

Matthew 19:20,27 (KJV)—*The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?... Then answered Peter..., Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?*

**B**oth the rich young ruler and Peter missed the essence of serving, which is the privilege without a promised reward. So many people look to humans instead of to the Lord for a reward for service.

We are blessed to be in God's kingdom to serve. Those willing to serve out of gratitude experience much reward while still on the earth, though it does not begin to compare to inheriting immortal, everlasting, and eternal life.

Twenty-two years after finishing Bible school, I asked my husband what it had been like to decide to walk away from everything and everyone in order to obey the Spirit's prompting to separate himself from all his earthly possessions. After a few moments of thought, he replied, "It was totally contrary to my conservative lifestyle and mode of behavior, but I had to know if God was as real to me as He had been to the men and women I'd heard preach about Him. It turned out that God did not prove to me what they'd said He was. *He* proved to me who He said He was."

Then Clinton asked me the same question. I replied, "On a \$3.25-a-day salary, my mother fed, clothed, and housed herself, my brother and me. Never knowing hunger, nakedness, homelessness, or sadness as a child, I wanted to know that God could do at least that much for me as an adult. If He didn't do that, I wanted to know it early in our relationship so that I could get as many jobs as necessary and do it for myself."

I was willing to serve the Lord because I was grateful for my salvation. It did not matter to me if He overwhelmed me with material abundance. I had been there already and found myself ready to commit suicide. I just wanted to be happy in my service to Him, and I could not envision being happy if I were hungry, naked, and homeless. I thought if Mama could do that on \$3.25 a day, surely God could, too. After all, as Aunt Celie would say, "He owns all the cattle on a thousand hills and the taters underneath 'em."

He does reward both in heaven and in earth, but what a privilege it is to serve Him here!

## The Promise by Faith

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

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

Where did our faith come from? It came from a moral conviction of the truthfulness of God, from reliance upon Christ for salvation, from assurance of the truth of the Gospel.

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

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

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

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

## The Purpose of Forgiveness

Psalm 130:4 (NLT)—*But you offer forgiveness, that we might learn to fear you.*

God doesn't want us to be afraid of Him, but He does want us to "fear"—respect and honor—Him. According to Psalm 130:4, God's forgiveness is essential to our learning to fear Him.

First John 4:8 says, "Anyone who does not love does not know God—for God is love." Love, which cannot be manifested where unforgiveness exists, defines God and also identifies us as His offspring.

The purpose of forgiveness is not just for us to be reconciled to God through Jesus; it is also for us to become reconciled to others. First John 4:20-21 says, "If someone says, 'I love God,' but hates a Christian brother or sister, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we have not seen? And God himself has commanded that we must love not only him but our Christian brothers and sisters, too."

Our ability to forgive others when we are wronged or offended is not automatic. It is a gift God offers us. We don't have to purchase it; Jesus already paid in full for us to have it.

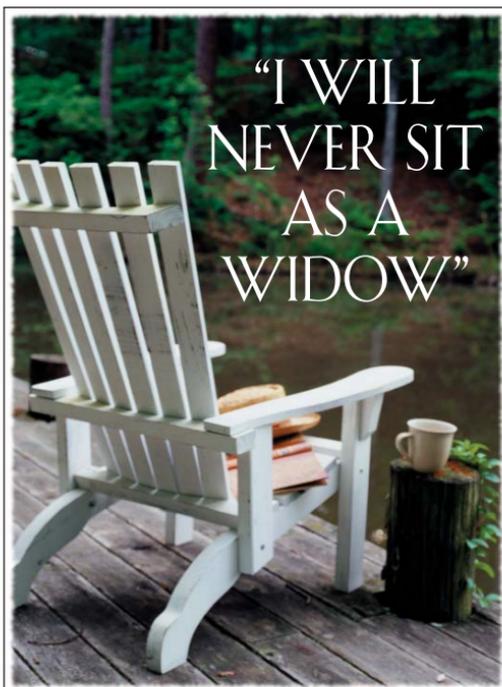
Why do we even need the gift of forgiving? Why can't we just float through life harboring unforgiveness in our hearts towards others who have contributed unbelievable pain to us?

Unforgiveness is an ingested poison. The longer it remains internally, the more effectively it will spread and, ultimately, cause our demise.

Forgiving does not mean that you necessarily have to fellowship with all people. There are some personalities still under construction that, for the good of your witness, may require you to remain at a distance. When the construction of both your personalities is completed, you can fellowship together without damaging your witness.

I speak from experience. God has required me to do things for and give to people whom I wasn't particularly fond of. I hesitated for a split second, but my desire to reverence and represent God quickly squelched my resistance, and I went on to obey.

My choice to obey God when I wanted to disagree and debate has helped me learn the purpose of forgiveness; it has also deepened my reverence for my God.



Many years ago, I was on a plane leaving Los Angeles, California, on my way to Vancouver,

British Columbia, without any knowledge of Isaiah 47:8. The Spirit of God spoke up as I was reading my Bible in Isaiah 47:8 (AMP): "Therefore now, hear this, you who love pleasures and are given over to them, you who dwell safely and sit securely, who say in your mind, I am [the mistress] and there is no one else besides me. I shall not sit as a widow, nor shall I know the loss of children."

It jumped off the page and lodged in my spirit: "I will never sit as a widow." I began to confess it

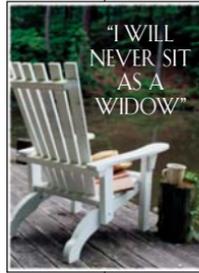
and I shared it with my husband. At that time when I received it, I wasn't in need of that scripture.

When you get to know God, you begin to recognize that there are some things that He prepares you for ahead of time because He loves you. I said, "Well, I don't know when I'm going to use that, but obviously I'm going to need this later on." I pondered it in my heart, just like Mary did when the angel spoke to her. I pondered it. I shared it with my husband. I shared it with the congregation when we started this ministry almost twenty-five years ago.

It was given to me, actually on July 7, 1978, as a personal promise

# SARAH W. UTTERBACH

to me. Remember this for your future: When God speaks to you, if He lodges something in your spirit, hold on to it and run with it because God does not lie. You're not taking it out of context if Jesus gave it to you because Jesus says, "The words that I speak unto you, they're spirit and life." People put things in context, but the Lord puts it in your heart. When He puts it in your heart, it isn't out of context.



On April 16, 2005, my husband fell asleep in Christ Jesus. One of the first questions that was asked of me on the Sunday morning following his departure was, "Well, what about the scripture that you would never sit as a widow and neither would you know the loss of children?"

I didn't have a total answer. Morally speaking, Clinton was fine. But I knew he had neglected to do something that God told him to do. Solomon in all his wisdom made the mistake of disobeying God and thinking that he could get away with it. You are never absolved of obeying God. You may get a scripture, you may get a promise, but if God has told you to do something, you will never be absolved of that until you do it. Don't think because you give a certain amount of money or you attend church on a certain number of days and you come to assist and help, that you can do what you want to. You have to obey God to walk in God's fullness and enjoy His benefits and His promises.

Clinton had a leaky heart valve. He had some health concern ever since we were married. God put us together because He knew that I was going to endure until the end. He

knew I was going to stick with the whole situation. The Lord healed him repeatedly since 1979, one situation after another. God did the miraculous where Clinton was concerned.

In this last situation, we agreed to a noninvasive procedure that allowed the doctors to repair this leak in his heart valve without having to perform surgery on him. That's what we agreed on; that's what the Lord and Clinton agreed on. When Clinton began to swell up with fluid, they decided to do the invasive surgical procedure. God said to me later, "I didn't cover him for invasive surgery. I covered him for noninvasive surgery." In 1979, 1984, 1993, and 1998—God healed my husband without surgery. When he decided to submit to the invasive surgery, Clinton stepped out from under the umbrella of protection.

You can do the same thing. Don't let anybody talk you into something you haven't cleared with God first. This is very important because the time could come when you make some choices. What you believe God for is what He will provide. But if you choose to change horses mid-stream, God is not obligated to go beyond what He has promised you.

About two years ago I went to

*continued on page 72*

continued from page 71

Clinton after the Lord healed him and I realized that he was standing on Isaiah 47:8, the scripture that God gave me. You can't stand on what God has spoken to somebody else because God is a personal God. He will speak to you directly about what He wants you to know. He will stand for that which He has said to you.

We were sitting in our office at home and I said, "God, why do I have to tell him this? Why can't You get somebody else to tell him?" It's hard when you're the spouse, because we are always telling them something to do anyhow and, after a while, they get tired of listening.

I turned to him and said, "I have a word for you from the Lord." And he said, "Okay." And I shared with him. "Clinton, you've been standing on Isaiah 47:8, that I would never sit as a widow and neither would I know the loss of children. The Lord told me to tell you that you can't stand on that scripture anymore because that was a promise to me, not to you. And God says if you don't learn Spanish, what could possibly happen is that I could leave and go home. You often say, 'Well, Sarah's alive, so I don't have a problem. God's not going to let anything happen to me.'"

My husband's next words to me were, "Honey, I just don't receive that. I don't receive that because I don't believe God will let something happen to me because I didn't

learn Spanish."

I looked back at him, smiled, and said, "You will never hear me utter those words again." My husband made the mistake that people often make, we don't seem to know how to separate the messenger from the spouse. Every single time I ever had to previously share anything with my husband, he received it because he did not just receive it as coming from his wife. This time he said,

"I just don't receive it."

He wasn't rejecting me. He was rejecting the Lord because I was the messenger. So I said, "Okay, no problem. I will never ever discuss it with you again." And I didn't.

A while ago I was reading the May 2, 2005 *Horizons Unlimited* article where I wrote that I would never sit as a widow and neither would I know the loss of children. When I was rereading that, there was hesitancy on my part. And the Lord said, "Don't you want to know about that?"

And I said, "Well, yes, why not?"

And He said, "Sarah, you will never sit as a widow and neither will you know the loss of children."

I know I won't know the loss of children because I was privileged to lead both of my children to Christ a number of years ago so they'll never be lost. They may not be in fellowship with me or with the Lord right now, but they'll never be lost.

This is how God chronologically laid this out for me. The article is called "A Notable Miracle."



"In Psalm 44:8 it says, 'In God we boast all day long, and praise Your name forever.'

"This is exactly what some of us did recently. The doctor said that my husband needed cardiac surgery to correct a leaky valve. But after Clinton was out of the hospital two weeks without the surgery, the same doctor assessed that she did not need to see him for another three months. Our staff and friends joined me in rejoicing.

"In 1979, my husband refused surgery and God healed him. My brother recently reminded me that both he and our physician at the time called Clinton a 'dead man' without the surgery. My brother said to me twenty-four years later, 'Obviously, you were right and we were wrong.' The doctor admitted the same thing nearly twenty years ago.

"Consider this and understand why you cannot put God in a box: In 2003," many years later, "my husband, who refused surgery in 1979, agreed to have the surgery. We prayed for God's perfect will. It obviously did not include surgery because it was postponed four times. The Spirit directed me to bring him home from the hospital. God did not override Clinton's will; He did delay things until Clinton's will lined up with God's will. God knew Clinton did not want open-heart surgery, but he was weary of pain and tired, so he was willing to have it if necessary. But he never needed to have the surgery.



