

HORIZONS UNLIMITED

Pastor Sarah W. Utterbach

REDEEMING LOVE CHRISTIAN CENTER

Insights For
Each Day

December • January • February 2008-2009



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

God speaks to people? I thought.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

His Joint Heir,
Sarah W. Utterbach

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A ministry of
Sarah W. Utterbach



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

A *new* Daily Schedule for



SUNDAY

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

MONDAY

Bible Class7:30 p.m.

TUESDAY

Bible Class7:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY

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

THURSDAY

Bible Class7:30 p.m.

FRIDAY

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

SATURDAY

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

Jesus Died for Me To Be Healed

Recently a very slight pain occurred in my body as I was washing dishes. Because it was bearable, I started to ignore it. The voice of the Holy Spirit within me said, "If you don't address it, I can't. Know that you don't have to tolerate what is bearable, thinking you are leaving the 'big stuff' for Me; it's all 'small stuff' to Me." I became indignant and reminded my body of Galatians 3:13,14.

The Holy Spirit went on to tell me that when we fail to address the little foxes in our lives, we become like the frog and the lobster. We relax in the cold water of deceit, not realizing the flame heats the water gradually. Before we know it, the water is boiling and our power to resist has been nullified.

I am through with being devoured by the adversary. I treat him like the enemy he is, using the name of Jesus and the promises given to me by my Father. The devil trespasses illegally and deceives because he is the ultimate deceiver.

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illegally and deceives
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ultimate deceiver.**

When I was a child, my mother had a say in the friends I was allowed to play with. As a Christian, I have a Heavenly Father who exercises the same right. The devil is *not* one of my playmates.

As I was growing up, Mother would punish me if I played with a forbidden playmate. Similarly, my Heavenly Father permits the devil to punish me when He has already told me His intended purpose and I choose not to obey. The Father always welcomes me home after I have strayed, but He allows the pain of disobedience as a reminder to me to listen to His instructions.

A Time To Pray And a Time To Praise, Part 1

I have the greatest respect for prayer. I have been fortunate in life to have my prayers answered. But there is a time to pray and a time to *praise*.

When it appears that what you want or need from God is not manifesting as a result of your prayers or the prayers of others, you can conclude this: Since God is not going to change, you should. Never stop praying, but perhaps the way

you are praying is a little off.

Many people fail to think of praising God as a form of prayer. This kind of prayer is the prayer of thanksgiving which, in my opinion, is the highest kind of prayer.

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which, in my opinion, is the highest kind of prayer made once you've made your petition to God. When I petition God for something, I must believe that I received my answer when I prayed. Therefore, I can begin to thank God for it at the moment of my prayer, not when it manifests.

When we were first starting in the ministry, one day I became aware of a boil forming in my mouth as I was trying to sleep. The pain was so acute that I got up and shared with the Lord that I needed some relief. He knew I lived within four blocks of a major hospital, but He reminded me that I was in His spiritual army, subject to be called to places that had no hospitals, doctors, or drugstores. I knew I needed to retrain myself on how to deal with pain, loss, and anything else that was contrary to the Word for my life.

A Time To Pray And a Time To Praise, Part 2

I was never a sickly child or an adult. However, I scheduled myself to have annual checkups regardless. Why? Because “that’s what people did.” Besides, it didn’t cost me anything, since my benefit package at my job paid the fees.

The night of the boil incident, the Lord asked me, “What would you do if I sent you to a place where medicine, doctors, hospitals, and pharmacies are not available?”

I responded, “The only thing I’d know to do is praise You, not for the situation, but in the midst of the situation