"This is one of the greatest lessons that I have ever learned. We never prayed for Clinton to be healed or released from the hospital. We prayed for God's perfect will to be done in His son's body. We reminded the Lord that as He remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and acknowledged the children of Israel, surely He would remember His covenant with Jesus and acknowledge His child Clinton.

Two years later," now we're up to December 2004, "because he trusted in God and rejected the previous surgery, a new procedure allowed for the leaky valve to be repaired with noninvasive surgery.

"You may be contemplating a major choice right now. You may even have agreed to certain things. So what is your heart, not your head, saying? Ask the Lord's perfect will in the situation and remind Him of His covenant with you."

The point I want you to see here is there was a procedure presented to us that was a noninvasive procedure. And in February 2005, when my husband went into the hospital, that's exactly what we had agreed on. You can't change agreements in mid-stream. It's like a contract. It cannot be changed.

So as I was rereading this article, I never asked the Lord about His promise. I was busy praising Him for my blessed thirty-two years with Clinton Utterbach.

Recently, I felt impressed to look

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up the word sit, s-i-t. "Never sit as a widow, neither will you know the loss of children." And, of course, everybody thinks, Well, you were sitting down. You think that that's what sitting is all about.

But as I looked up this word, I began to discover and uncover a number of positions that it talked about. Unfortunately, I didn't write them down right then, but if you look it up in Strong's Concordance, you will see that they talk about things like *dwelt*, and *take up your abode*, etc.

And I said, "God, You're saying something to me." The Lord had me to look up "widow" and "widows" in the Bible. The revelation came that the widows of the Bible were always at the mercy of others because they were without Jesus. One even called widowhood "an affliction."

Thanks, but Jesus and I have no need for anyone to plead for me. My children don't have to concern themselves about taking care of me. I'm too old to have any more babies, and I don't have a need to get married to satisfy my flesh. No one has to visit me because I'm not lonely. I have Jesus.

God's promise to me was fulfilled. He said, "You will never sit as a widow, neither will you know the loss of children." He says, "Look up all the widows in the Bible." I did as God said, and I saw that they were always at somebody else's mercy. They were depending on somebody else to visit with them, to plead their

cause, to provide for them and all of these things.

He said, "Sarah, that day will never come where you're concerned because you married Jesus a long time ago. And when you married Jesus, your needs were taken care of. I never said to you that you would not be a widow. I said you'd never sit as one. Do you understand the difference? In other words, you will never be dependent on somebody else. You will

never be at somebody else's mercy, and you certainly don't consider living alone with time to praise me an affliction."

Some of you think what I'm saying sounds kind of strange, and some of you are reading these words wondering, "What is she really saying?" I am saying to you that once again my Father God has fulfilled what He promised me, that I would never "sit" as a widow. He again said, "Did I tell you that you would never not be a widow?"

I said, "No, Sir."

He said, "Well then, I'm only obligated to fulfill what I promised. You read into that what you wanted to believe, and it has worked for more than twenty-seven years. But I'm only obligated to fulfill My promise to you, and My promise was that you would never sit. Look at your circumstances. Look at what's going on around you."

He said, "Because you put your trust in Me, you trusted Me in the midst of a relationship with a human being." He said, "Would you



please go and tell the rest of the world to put their trust in Me and not in human beings. Then they too will never sit as widows or widowers."

Do you understand what God is trying to teach us to do?

I recently heard something I will never forget if I live to be 200 years old. One person said: "People don't train themselves to let go. They train themselves to hold on." Think on that for a moment.

Therefore, when there's a separation or a division or a death or something like that, they are devastated because they did not train themselves to let go that which they feared they might lose. I didn't say you had to lose it. I'm telling you, it's a whole lot easier on you when you can let go while the person is alive.

I did everything a human being could do for my husband while he was alive. I had been a caregiver for him for twenty-five years of the thirty-two we were married because there was always something going on in his life. I have no regrets. But I trained myself to keep my focus on Jesus Christ so that when and if there was a departure, I wouldn't be devastated. Nobody would have to plead my case. Nobody would have to suddenly come and support me. Nobody would have to take me out—I could go with Jesus wherever he directed me to go.

Recognize the importance of understanding that Calvary has cov-

ered it all. Therefore we can walk in victory here on the earth, not wait until we get to heaven. Most people are postponing their joy. They will skip and get their step in when they get to heaven. You're going to be so busy staring up in Jesus' face you're not going to want to do all those things. That idea of wanting to go looking for your relatives when you get there—not so. I have news for you: They're not going to be your relatives. They're

going to be another spirit being who is worshiping Jesus just like you are. If you don't enjoy your relationship with them here, don't expect to wait till you get to heaven, when you don't have any challenges. This is where you will find out what you are made of.

The Lord said, "Did I keep My promise?"

I said, "Lord, You kept Your promise. This is several months later, and I have not sat in any grief. I have not been broken. I'm not the poor little widow in Mark 12. I am not any one of those widows from the Old Testament all the way through to the New Testament."

I don't fit into any of those categories. Why? Because I accepted a person named Jesus. I understand what His shed blood provided for me. I understand what His bruised body provided for me. So instead of having regrets about a loss, I am shouting the victory that I will never sit as a widow and neither will I know the loss of children.



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God did not say I wouldn't be a widow. He said, "You will never sit as one. You will never have to depend on anybody but Jesus. And because you have trained yourself to be dependent on Him and let go of everything and everybody else, you're in good shape for whatever comes down the pike."

That blessed me. I mean, that was shouting time for me. As I told the congregation when they left that day, "If they weren't shouting, that's not my fault and I don't really care because I'm shouting on the inside."

My insides were doing cartwheels. Not because my husband is gone, but because there's not one single thing that God has spoken to me that He hasn't fulfilled. God started talking to me when I was seven years old, sixty-one years ago was the first time I heard the voice of God, and every single time since, He has fulfilled what He spoke to me.

Sometimes we take things out of context to hear what we want to believe God is saying. But when the rubber meets the road, what did He really say? Can you accuse Him of not fulfilling that which He said? Never. Not ever.

And when He said, "You will never sit as a widow," I put it in its proper context. But I didn't need that information back in 1977. But God is so faithful and He is so good. When He knows you're pondering something in your heart and other people are questioning what

has happened, God says, "I don't want you to have any excuse to doubt what I said. Now what you said, what you meant, or what you wanted to believe is a whole other story. I am not required to support your beliefs unless it's what I've spoken to you. I'm not required to support your beliefs unless you're quoting what is written. I said you would never sit as a widow, and you look back over the past several months. Have

you been sitting as a widow? Have you been grieving? Have you been crying?"

Remember: what God has spoken to you He will bring it to pass. He will fulfill it every single time. Make sure you don't read into what He said to you what you want to believe that He's saying. And if you stay with what He has spoken, then you can just sit and wait and see. I can tell you from experience, it's going to come to pass. As Clinton's bishop used to say, "With scrupulous exactitudes." It's going to be exactly the way God said it.

We can read into things what we want to read into them, but you will never be able to accuse my Father of lying to you because He's not a man that He can lie. My God who promised cannot lie (Titus 1:2). My God has shown me and proven to me that He gave me exactly what He promised me back in 1978, "You will never sit as a widow."

I might be sitting and I might be a widow, but I'm not sitting as a Bible widow. It's taken everything in



my power to keep from running laps. I've had no grief.

He asked me, "What do widows do?"

"Well, they get long faces, they look ugly, and they always want somebody to come visit with them."

He said, "Sarah, you don't have any of those requirements. Do you understand how I have fulfilled what I promised you? I didn't fulfill what you were believing for because you added to what I said. And I'm only obligated to do what I promised."

The Bible says "Hearken to the voice of the Lord." For twenty-seven years I was absolutely convinced that what God meant was, "Sarah, you will never be without a spouse. Your spouse will never die."

But when the rubber met the road and God challenged me on what He said, I had to go back and say, "No, Sir, that's not what You said. You said I'd never sit *as* a widow."

I have not had a widow's day since Clinton's departure, and don't expect to have one—because of God's promise. And God, who cannot lie, will fulfill what He has promised, not what we want to have. God supports what He promises, not what we desire.

Because of the Lord and His goodness, I am not considered poor, lonely, or afflicted. The joy of the Lord is my strength, and I found out that I like my company. I like it more when I've been able to get into the presence of Jesus without interrup-

tion. I trust in the Lord with all my heart and I don't lean to my own understanding. I'm not into hoping, I'm into trusting.

I will not be a burden to my children or to my congregation. I said, "Lord, they will never have to worry about doing anything for me, other than obeying You. If every person that I teach and preach to will just obey God, they won't ever have to give me a dime for anything, because God, the

Lord Jesus, is my source.

He kept His word to me. I've never sat a moment as a widow and I never will. My husband is asleep in Jesus. Technically, I'm a widow by the world's standards. Thanks to Him, I don't have to sit as one. I couldn't do anything about being one, but I can do something about sitting as one. That's my choice. I don't have to sit as one, depending on others to fill the void that death has made in my life. My Jesus again has supplied my every need, and He will for you also.

Widows had a tough time in Bible times. Jesus came along and He was no respecter of persons. It didn't matter whether you were a widow, whether you had a husband, whether you had 92 children—your dependency still was supposed to be on Him. That is true today. When you put your dependency on the Lord Jesus Christ, it doesn't make any difference what else goes on in your life, you can rest in the Lord and know beyond the shadow of a doubt that He is always on your side. ●



## Quiet, Calm, and Fearless

Isaiah 7:4 (NKJV)—“Take heed, and be quiet; do not fear or be fainthearted for these two stubs of smoking firebrands.”

**T**ake heed, and be quiet; do not fear.” Most people have yet to learn that these words are the keys to victory and peace when challenging situations confront them. It’s very important for us to understand that when God tells us to either “do” or “be,” He is saying, “I have empowered you to do these things.”

Furthermore, when an anointed man or woman of God tells us, “Thus saith the Lord,” the word that follows is not a suggestion for us to consider. We need to listen to the entirety of God’s message to us. It is a statement of intent. It is truth promised, and our only choice at that point is whether to obey it or to reject it.

Most of us are so highly motivated to respond to what we see, hear, taste, touch, and smell that we forget to develop our spirits. Developing our spirits takes us to a level of trust and obedience beyond our physical senses.

God sees and hears the threats of physical harm against us. He is fully aware of the enemy’s plans toward us, but God’s concern is never with the threats or the harm. He is concerned with assuring us of the outcome.

Isaiah 7:7 (NLT) says, “This invasion will never happen.” The choice, then, is ours. Will we believe His words to us? Or will we allow what we see, hear, taste, touch, or smell to dictate our reaction? Verse 9 (NIV) says, “If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all.”

*Father God, You expect us to be standing when the forces of darkness have unleashed ballistic missiles against us. Standing is what we are to do when we have done all we can do. Standing is what we are doing when the Word has been uttered.*

*I know of only one way to stand, and that is to believe Your Word. Your Word will establish me and secure me in a position that brings glory to You, that shows You for who You are. I choose to be quiet, calm, and fearless because You told me to do so. I will not lose heart. I will stand in my faith in You.*

## Rejoice in the Middle of the Mess

1 Peter 4:12 (NKJV)—*Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you.*

**T**he Bible says each trial comes “to try you.” Trials come solely to determine whether we have resolve or will cave in like a sandcastle before the first little wave at high tide.

“High tide” comes for everyone. God permits it to help us locate where we are and to discover what we need to do to stay anchored. We, the children of God, should use each new attack and event to cement our partnership “with Christ in his suffering, and afterward [we] will have the wonderful joy of sharing his glory when it is displayed to all the world” (1 Peter 4:13 NLT).

I have grown to anticipate and expect what used to surprise me. Since I now know that trials will come and I fully understand their purpose is to sway or influence me, I simply go about life as though they didn’t exist.

How can I do that? I don’t allow myself to look at the here and now, but I focus on “afterward.” Since there is the promise of “afterward,” I realize that the fiery trial cannot destroy me. Therefore, I destroy its power in my life by seeing Him who is invisible (Hebrews 11:27).

When we keep our eyes on the invisible Jesus, we keep going. What an advantage we have over the devil’s crowd! They look at what can be seen; we move towards the invisible. Though Jesus also died for them and wants them to come into the saving knowledge of the truth, unbelievers are limited to the five physical senses.

I do not ignore my physical senses. God has given them to me so I can function here in the earth. But sometimes I must go beyond what I see, hear, taste, touch, and smell. Unsaved, unregenerate people cannot consistently do that, but we believers can.

I charge you this day to begin to rejoice in the middle of the mess all around you. What you are experiencing is no surprise to your Father God. Because He is already aware of it, He has taken the necessary steps to get you through it to His promised victory. He has guaranteed it.

## A Miracle Child out of Control

Judges 16:28 (NLT)—*Then Samson prayed to the Lord, “Sovereign Lord, remember me again. O God, please strengthen me one more time so that I may pay back the Philistines for the loss of my eyes.”*

Samson was a miracle baby born to a barren mother to help fulfill God’s plan to destroy the enemy of His people (Judges 13:5). Though God called him, gave him a mission to fulfill, and anointed him to do supernatural feats, Samson was carnal, lustful, and weak in his flesh.

Samson had everything necessary to please God, but he appeared to be accountable to no one. Samson was a loner who thought he could do anything without the aid of advisors, an army, or his parents’ wisdom.

His father had asked the Lord’s angel what kind of rules should govern the boy’s life and work. He was certainly raised right. But what happened? He not only ate forbidden food from the carcass of the dead lion but also gave some to his parents (Judges 14:9). This first act of deception and disobedience began a downward spiral, which deeply plummeted when he met Delilah (Judges 16:4).

This miracle baby with supernatural gifts and upright teaching did what so many do today. He failed to practice self-control. He did not know that with all his strength, he was no match for a nagging woman. He died a hero; but even in his final prayer, he was unconcerned about his misdeeds. He only wanted revenge for others’ taking his eyesight.

God told me once, “It does not seem to matter what I do for My people—how much I anoint, bless, increase, and provide miracles for them—they still seem to fall in one of the three following areas: distortion, corruption, or compromise.”

Samson was dedicated to God as a Nazarite from birth until death. But his life was cut short because of disobedience, evil associations, yielding to temptation, carnality, and lust.

It is not good enough to have a noble beginning or a life full of miracles and the power of God in manifestation. Will our end be a sad commentary on what we could have been if we had stayed in control? Learn from Samson’s mistakes and turn from distortion, corruption, and compromise, bringing God the glory till the very end.

## Accepted and Proven

1 Corinthians 11:19 (KJV)—*For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.*

**I**n order for the people of God to be recognized as such, we must put up with others right in our midst who have not yet been proven. Our natural tendency is to get rid of everyone who is not like us. That is not God's way. He does not want us to get rid of them. He wants us to help them find what we have. He wants us to affect them with what we have that has been proven and accepted by Him.

The only way we will know who is of God is to allow Him to do His work in our midst among those who have not yet become part of the body of Christ. Every unbeliever is a potential believer. Every heathen is a potential saint. And every "enemy" is a potential brother or sister.

We are who we are today because God approved us. We need to remember that God sent Jesus to do the same for the unbelievers around us. We must never allow the heathens' heresies to distract us from being manifested among them.

You and I can never afford to hate anyone. We may hate what the heathen do contrary to God's Word and will. However, as true children of God, we do not have the option of judging, hating, or criticizing others.

God judges us. And He raises our approval rating when we love our enemies, do good to them, bless them, and pray for them (Luke 6:27).

*Father God, in Jesus' name, I say thank You that You sent the One You first approved of into the midst of the lowly place where I was, so that, as He was made manifest, I was able to glimpse light at the end of my dark tunnel. It was Your love, Your grace, and Your strength that propelled me one step at a time through that darkness until I was able to walk fully in His light, which I saw through others who demonstrated Your love to me. Thank You for manifesting Yourself to me through them. I yield myself to be a reflection of Your light to the world, in Jesus' name. Amen.*

## Abounding, Active, Divine Compassion

Ephesians 2:4-5 (KJV)—*But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved).*

**T**ry as I may, I cannot comprehend why God loved us enough to put forth the effort and energy He did to restore us to a relationship with Him in Christ Jesus. With the psalmist, I ask, “What is man, that thou art mindful of him?” (Psalm 8:4). Yet God never lost His temper with us, and He never lost His hope in us.

We humans strive to be rich in finances, but God was rich in mercy. He excelled beyond measure in divine compassion, which was active at all times for us—even when we were totally lost to Him.

God’s grace in operation gave life to us together with Christ. We had no life until God provided His grace, which bonded us with Jesus’ righteousness and bonded Jesus with our human, sinful nature. The great thing about this exchange is that our sin did not affect Him, but His righteousness made us alive and restored us to our Father God.

God brought us to Himself when we were yet heathen, and I suspect that He did it as an example of what we should learn to do for others. I don’t have a difficult time forgiving others in my heart for their words and deeds against me. However, I do find that I am not as interested in fellowshiping with them as I once may have been. When people deliberately deceive or hurt me—especially when they attempt to justify their actions and show no remorse for them—I want to pray for them at a distance. (When we hurt people, we should let them know we regret wounding them.) However, regardless what people do to us as Christians, we should follow our Father’s lead and accept them when they seek to reestablish a relationship with us.

*Father, I am aware that there is room for improvement in all of us—especially in me. Teach me how to activate Your kind of mercy and compassion. I want to show Your love—without making it appear that I am giving license to anyone to do wrong—and let it be.*

*Thank You for quickening us together with Christ. Thank You for Your grace to save us in all situations. We desire to please You.*

## Administrations Don't Affect God's Prosperity

Daniel 6:28 (NIV)—*So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.*

Every four years, the United States presidential administration is subject to change. Millions of people and dollars put the favorite candidate of a particular party in office.

I suppose it's as good a system as any for determining a leader. However, I have been troubled in the past by the abuse of the office and the tax monies extracted from the people who are supposed to benefit from the government. Officials are to be elected "by the people, for the people"; they are to bring benefit to the people they represent.

I simply have chosen not to look to other humans to do what is right or what is for the good of all. Instead, I study who God is and what He has promised His children. I do my very best to abide by His statutes, His precepts, His commandments, and His laws. And when I do, like Daniel, I am found pleasing in His sight.

I prosper financially during the reign of the Republicans, or the Democrats, or the Independents, of whoever is the current occupant of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

When God makes us to prosper, His wealth and abundance are not limited to finances. Our minds, our souls, our bodies, and all that we put our hands to shall prosper as well.

Prospering for me is pushing forward, breaking out to mightily go over, to advance, and to be promoted.

I cannot focus on money. I have watched far too many people with more money than they will ever spend become sick in their bodies, broken by families torn apart, and grieved by tragic deaths of loved ones.

People use money to do many things, but God does not need money to get the job done. Because He is God, He'll use what is available or, better yet, create a new thing to fulfill His plan and prosper His children.

*Father, I thank You for teaching me that retreat is not a word You use often, if at all. As Your child, I expect to advance and be promoted to be in a position to assist others. I may not be able to change the election, but I don't have to be negatively affected by the outcome as long as You are God.*

## Alienated and Enemies in Your Mind

Colossians 1:21 (NKJV)—*And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled.*

**I**t matters not how nice one is or if one has blended into a respectful role as a good citizen: an unregenerate, unrenewed mind separates one from God. It estranges one from the Creator. It makes one hostile, an adversary and foe of God.

This is why it is so important to receive the supreme Christ, the One whom God was pleased to send so that He could reconcile everything to Himself (Colossians 1:20).

By Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, He has made peace with all in heaven and in the earth, so that He could bring us into the very presence of God, holy, blameless, and without a single fault (Colossians 1:22).

The only way to continue in this truth is to first believe it and refuse to drift away by failing to renew your mind. What does a renewed mind do for you? Let me give you a personal application. One Thanksgiving Eve, I stopped in a supermarket to pick up a few items I needed. The lines were long, and I needed to get to a church service. I waited patiently, paid for what I purchased, and went to my car. While loading the car, I noticed the three-gallon bottle of detergent on the bottom of the cart that I had forgotten to put on the counter for checkout. The wicked mind said, "Put it in the car and forget the cost. They charge too much anyway."

I said, "No."

The wicked mind tried to continue arguing with me, but I locked my car, went back in, and went to the same cashier. I apologized for my mistake, paid, and left feeling very pleased that my works had not made me unfit to stand in the presence of my Father. There was no guilt, just joy.

The mind and the flesh will never voluntarily submit to God. In fact, following them will shorten our lives and displease God (Romans 8:6-7).

I wish at times that the war between my flesh and my spirit would cease, but Paul said it would not. But Jesus has given us the victory each time we choose to operate in what we have received through His death at Calvary (Romans 7:25).

## All Things Working Together for Us

Romans 8:28-30 (NIV)—*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.*

**W**ho we are and what we are doing are no surprise to God. He is never caught unawares. He had advance knowledge of our love for Him. He extended us an invitation for an appointment with Him pertaining to His proposed intention for us to be jointly formed, fashioned like unto, or made similar to Jesus. He placed Jesus in first place among many made in the heart of God. He rendered us innocent, esteemed us honorable, gave us dignity, filled us with His glory, and magnified us.

Are we able to validate our witness, our testimony, as Jesus did? He said, "I am not alone, but I am with the Father who sent Me. ...And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him" (John 8:16,2, NKJV).

When we do what is pleasing in our Father's sight, we, too, can say with confidence, "I am never alone." How can we be so confident that we are never alone? How would our Father know that what we are saying and doing is pleasing if He were not present with us, observing our words and deeds? Because we know He is present, observing all, we can truly testify that we are His and He is ours. This validates our witness that we are never alone. We are walking and talking at our ever-present Father's bidding.

*Father, I am persuaded that You are always present with me, and I know that You are not just idly standing by, doing nothing. I believe that You are orchestrating all things together for my good. You know I love You because You observe everything I do and say. I thank You for predetermining that I would be conformed to the image and likeness of Jesus. I don't know if I would have thought to do that on my own. I am blessed that He was made in Your heart and carried in the womb of Your chosen human vessel. You did not make a mistake in that selection; therefore, I will not question what You have decided concerning me. Help me to simply cooperate with You because it's true that You, my Father, do know best.*

## America: What About the United Part?

I love my country. Sometimes after traveling abroad, I want to kiss the ground. I honor God for allowing me the privilege of being born in America.

My only concern is that we call ourselves the United States when, in fact, we are still far from it. This wonderful country I call home will only become the United States when citizens and guests understand that unity is not something that we can legislate. Unity is not about everyone doing and being the same; it is about having a common purpose while enjoying our differences in culture, race, religion, and so forth. It is refusing to allow the differences to divide us.

I don't have to be like you to love and respect you. If our common goal is to be ambassadors for Christ here in the earth, then our message must be that of love. I don't plan to be anything but a

Christian, a believer in Jesus Christ. It is not my job to force my religion on anyone else. It is my responsibility to live my religion and share the message whenever possible to whoever will receive it. Then I must allow the power of the

**If our common goal is to be ambassadors for Christ here in the earth, then our message must be that of love.**

Holy Spirit to do the convincing and the convicting.

Love and respect for each other and the common denominator, Jesus Christ, are the only things of true worth and value.

Because of September 11, 2001, flags and banners waved everywhere saying, "God Bless America." A few said, "United We Stand," but are we united? Slogans are great, but without practical application they are, at best, motivational for the moment.

As you read this message please stop and consider what you are doing to bring unity to this country. If we really want America to be the United States and God to bless her, then each of us as individuals must (1) daily seek God's direction concerning our part to play, (2) ask Him for the heathen as a part of our inheritance, (3) represent Jesus' love to all, (4) trust the Holy Spirit to do what He does best: draw people to the one true God.

## And God Was with the Boy

Genesis 21:20 (NIV)—*God was with the boy as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer.*

**W**hen God asked Abraham to offer Isaac as a sacrifice, it was not the first time Abraham was asked to give up a son. Though it was Sarah's idea the first time, God approved it. This must have been a very painful time for Abraham. He had enjoyed a relationship with Ishmael for about fourteen years. In fact, verse 11 says, "The matter distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son." Verse 12 tells us that God Himself had to speak to Abraham to relieve his distress: "But God said to him, 'Do not be so distressed about the boy and your maidservant.'"

It takes a personal word from the Lord to rid a person of that kind of pain. He will gladly give that word to a person who is a part of His plan for the future of humankind. God's gifts and calling are never grievous. He will either rid His called ones of all pain or ease it to a bearable point.

What has God spoken to you about your loved ones? He gave Abraham a personal word concerning his firstborn. In Genesis 17:18 Abraham petitioned God concerning him: "If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!" God responded, "I have heard you: I will surely bless him." Because God had given His word, He later heard Ishmael's cry in the wilderness (21:17).

Abraham had to release this son to God with His promise to care for him. Will you do that today concerning your family? You can't make the promises of God happen for your family. God will perform what He has promised you. You may have to separate yourself from those you love, but the covenant you have with God concerning them can never be broken.

I am presently out of contact with one of my children (his choice), but the covenant promises I have with God are still intact. And "God was with the boy." God will be with your boys and your girls because you are still with Him.

You may find yourself having to make what appears to be a painful choice. Don't let it be grievous in your sight; watch God work His will in the situation. It's about trusting His promises.

## Angels on Assignment

Psalm 91:11 (NLT)—*For he orders his angels to protect you wherever you go.*

It is true that God sends His angels to protect us, but it is also conditional. Psalm 91:9-10 says, “If you make the Lord your refuge, if you make the Most High your shelter, no evil will conquer you; no plague will come near your dwelling.”

The angels of God are on assignment to protect the children of God when God is their priority, their peace, their prosperity, and their abode.

In the recent past, more fear has been unleashed in the world than at any other time that I can remember. That, in my opinion, is a good thing. Let me explain. Some believers needed to know that they had been giving lip service to faith and trust. Now they can see that. Though they may be uncomfortable doing certain things that didn't used to bother them, they can choose to resume their lives with confidence in their refuge and their shelter. They can see that God allows for them to go out and be among the living because their assigned angels will be where they are.

We cannot protect ourselves. We can refrain from foolishness and abstain from things that work against us, but our protection is God's responsibility because of Jesus' intercessory prayer for us (John 17:15).

Life is to be lived. Concern for your protection will hamper your daily selections and choices. Choose today to meet the condition set forth in God's Word guaranteeing your protection and safety. Then leave God with your choice to trust Him. He will convert that trust into a language that every angel understands.

When given the dangerous opportunity to visit the king on behalf of her persecuted people, Esther said, “If I perish, I perish” (Esther 4:16 KJV).

Do you have convictions you are willing to die for? Wouldn't you rather die than displease God? With a sincere heart, tell the Lord you love Him more than life. Commit to obeying Him even though it seems risky.

Life is too fleeting to do anything but enjoy it—not just for the pleasure it affords, but for the opportunity to join with God on behalf of others. Your angels and you are a great team.

## Anointed Music Ushers in God's Power

2 Kings 3:15 (NLT)—*"Now bring me someone who can play the harp." While the harp was being played, the power of the Lord came upon Elisha.*

I have never personally requested my husband to play the piano in order for me to flow with the power of God's Spirit, but I cannot tell you how many times during his playing the Spirit of God has moved on me and the gifts of the Spirit have begun to operate through me in order to heal the people. Other times the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, and even the gift of faith have come forth.

It is so important to have *anointed* musicians and singers, not just talented ones. When the psalmist's gift is resting on anyone with musical skills, what the person sings or plays soothes every agitation of one's flesh and creates an atmosphere for God's power to enter and supply a missing ingredient to effect change.

Of course, we all know of talented musicians—and some not so talented—who are able to play fast and loud enough to excite anyone's flesh. Some ministers travel with their personal musicians or singers so that on cue they can work the instrument in such a way that the people are in a frenzy and the minister will be remembered for leaving the crowd on "a high note."

However, when you have confidence in the message from God to the people, you can rest in the Spirit's power to do what needs to be done. My late mother-in-law, a musician and singer herself, said often, "The Spirit of God ebbs and flows. He is not always loud and fast."

I have attended certain meetings where the first song or two were fast and furious. Almost always the same thing would happen when it was time to receive the offering. Many people would give in the offering because their flesh was excited; then they went home regretting it because they gave out of emotion, not being led by the Spirit of God.

My husband and I agreed that the anointing cannot be taught; it can only be given by God to vessels of His selection. You may not be the most highly skilled musician or singer, but with God's anointing on your talent no one will care or even know the difference.

## Allow Nothing to Lure You Away from Him

Hebrews 13:9 (NKJV)—*Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them.*

**Y**ou may laugh and say, “What in the world could lure me from Jesus? I’m in this for the long haul.” We’d all like to believe this of ourselves, but I’ve seen far too many who call Jesus Lord eventually become workers of iniquity.

Recently I wrote a letter to a lady who had confessed the sin of pride and rebellion. I wanted her to know I was impressed with her for making what I know to be a painful confession. Disappointment in oneself is a sign of maturity; immature people always justify their wrongdoing.

The Bible very clearly reveals what will happen to those who are not lured away from Christ. John 14:21-24 says that the ones who keep Jesus’ commandments love Him and His Father and that He will reward their love by manifesting Himself to them, the keepers of His words.

Hebrews 13:9 says to refuse to be transported here and there with various and strange instructions. The time has come for our hearts to be confirmed and stabilized in God’s grace.

I have changed denominations a couple of times in my life. When I was thirteen, I started going to a certain church because I liked the fact that it made me accountable for my wrongdoing by requiring me to go to confession before I could receive communion. The problem was that, although I was sorry for sinning, it wasn’t difficult or uncomfortable to do it again. Oh, I said my prayers and did everything required, but I didn’t understand how unhappy I made God or that I put myself at risk with one foot in the devil’s camp and the other in God’s camp. I continued to sin, but I didn’t know the negatives in my life had their root in the sinful seeds I was sowing. If I had known, I’m sure I would have left some things alone.

We need to know that there are rewards and consequences for all that we do and say.

## Are You God's Selection?

1 Corinthians 1:27-28 (KJV)—*But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are.*

Can you imagine God being impressed with your mental acquisitions? Try to visualize Him being amazed over how much you develop your physical body. Could you ever envision Him applauding you because your name is in the social register?

I don't think so. God does not respond to us this way for such accomplishments. What I have discovered about God is that He appears to delight in taking the nothings and the nobodies and making them pleasing in His sight.

God certainly is not opposed to wisdom. He is not opposed to strength. But He loves to elevate, exalt, and promote wisdom and strength in His people. It is His delight to make something out of nothing—and to make nothing out of something.

God is displeased when His children, whom He exalts, do not totally submit to Him. He does not appreciate our thinking we are self-sufficient or our trying to be independent of Him. He really wants to be our all in every way and in everything.

He wants us to be as dependent upon Him when humans heap awards and applause upon us as we were when we were nobodies. When we are exalted, He wants us to glorify Him before everyone within viewing and hearing distance. He wants us to proclaim that He alone made us who we are today. This is what we can do to satisfy our Father.

*Father, You have decided to involve Yourself, and everything Your character stands for, with us. If we are honest, most of us know that we would never have selected ourselves to do Your bidding. But You saw and knew something about us that we are still uncovering. The talents, skills, and abilities unfolding in us continue to demonstrate Your unique kind of love for us. Help us look not at what we can see with our natural eyes, but help us keep our focus on the gifts You have deposited in us. Our desire is for You to bring out our best and to lead us to help others bring out their best. When You exalt us, we will not forget that You are the One who has done it.*

## Are You Ministering to the Right People?

Acts 18:6 (KJV)—*And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean; from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.*

**W**hen we as believers mature enough to realize that there is one plan for humankind to be saved, and that is the plan of God and not our emotional sentiment for people, all will be well.

Some people do not receive what we have to say because we are not the perfect laborers to them. We go to them, not in obedience or by the leading of the Spirit; we go because we see a need. But the Lord told me one day, "A need is not a call."

When we go to share where we are not called, we operate without the anointing or power accompanying what we say.

In Acts 18, Paul had an attitude with the Jews because they rejected his teaching the Gospel. He responded angrily, telling them that he was through with them and was therefore going to the Gentiles. Of course, we know that this resolution was unacceptable for a Jew.

When we look at this story, it seems puzzling—until we remember that Jesus never told Paul to go preach to the Jews in the first place. He specifically told him to go to the Gentiles to take them light.

Unfortunately, Paul tried to do it his way. Like many of us, Paul wanted to get this message to "his people." God doesn't think of people as "ours" and "theirs." God's attitude is that all people are from Him and, in order for them to be of Him, they, too, must hear the truth and make a choice to follow Him.

*Dear precious Father, I thank You that You are in charge of Your plan for humankind. I bless You for Your sometimes unique way of bringing me in line with Your Spirit's direction. Thank You for reminding me of Your desire for all people to be saved and to come into the knowledge of truth. Thank You for reminding me that I can't get them all saved, but I can be obedient to go where You tell me and teach what You give me to share because that is where You will be to confirm Your Word with signs following. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.*

## God Provides as He Wills

Exodus 15:27 (NKJV)—*Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees; so they camped there by the waters.*

**Y**ou have learned by now that you cannot worship the Lord when and where you want.

God's command to go into the wilderness a three-day journey and worship Him was not a suggestion. He says what He means and means what He says.

When you go beyond what He told you to do, your waters always will be bitter. Bitter water comes from being in the wrong place at the wrong time. When you miss God, admit it, repent, and keep going until He makes the next move.

"What can I do to fix it?"

Never stay in a place just because it is comfortable or convenient. If you linger too long where you're not supposed to be, you could miss His best for you. Keep going until you're back in His arms, which is your place of twelve wells and seventy palm trees.

Things could have been different for the children of Israel if they

had stopped to worship Him when He told them to. While they were not permitted to return and get it right, God's love and covenant still provided for them. They found water at Marah, but they needed God to intervene on their behalf. In fact, all they really had to do was to keep going until they reached the level of His provision.

God is committed to provide for His children. He is not short when it comes to caring for you. Never doubt Him. In this case, they never knew whether their obedience to worship Him would have produced twelve or more wells and seventy or more palm trees. It is possible their obedience and worship could have produced more.

Some of us today have settled for what we have because it is more and better than what we have had. But, is it God's best for us? Would there be more if we took the time to worship Him?

**God is committed to  
provide for His children.**

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## For Thine Is the Kingdom and the Power

Matthew 6:13 (SFDD)—*“And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”*

God uses whatever He wants to in order to keep us dependent on Him.

As I wrote this, my husband and I were aboard the largest ocean liner afloat. When we arrived to board, we were surprised to learn our suite had been upgraded, at no request of ours, and it was bigger than some apartments we had lived in. We accepted it as blessing and favor from God.

Around 3:30 a.m. on the fourth day, the alarm sounded on the oxygen tank my husband was using temporarily, indicating a power failure onboard. I had several portable oxygen tanks for my husband’s use, but they were not necessary since the power outage only lasted a few moments. However, I began to look for God in the middle of this situation.

As I attempted to resume my sleep, the Lord directed me to pray in the Spirit and reminded me that, although He had allowed us to vacation aboard the best ship afloat, that ship was dependent upon power generated by man’s ingenuity. God also let me know that we were not dependent upon the electricity on the ship to keep the oxygen tank going, but that He had given my husband his breath to breathe in the first place.

I could have allowed myself to imagine that terrorists had sabotaged the ship. Instead, I thanked God for the reminder that it’s in His power alone that I trust. I thanked Him for the time to write. I thanked Him that we could draw closer to Him, and focus on Him, His power, and His might.

You may be experiencing the biggest and best that man provides but you can’t forget, even for a second, that anything compares with God’s love, His power, His grace, and His wisdom. Keep reminding yourself.

## Charge Me or Free Me

Acts 25:27 (NKJV)—*“For it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner and not to specify the charges against him.”*

**F**estus, in talking to King Agrippa, recognized the foolishness of sending Paul as a prisoner to Caesar without specifying what he supposedly had done wrong.

Holding a prisoner indefinitely without a bona fide accusation is illegal and we each have a right to say so and appeal for justice.

Paul said in Acts 25:11, “For if I am an offender, or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying; but if there is nothing in these things which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar.”

Men may accuse you of wrongdoing. But they have to prove your wrongdoing and a group of your peers must weigh it according to the evidence and the law that is on the books. If they try anything that is not lawful, you have a right to appeal to the higher authority. You may lack funds to support an appeal by man, but no human is your judge when you become a child of God. Jesus is your judge and He has access to the Supreme Court, His Father God who is supreme.

### **Ask the Lord to show you the light at the end of the tunnel.**

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Don't despair or give up hope. Things may not be as bright now as you'd like. Remember who your advocate is and He is ever making intercession for you and me. Be innocent of all they accuse you of because God and His laws and His grace are on your side.

If you are guilty of a crime, take the bitter with the sweet. But if you are innocent, exercise your rights as a believer to trust God to do what is right by you.

The law says “charge me or free me,” so stay in Jesus' face, loving Him, reverencing Him, and rejoicing in Him until you are free to work for Him. Ask the Lord to show you the light at the end of the tunnel.

## A Handicap Must Never Be a Hindrance

Acts 22:11 (NKJV)—*“And since I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of those who were with me, I came unto Damascus.”*

**P**aul had just encountered Jesus, the One whom he so violently persecuted.

Jesus gave Paul instructions to do something. It seemed impossible to perform because he was blinded by the light of the Lord’s presence. But Paul did not make excuses, request to be exempt from, or try to figure out what to do about the direction he was to take at the command of Jesus.

**Jesus is Lord over every  
handicap you face;  
He is observing how you  
handle the handicap.**

When I hear Christians reason why they can’t obey the call of

God on their lives, I grieve for them. Jesus is Lord over every handicap you face; He is observing how you handle the handicap.

Disability can either disable you or inspire you to overcome it. Will you allow it to be a stumbling block or will it be the stepping-stone that launches you into a new life with the Lord?

Jesus is known to intervene, interrupt, and intercede concerning that which concerns us. He does all three things to help us with our assigned task. Just as you and I would not require something of our children then block them from doing it, Jesus goes before instructing His angels to aid us at every turn in the road.

One of the wisest things that I have learned is that God is on my side. He is not against me and He is not punishing me for my lack or my past. I refuse to insult the Lord of Glory by accusing Him of being anywhere but in my corner. God is able to perform what He has promised; He gave the Holy Spirit to assist you in what He has required of you.

Take a look at yourself and you may view all kinds of excuses for not succeeding in God’s call on your life. Then take a look at Jesus and accept that apart from Him you can’t succeed.

## Conscientious Objection

Psalm 35:1 (KJV)—*Plead my cause, O Lord, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me.*

**I**n my early childhood, I never started a fight. However, I never walked away from one either. A couple of times, I tried to discourage fights; but when such efforts were futile, I jumped right in the middle—and, by the way, won them all.

Even though I was never beaten, I always felt a sense of loss because I never enjoyed one single fight. In fact, I secretly hated fights. I didn't like feeling as if I needed to protect myself from other people. I really liked most of the people I fought and wanted to be their friend, but I didn't know about the grace of God and His power within me to trust Him for my protection.

I still don't like the feeling of needing to protect myself. The difference is that now I know to ask the One who bought me at a high price to plead my cause with those who strive with me. Because the Creator of the universe is my Lord, I ask Him to fight for me.

He does it in the most unusual and unique ways. He challenges me to love them, to bless them, to do good to them, and to pray for them (Luke 6:27). And before I know it, my former opponents become my friends, members of the same family, God's family.

Sometimes my personality doesn't mesh with certain people's personalities, so I try to avoid contact with those people until His fruit is further developed in me. However, whether our personalities mesh or not, God requires me to love, bless, do good to, and pray for them.

*Father, please forgive me for the many times I handled matters in the flesh. Thank You for teaching me that I may be called into the war, but I never have to fight the battle. When I have opportunities to protect myself at the risk of harming another, You provide me with the choice to refuse to defend myself because You protect and correct me. I may be drafted into the service, and I may be in the war; but as a conscientious objector, I refuse the use of all weapons that are carnal because I have mighty ones through You.*

## Disaster and Distress: Stopped in Their Tracks

Jeremiah 15:11 (NIV)—*The Lord said, “Surely I will deliver you for a good purpose; surely I will make your enemies plead with you in times of disaster and times of distress.”*

**W**ouldn't we just love it if evil, affliction, disaster, and distress never knocked at our door? But that is not a real story, and there is nothing we can do to prevent these unwanted and unwelcome visitors.

We should be more concerned about what to do when they do occur. The key is always finding out what “the Lord said” in His Word, then what He has spoken to our hearts, for Jesus said, “The words I have spoken to you are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63).

God does not just deliver us. He said “it shall be well” for His people of the old covenant. Therefore, it shall certainly be well for those of us with a better covenant.

If I am concerned about my own protection, safety, and prosperity, it is an indication that I don't trust my Creator, that I believe I can do better for myself than He can.

The Holy Ghost Rescue Squad is always on duty for God's children. Too often, we don't recognize Him because we believe we know better what is best for us and we think deliverance can only come according to our plans and desires.

First of all, God delivers us for a “good” purpose. Instead of pleading with the enemy for favor and mercy, God will turn the disaster and distress around so that those opposing God's plan for our lives will plead with us. He will entreat the enemy for us, and they will do us well.

We may not be able to prevent the enemy's weapons from forming, but faith in our God will prevent them from pushing forward in our lives. The enemy's attacks to prevent us from fulfilling our purpose will not affect our lives.

*Dear Father, protector and provider, thank You for reassuring me that I am always on Your mind. Without my cooperation, nothing can prevent my deliverance from disaster and distress. I can truly trust You with my life because You had my purpose planned and laid out before I was formed in my mother's womb. Thank You for reminding me often how much You care for me and that You desire to work with and through me to complete Your plans and purpose for humankind.*

## Disciples Look to Give Up, Not Just Get

Luke 14:33 (KJV)—*So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.*

God does not need anything we have, but He will use everything we submit to Him. He is not trying to extract from us. He wants to bless and multiply what we sow, as 2 Corinthians 9:10 reveals: “Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness.”

The benefits and rewards of total commitment to the Lord far exceed our ability to comprehend. I don’t understand the laws of increase. I know Matthew 13:8 says, “But others [seed] fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty” (NKJV). Why, if I sow a kernel of corn, am I subject to get a stalk with at least three ears on it with hundreds of kernels on them? I don’t understand, but I don’t have to; I just need to enjoy it.

Psalm 103:2 says, “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.” The word “benefits” here means *good treatment, bountiful dealings, and recompense*. I will never forget the benefits of forsaking all and becoming my Lord’s disciple. When I became truly serious about the things of God, I had accumulated and acquired a large number of material things and creature comforts. I don’t recall God asking me to give up anything to come to Him. He said, “Come as you are.” I did because I wanted Him in His totality. I never knew I was operating a spiritual principle. I only knew that all that I had did not thrill me the way one moment in His presence did.

Men and women in the world have risked everything for a few seconds of thrill and have reaped regrets for a lifetime. I have never once regretted accepting the opportunity to be Christ’s disciple.

*Father, I thank You that I know for certain that nothing compares with being Your child. Nothing matches the wonderful benefits of making Your lifestyle my lifestyle. May my words and deeds be a living epistle, for I may be the only Bible some ever see. Bless You for counting me worthy to serve others as You direct, in Jesus’ name.*

## Don't Sign for Them

Isaiah 54:14 (KJV)—*In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee.*

**I**n righteousness we will be established; we will not be oppressed; we will not fear; we will not be terrorized; harm will not come near us.

One of the words for righteousness is justice. Another is prosperity. In righteousness we can expect to be confirmed and fixed in what is just and what is prosperous.

In righteousness injury, distress, cruelty, fraud, and things deceitfully gained shall keep a considerable distance from us because they are oppressive. Violence and violation are not our lot in life.

In righteousness fear is not an option for us as believers. Ruin, consternation, destruction, and dismay are not a part of our benefits.

As a matter of fact, none of these things can come even close to us when we know what has been written and refuse to accept the enemy's packages. These things may have our names on them, but God did not send them. Therefore, if we will not sign for them, they have to be returned to the sender: the devil.

I am somewhat fed up with people telling me, "That's life," when attacks are launched against me. Oh, I know difficult situations come, but bless God I refuse to accept them as a part of my life. I may not be able to prevent them from happening, but I sure am not going to just sit still and have the devil dump his garbage in my lap and on my head. He can't violate me at his will. I plan to protest every time, using the written Word as my defense. I expect to be fixed and confirmed in righteousness, which is from God. I will not settle for deceit, destruction, and dismay.

Every good and every perfect gift comes down from the Father above, and He does not change (James 1:17). I choose righteousness; I choose His good and perfect gifts.

*Father, help us to see that our supreme weapon is knowledge of Your Word and the commitment to act on it regardless of the circumstances around us. You have done Your part in promising us. Our job is now to believe and act as if every word is so, because it is. Thank You for caring enough to provide, in Jesus' name.*

## Establishing What You Decree

Job 22:28 (KJV)—*Thou shalt also decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee: and the light shall shine upon thy ways.*

**W**e've all heard how important words are and that there is no such thing as a powerless word. At the same time, there are unproductive words that are not at all beneficial to us because they're not divinely inspired nor do they foster God's plan for our lives. Since we have the power to decree and establish things, every word we utter needs to line up with the Bible to bring about God's best in our behalf.

My mother used to say, "Idle hands are the devil's workshop." Worse than that, I believe idle words are the devil's personal arsenal to destroy God's people. We may be able to unproductively sit on our hands, but we cannot sit on our words once we've spoken them. Words roam around unbridled in the atmosphere until they accomplish what they were sent to do. That is one reason it's so important to say, "I'm sorry" or "Please forgive me." We can't even call words down until we have repented for releasing them.

Most people in the ministry are criticized at some point or another, and as much as your flesh will want to retaliate, don't do it! What you decree to another will be established first in you. Even though these spokesmen obviously don't understand the power of their words, what they say about you they actually decree for themselves. When you touch God's anointed ones with unkind, ungodly, and vicious words, you release a negative force that will hunt you down as though it were a heat-seeking missile.

We stand on dangerous ground when we decree negatively about other people. Romans 14:4 (NLT) says, "Who are you to condemn God's servants? They are responsible to the Lord, so let him tell them whether they are right or wrong."

While we never condone wrong, we also need to make sure that while we encourage others to do right, our words concerning them do not in turn act as judge and jury and then condemn us. Remember—what we decree will be established to, for, or against us.

## Except

1 Kings 15:5 (NIV)—*For David had done what was right in the eyes of the Lord and had not failed to keep any of the Lord's commands all the days of his life—except in the case of Uriah the Hittite.*

David's habit of obeying God's commandment had to have counted for something, because what he did to Uriah was not a good thing (see 2 Samuel 11). David certainly paid a price for this one transgression; however, only God could judge graciously in this situation.

David did what was right—"except...." Don't you wish the word "except" weren't in our vocabulary? My mother used to say, "Girl, you are like an old cow. You give a good pail of milk; then you turn and kick it over." She never had to explain it; we all understood that she meant that there is no profit in doing most things right but making occasional blunders.

Before Jesus came into our hearts, all of us had a lot of "excepts" that should be behind us now. However, "except" still seems to surface.

We come to the assembly to worship the Lord, *except* we are distracted by the lack in our lives or by someone not speaking to us. We commit to tithe, *except* a bill comes due or a certain garment goes on sale or we need to pay to go on a special trip with the church.

Listen to people talk long enough, and you can locate why the blessings of God are not overtaking them. There are just too many "excepts" in their walk with the Lord. In their eyes, they are doing a lot of good and right things—*except* they forget to confer with the Lord concerning people and choices in their lives.

We come to church every Sunday and Wednesday, *except* we seldom arrive on time. We are appointed the noble task of counting offerings in church service collections, *except* we gossip about how much someone tithes.

Can you imagine God loving the world so much and knowing what was required to restore people to Himself, *except* He could not bear to send His only begotten Son to the cross to accomplish the task?

Don't leave this life having sacrificed and done so much for the kingdom, *except* that most people will remember the one thing you did wrong when your story is told.

## Excessive Baggage Will Cost You

Genesis 14:14 (NLT)—*When Abram learned that Lot had been captured, he called together the men born into his household, 318 of them in all. He chased after Kedorlaomer's army until he caught up with them in Dan.*

Airlines inform each passenger of the amount of luggage allowed on each trip for the price of the ticket. However, a person can bring as much as he or she is willing to pay for. In other words, everything over the predetermined allowable amount becomes the customer's responsibility.

Had Abram left Lot behind, as God told him to do, then he would not have had to concern himself over the weight of his excess baggage. He would not have been responsible for his safety and care.

Cute little puppies grow into large dogs. Children who plead for a puppy need to understand their responsibility for the dog. Parents rob them of a very important piece of maturity when they release them from the responsibility of their choice.

These same children whose parents rob them of such learning experiences may fail later in life to support and care for their own children, especially those born out of wedlock. When parents assume the responsibility of the puppy-turned-dog, they can expect to do the same for the infant-turned-teenager.

My mother made it very clear who would support any babies brought home to whom she didn't give birth. When I bore a child out of wedlock at age twenty-five, I had my own apartment, worked every day, and paid for the baby-sitter, my baby's food, clothing, and medical care. And I did it without the help of welfare. Why? It was because I understood that my son was my responsibility for my moment of lustful pleasure. Guess what? That infant was the last one I bore out of wedlock!

What has God spoken to you in His Word? Any violation of His Word will carry with it consequences and responsibilities. Have you counted the cost? Are you discouraged because your paycheck has sprouted wings? Check to see how much excessive baggage you have brought onboard. Did you say, "But that is my child, grandchild, or other family member?" We must be responsible for our decisions, and require others to do the same. It will cut down on the excess.

## Faith Alone Is Useless

James 2:20 (NLT)—*Fool! When will you ever learn that faith that does not result in good deeds is useless?*

I was spoon-fed teaching about living by faith. Still today, I believe every word and am grateful for it.

As Martin Luther discovered one day while reading the Scriptures that the just shall live by faith, I discovered one day that the just who are learning to live by faith must produce good deeds to accompany it. Otherwise, their faith is useless.

I smiled when people looked at me and said, "You and your husband always seemed to be walking above the evil in this world." That was not true at all. Perhaps our approach toward unwelcome circumstances was different from others', but my husband and I were certainly not immune to adversity.

Take, for instance, the year 2001. It was a great year for us, despite some adverse circumstances.

Our youngest son, who had been working on floor 103 of the World Trade Center South building suddenly changed jobs a few months before the September 11 terrorist attacks and experienced only the dust of the damage in his hair and on his clothes.

My husband, a dialysis patient for three and a-half years, suddenly announced to a guest in our home that God had things for him to do and that he could not do them on dialysis. Less than fifteen hours later, a member of our church called to say that she was donating one of her kidneys to him; she was a perfect match. While Clinton was receiving his new kidney, I led 1,200 people in a three-and-a-half-hour praise service. Then, four years later, Clinton fell asleep in Jesus.

Then we were blessed to be able to assist an acquaintance with a large sum of money to help her pay a growing hospital bill resulting from her husband's illness.

Later I was blessed to be able to give my Aunt Vi a large eighty-fifth birthday celebration and a trip to Alaska, where she saw the glaciers she had once taught and read about. Soon afterwards, although she was fine one day, she was deceased the next.

Through it all, I continued to love and praise my Lord as I committed to serving Him more. So, you see, I am not immune. I just mix good deeds with my faith and refuse to lose my joy over the difficult moments.

## Fear Leads to Slavery: Faith Results in Freedom

*Exodus 14:12 (KJV)—Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.*

**H**ow many times have we asked God to remove our burdens or alter our circumstances and conditions and then complained about how difficult life was after He answered and how satisfied we were before He intervened?

Generally speaking, we humans are not honest. For instance, the Israelites hated Egypt and what it was doing to them. Then, after God had miraculously delivered them, they said they wanted to go back. Failing to recognize their God-given deliverance, they became afraid and started to blurt out less than the real truth; they became dishonest in their appraisal of life.

God does not deliver because we cry out to Him. He delivers because our season for bondage is over. Long before the Israelites were in Egypt, God told Abraham they would be slaves there for 400 years. The human keepers of the clocks neglected to keep accurate time, so they didn't recognize it was time to go. How they were to go and Pharaoh's army pursuing them should not have concerned them or caused them to lie.

Moses didn't comment on their complaints. He simply walked in his authority and said, "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will shew to you to day" (v. 13).

Slave mentality, as the Israelites demonstrated, results from fear of a person. Our freedom arises from faith in another person, Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God. Our days of bondage are already over in Christ, but we may still have to cross some spiritual Red Seas. We may hear the sound of the enemy as we go, but he is always behind and unable to overtake us even when we stop in our tracks. Our job is to fear not and to stand in place.

*God does not need our assistance to deliver us. He needs us to help deliver others, expecting to see His deliverance, aid, victory, prosperity, health, help, and welfare—salvation.*

*Today, following the required season, expect to be free.*

## Father or Taskmaster?

Hebrews 5:8 (NIV)—*Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered.*

**B**eing children of God does not force us to obey. Our relationship with the Father through His Son, Jesus, does not force us to lead holy lives or to love unconditionally. We do not earn points with God by doing the right thing.

God does not require us to do anything to gain His love. According to Romans 8:39 (NIV), nothing can remove us from God's love: "Neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

We need to learn to live in obedience because of who we are—not because of a dream of who we would like to be.

God presents us with the privilege of working with Him by sending opportunities our way. Some are more comfortable than others, but He needs us to do all of them. Nevertheless, as His children, we are never to see our loving Father as a taskmaster. A taskmaster oppresses, taxes, drives, harasses, and tyrannizes those subordinate to him. In contrast, God has made us equal with Him. Philippians 2:6 says, "...[Jesus] thought it not robbery to be equal with God." Why should we?

The Greek word here for "equal" means *similar in amount or kind; like*. God is a spirit; so are we. God creates and destroys things with His words; so do we. God has dominion and authority over the devil; so do we.

*Precious Father, I am so glad that You are a loving Father and not one who drives me and makes me do his will. You have given me a free will, and I choose to be obedient to You. I will never regret that choice. As a part of the body of Christ, I do not consider it robbery to be equal with You, because it was Your sovereign decision to make me similar to You.*

*My prayer is that Your Word sown in me and Your love demonstrated to me will be constant reminders that You are ever mindful of me, Your creation. My desire to work with You brings me pleasure. I live in adoration of You at all times.*

## Follow God's Decision, Regardless

Joshua 1:2 (KJV)—*Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel.*

**J**oshua 1:2 tells us that Moses was dead, but God's covenant plan for His people was not. One of the difficulties in the church today is that sometimes people bond with their human leaders and, when their leaders stop marching forward for whatever reason, the followers refuse to go on with God's selection for the next phase of His plan.

Leaders should not cause people to bond with them. Instead, they should constantly encourage others' union with Jesus. When they do this, the people will continue with Jesus even if death, illness, or adversity comes to their leader.

A ministry built around a man or a woman is designed to fail. In order to stand, a ministry must have Jesus as its foundation.

God selects servants to do various, specific works on the earth. He may use one servant to bring you out of bondage, but it is His privilege to use another to take you into His promises. The key is to keep your focus on the One who is infallible, because people die. Yet the job is not over until God says it's over, and it's not going to be over until His people are positioned and secured as He has promised.

We should respect and honor the office of every leader whom God has ordained, but only the person of Jesus Christ should be revered. If leaders cause people to revere them or to become attached to them personally, they cease to be the friends of the Bridegroom.

Christ alone is worthy of all glory. Therefore, we as His representatives in the earth must work at instructing the people we lead to keep their eyes not on us but on the real prize, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the Son of the living God.

*Dear Father God, we love You and we revere You. May Your precious Holy Spirit prompt us to stay steady with Jesus our Lord so that when a foreign or false teacher arises to entice us to learn untruths, we will recognize that the spirit in that person is not of You. All of Your leaders will train and instruct the people to follow You because You alone lead us into Your Promised Land.*

## Follow His Example Daily

1 Peter 2:21-23 (NIV)—*To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.*

**M**y Father has already laid out His perfect plan for my life. He has predestined and called me to conform to His image. Christ is my example to follow. This is my destiny; I simply must learn to cooperate with it.

I must begin by eliminating sin from my life. Truth must become my every word. I cannot do unto others as they do unto me. I am to bless, not threaten, those with attitudes and opinions that oppose my own. I must forget about committing my opponents to the Lord. Instead, *like Jesus*, I must entrust myself to my Father because He is just and fair, and His judgment is right and profitable to me.

Every day is a gift from my Father. Unless Jesus returns today, it will simply be another day of opportunities and challenges. What I do with these will determine what this day will mean to me. As a servant of the Most High, I simply want to use this day to spread the Gospel, let God be God, and invite the Holy Spirit to do what He has been sent to do.

I believe I have lived long enough now to fully realize that God is not going to change. But following in His Son's footsteps will change me. I can choose to conform to His image, and the end result will please my Father.

*Precious Father, loving, kind, and gracious Lord of all, I do not have an inkling of the magnitude of what You are about to do in the earth. However, I sense that You alone are capable of accomplishing it and that, ultimately, I will benefit from it. For that I thank You. Today I make a conscious choice to entrust myself to You for care, keeping, and consolation as I need them. Continue to reveal to me daily what part I am to play in building Your kingdom. Today I submit to You my actions, my words, my thoughts, and my attitude. Do what You feel is important to lead me and guide me in Jesus' steps so that all I say and do will also be an example for others to follow.*

## For a Witness

Isaiah 55:4 (KJV)—*Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.*

**T**his verse says God gave Jesus “for a witness.” As members of the body of Christ, we are to represent Him in the earth. Each of us is given “for a witness.”

It is interesting to watch even the newest of believers get excited about witnessing to others—and that is a good thing to do. However, God has commanded each of us to *be* a witness (Acts 1:8). Anyone can witness and give out tracts. But to be a witness is to live what you are talking about, to allow your lifestyle to testify when words are unuttered.

In addition to Jesus’ being given for a witness to the people, He was also given for a leader to the people. Leaders always stand boldly in front. We Christians, too,

must stand boldly in front of the people, in a place of influence.

The anointing for a believer to lead will attract others to follow; therefore, the believer’s example for them should be the same as Jesus’ example, which never caused anyone to stumble or fall.

Finally, Jesus was given as a commander. He was appointed for a message. The message was not just what He said; it was what He did. He said, “I only do what is pleasing to the Father. I didn’t come to do My will, but to do the will of Him who sent Me.”

Our greatest sermon will not be what we utter, but what others see us do, especially when all the forces of hell are raging against us.

*Lord, I know what it is like to live contrary to Your will and, gratefully, I know what it is like to live pleasing in Your sight. I refuse to think about how far I still need to go to get it totally together, because I’d become discouraged. I’d much rather meditate on how far I’ve come with You to be a witness for the kingdom. Help me remember that You have given me, along with Jesus, for a witness to the people—an up-front woman, an example, and a message that is better seen than heard. Thank You again for including me in Your plan for such a time as this.*

**To be a witness is to live what you are talking about, to allow your lifestyle to testify when words are unuttered.**

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## Foreign Lands Are the Place to Sing

Psalm 137:4 (KJV)—*How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?*

**T**he writer of this psalm did not have what we have and who we have to stimulate us to sing while we find ourselves in a strange setting. However, rejoicing is not a feeling we have; it is an attitude we choose.

Do you want to be released, liberated, and made free? The more foreign the place, the louder your song should be.

Look at Paul and Silas: At midnight they prayed and sang praises unto God, and the prisoners heard them (Acts 16:25).

I have learned this lesson. Flying from Toronto to New York with bolts of lightning and four tornado cones all about is a very foreign land. I began to sing loudly, "In the name of Jesus, I have the victory." My husband, a much better singer, joined me—so we had agreement. The devil didn't notice the quality of our singing voices; all he heard was believers believing. We landed safely without incident or accident.

The world can and will sing when the winds of adversity aren't blowing, when the rain has ceased to cause a flood, and the howls of the storm are no longer raging. But our glorious relationship with God through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, our Helper, provides for us the ability to focus on what we see spiritually beyond what is physically visible.

What's the point of having a treasure if we are going to live as paupers? The treasure of praise, prayer, and songs is given to us to comfort us in foreign lands. Foreign lands may not have been on our travel itineraries, but if we travel long enough and refuse to be limited, we most likely will find ourselves in some unfamiliar, unlikable places.

In foreign places where the devil is releasing his elite demons to destroy our morale and confidence in our Redeemer, we should make it our goal to absolutely confound him by singing our songs of Jesus and our heavenly homeland.

Today, choose to sing. While your location may not have changed, the Lord Jesus will give you the song to sing that will effect your sudden liberation. Stay steady with your song wherever you are. Help is on the way.

## For You, I Am He

Isaiah 46:3-4 (NIV)—*“Listen to me...you whom I have upheld since you were conceived, and have carried since your birth. Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you.”*

**G**od shared these words to encourage the house of Jacob, but they speak to my heart also. And what a surge of confidence I receive along with them!

When I look back on days past and remember the many times the forces of darkness tried to take over my life to destroy it, I know God was there. I can come up with no earthly reason for being who I am and where I am today, so I know that all along God has been on the case and working all things together for my good (Romans 8:28). Knowing this, I want to cry and rejoice at the same time.

You might say that God, the Creator of the universe, is my personal caseworker. He did not start on my case when I arrived here on the day of my birth; He has upheld me since I was conceived. He picked me up and carried me, even though at times I tried to wiggle out of His arms.

Now that the time has gone by and my hair is frosted with years of living, I can see that He has always been there, sustaining and maintaining me.

*Lord, I am so glad that You have not become weary from the weight and load of carrying me. Thank You for reminding me that You made me; You carried me all these years; and You will continue to be my all in all. “Everything I am and ever hope to be, I owe it all to Thee.” Your grace has performed this miracle in my life and, according to Your Word, has been sufficient for me.*

*May I never again long for the unreachable when it is You who kept me from it because it was not Your best for me. In the future, may I never struggle with what life brings my way; but, instead, may I remember that the “I Am” of the Bible brought me through the things of the past. And You have done a pretty good job—especially with what I have given You to work with. For me, You are He who has rescued and sustained me, and I will serve You alone.*

## God Needs Your Help

Jeremiah 10:12 (NIV)—*But God made the earth by his power; he founded the world by his wisdom and stretched out the heavens by his understanding.*

**D**on't let this verse cause you to think that you are not valuable and precious to God. On the contrary, He loved His world, its orderly arrangement, its decoration, and its inhabitants so much that He sent His only begotten Son to reclaim it all.

We often read John 3:16 with the impression that Jesus died at Calvary to provide for humans' salvation. That is true, but it is just a part of what that verse means.

God, who made the earth with His power, had assigned its care and keeping to His creation, humans. They forfeited their right to rule it, and that rule had to be restored to humans by a human. This is why Jesus came.

God's wisdom and understanding founded the world and expanded the heavens. We are His workmanship, His product, His fabric, created unto good works. "He creates each of us by Christ Jesus to join him in the work he does, the good work he has gotten ready for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10 MsgB).

God is sovereign, and nothing is impossible to Him. He can even love us, who were once His enemies. Amazingly, He can once again trust us to rule His world according to His plan.

Every day of my life, I wonder why God would use me for anything. When I think about it, I am breathless and my heart takes on a different beat.

*Father, though I may not have a definitive answer why You work with me and include me in what You do, I suspect it has something to do with love—Your kind of love. I wonder each day about Your selecting me as a servant, and I find that it inspires me to be more tolerant and less critical of others. It teaches me to try to find the best in them.*

*You certainly may be able to do almost everything without me, but I am convinced that You need my help in one area—and that is with me. I'm sure if You could have straightened me out by Yourself, You would have done it by now. But You need my effort and cooperation in this one. And together, we will do it.*

## God's Plan Includes Great Substance

Genesis 15:13-14 (KJV)—*He said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.*

I'm sure God could have blessed Abram without promising that his seed would serve another nation for 400 years. But He chose to do it this way. What excites me is that when "He said unto Abram," it did not take Abram by surprise.

This principle has helped me considerably when determining whether my circumstance is a result of God's plan or my choice to ignore His warning or promise.

Genesis 15:6 says God counted as righteousness Abram's belief in His promise of an heir. What, then, was Abram to do with the part of the promise that said his seed would be slaves? Abram, like you and me, couldn't just take the part of the promise he wanted to and ignore the remainder. Once he was told that his seed would be strangers in a land not their own, he was responsible to accept it and teach his children and his children's children so there would be no surprise.

Yes, every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father above (James 1:17). But the same Father works all things together for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).

If you're in the middle of a difficult situation, then resist and rebuke the devil all you want to—unless God has told you that this, too, must be fulfilled. However, instead of making the 400 years of bondage the message, focus on "afterward shall they come out with great substance."

I don't like exercise; but I accept it because I know the desired results are inches and pounds worked off. I focus on the conclusion, not the "punishment." This helps me pass the candy dish, saying, "You are not worth it," and give the sweet potato pie to someone else who wants it. The great substance in God's plan for me is not increased pounds and inches; therefore, I accept His promise concerning temperance, temptation, and abstinence. When I choose to have what I want, I will have to learn to live with what I have!

## God, I Trust You With This Trial

1 Corinthians 10:13 (NLT)—*But remember that the temptations that come into your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can't stand up against it. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you will not give in to it.*

Once I learned that the tests, trials, and temptations that visited me were not unique in themselves, although unfamiliar to me, I chose to discover how others approached and handled them. I discovered that most victors started with a choice not to settle for defeat. They went on to understand that retaliation was not always possible, but a victim's mentality was. Furthermore, they chose not to be victims.

We are always discussing the benefits of trusting God. But our trusting God is not the issue. The important thing is how much He can trust you and me.

A famous seafood chain used to air a television commercial showing a mannequin with its arm upheld and holding a plate of shrimp. A tester tried to place thirty shrimp on the plate to see how many the mannequin could hold. The thirtieth shrimp caused the mannequin to spill the plate and its arm to fall off, which gave the tester the figure he needed to say how much was too much.

Aren't you glad that God, unlike the tester in this commercial, does not have to allow injury to occur to us before He says, "That is enough"? The reason He permits the trial at all is that the original sin diminished our trust, the very thing that enabled us to communicate with and rely on Him for anything and everything. Therefore, God is trying to give us lessons in leaning on Him.

Be encouraged to know that the trial you are in will not destroy you; it is not new or original. God permits it because He trusts you so much and He wants you to become confident in your life with Him so that your daily walk will become joyful.

Make a choice today to believe that as God's child, you are so special that He trusted you with the present trial. It is not meant to destroy you. It is designed to motivate you to move forward in God's plan for your life. Have as much confidence in your God as He has in you as His child. Trust Him as He has trusted you, and neither of you will be surprised or disappointed.

## Grace: One of God's Gifts

1 Corinthians 1:3 (KJV)—*Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*

**W**hat is this gift of grace that God and Jesus give us, and why do we need it? It is the divine influence upon the heart and its reflection in life.

Because the human heart is capable of so much good and bad, it needs help. Every heart needs to be divinely influenced. Without divine influence on our hearts, we would never get saved. Even if, by some miracle, we did get saved, without divine influence on our hearts, we would reflect a life that was displeasing to God and that certainly would not

attract others to Jesus. Without divine influence on our hearts, we would never experience any kind of peace. We

would not enjoy any blessings without God and Jesus pouring into us the grace and peace needed in all seasons.

Although we do have this wonderful divine influence in our hearts and we do not have to labor and struggle for it, it is not automatically going to operate and flow. Our hearts are like wells. People whose water source is a well must draw from it daily. The well may be full of water, but someone has to dip it out for the well to fulfill its purpose. Similarly, our heart wells are full of God's grace, His mercy, and His peace, but without dipping daily for them, we will miss their purpose in our lives.

We don't get new grace any more than we get new air to breathe. Even though it is stored in the wells of our hearts, we need to go boldly to the throne to obtain the mercy and grace that we need for each day (Hebrews 4:16).

*Father, our desire is to operate in Your grace, to extend Your mercy, and to live in Your peace. Teach us to dip daily into the wells of our hearts, which You have filled, so that we will be a reflection of what You have already done in us.*

*Your grace is sufficient for us to share the overflow with others. You give such good gifts, even when we have not appeared to be appreciative. We really are grateful, and we will be more mindful to show it in the future.*

**Without divine influence on our hearts, we would never get saved.**

## Greedy Men Do Not Prosper

Proverbs 28:25 (NIV)—*A greedy man stirs up dissension, but he who trusts in the Lord will prosper.*

I heard a wife say that her husband was telling her what he wanted for his approaching birthday. Her response was “Aren’t you ever going to be satisfied?” He answered, “Probably not.” The tragedy here is that this person has all the creature comforts anyone could ask for, but it was not enough. He always wanted more.

Usually when greedy adults do not get another new toy when they want it, they begin to pout like children. Strife and dissension usually follow people of greed. Their hearts are proud, and they stop trusting in the Lord for their prosperity because they think the things they have acquired are a sign that God is prospering them. However, anyone who no longer trusts God is not a prosperous person. I hurt and grieve for people who fail to trust God for all they need and desire.

Uncertain and beautiful riches flee without warning. The reason is that wisdom has departed, and where there is no wisdom there is no reverence of God.

I once read the book written by Jim Bakker titled *I Was Wrong*. In it, he reveals that the fall of the PTL empire was not just the result of the sin of adultery; it began with his entertaining the thought to spite his wife.

Most of us can trace the downfall of things in our lives back to an unwise choice to do something without conferring with the Lord. Then we compound the problems of sin by trying to conceal it instead of confessing it. Proverbs 28:13 says, “He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.”

*Lord, God of the universe, I have been the chiefest among sinners, and in my flesh there is no good thing dwelling. However, I want to say thank You for showing me that all of my stupidity will be forgiven when I confess and forsake my wrongdoing. My prosperity begins with trusting You enough to admit to what I have done because You already know. Failing to share what I have done is saying that You won't know if I don't speak of it. That is the height of ignorance. Thank You for prospering me and giving me mercy, in Jesus' name.*

## Guarded Hearts and Minds

Philippians 4:6 (KJV)—*Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.*

**N**ot one necessary or desired thing in this life should cause you and me to become anxious or antsy. We are to be full of care for *nothing*. But in everything (not *for* everything) by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, we are to share our requests with God.

In the calmness of comfortable circumstances and in the tumult of uncomfortable ones, pray and supplicate (petition). And don't forget to give thanks for the request—not when it manifests, but when you request it.

Over the years, I have experienced the thrill of rejoicing in the peace of God while awaiting the arrival of a request. In fact, the more I give thanks as I wait, the more it appears that the waiting time decreases. I act as if I already have the thing once I've prayed, and I give thanks. When it appears, I have moved on to something else because I have been enjoying the petition by faith all the time.

How can this be so? When I offer up thanksgiving by faith, knowing I am praying God's promises, His peace enters. It becomes a sentinel, a guard, a sentry over both my heart and my mind. My head refuses to doubt it, and my heart becomes fixed and settled on it.

*Most precious Father, I am so glad that everything You have promised me is already done. When You first spoke life, healing, prosperity, and wholeness into Your people, they were put in motion towards me as Your child. My petition and thanksgiving for every one of Your promises make it a done deal.*

*I renounce and reject any thoughts or words that seek to disrupt and disturb my tranquility. Calvary provided me peace because Christ bore all my anxiety on Golgotha's tree. The Godhead alone occupies space in my mind; there is no room for worry. "I will trust in him and not be afraid. The Lord God is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation" (Isaiah 12:2 NLT).*

*My heart longs to please You and You alone. I work with other people, but all of my effort is for You. You are good, You are merciful, and I love You.*

## Hiding Place

Psalm 32:7 (NLT)—*For you are my hiding place; you protect me from trouble.*

**T**his verse is not telling us that God is gathering up all of His children to protect them from the “big, bad devil.” If that were true, then most of us would not be considered saved because we experience trouble—and at times in large quantities.

No. Jesus prayed in John 17:15 not that we would be taken out of this world but that we would be kept from the evil. The word “evil” here means *hurtful influence*. Whatever takes place in this world we live in, Jesus asked God that our character not be affected by the wicked one’s influence to the point of our being hurt by it.

The time has come for the body of Christ to rise up and say, “Devil, I challenge you to shoot your biggest shot because I have decided to walk in my authority and God’s grace, which is sufficient to sustain me in the middle of your onslaught.”

Calvary did not promise me prevention from persecution and problems. It provided for me power to resist, power to withstand, and power to move forward and pursue my Father’s every provision through Jesus Christ.

The way to demonstrate the devil’s defeat in your life is not to pray and ask God to hide you. Israel needed God to hide them because they were still looking for their Deliverer. Glory to God, I am looking for His return to take me home with Him. But in the meantime, He left His Holy Spirit to empower me to stand when things are falling all around me.

He authorized me to come against the very gates of hell with His Word and with confidence that He and all of heaven will back His Word. Jesus is not backing me. He is backing His Word spoken through me.

Stop praying to God for deliverance. Ask Him for His sustaining grace in the midst of the “mess.” He delights to hear prayers, petitions, and confident words from His offspring. If Israel could be surrounded with songs of victory after being hidden and protected from trouble, how much more should we be able to sing with gusto as we walk right through the enemy’s territory victoriously?

## Happiness: The Byproduct of Trusting God

Proverbs 16:20 (KJV)—*He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good: and whoso trusteth in the Lord, happy is he.*

It appears that the good things in life make us happy. Most of these good things are external, and there is nothing wrong with external good things—as long as we don't become addicted to them for our real happiness.

Any happiness we have that is based on external goods is short-lived. We need more and more to make us happy, until it seems as if we are in constant pursuit of happiness. It is never permanent but always illusive and fleeting.

I used to be on this unceasing hunt for happiness. Then one day, after having prayed the "Ephesians Prayer" (Ephesians 1) over myself for a period of time, I began to better understand God's Word. I could see more clearly His plan for my life and my role as His child in the total plan for humankind.

I discovered that, in the midst of a deteriorating society in which moral decay had seeped through the cracks of life, I was in better control—not of the world, but of its effect on me and on the things that concerned me. I realized that wisdom to handle matters as they surfaced was more valuable than silver and gold. Good began to surface in my life from all angles and every avenue. Even the pressures, temptations, and everyday tests of life did not throw me off balance.

I didn't like everything that happened, but I purposed to fix what the Holy Ghost and I could fix and leave behind what we couldn't. Interestingly enough, when the wisdom of God inspired me to leave things behind, I found that nothing had power to follow me without my cooperation. I began to perceive that I trusted God more and more; and the more I trusted Him in everything, the happier I became.

I thank my Father for allowing me to bump my head and crash into walls when I followed my own plan for me. This was the best way for me to discover that, apart from total trust in Him, happiness is a temporary thrill. There was no better way for me to be convinced than by trying to do it myself and discovering that without God, I don't even know what needs to be done.

## His Purpose Will Stand

Isaiah 46:10 (NIV)—*"I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please."*

**M**y late husband, Clinton, wrote a song called "I'm So Glad." In it, one of the statements is "Nothing in my life takes You by surprise." It's true. God is never caught off guard or shocked by what we say or do.

Still, He trusts us with His plan for humankind. Only God in His infinite wisdom and power would do that, but He does. Isaiah 46:10 helps me understand why and how He could do this. He knows the first from the last, the front from the back, the beginning from the ending. The ancient is not unfamiliar to Him, and the future will present Him with no new information. Yet with all of these things in mind, He boldly declares, "My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please."

In other words, God essentially says, "With all the information, all the facts, and all the truth available, I will make sure that My will is done in the earth, just as it is being done in heaven. I am doing it My way, and no force or power can prevent it or hinder it. I could not be stopped in the past, and I will not be stopped in the future. Period. The end."

*Father, when I read that You will accomplish Your plan regardless of any adversity, I am so proud and confident to have You as my Father. It is easy to serve You and submit to You, because it is quite obvious that You are in control.*

*Father, in moments past, I was not sure that my future was part of Your concern or agenda. But that was because I was ignorant of Your Word. So I made a pitiful attempt at doing what I thought was best for me. I even had nerve enough to think I was helping You out by not bothering You with what I considered the "small stuff." Was I ever glad to find out that to You it was all small stuff! It is now my pleasure to roll the whole of my care over on You because You care for me (1 Peter 5:7). I leave it all in Your hands now because I know Your purpose will stand.*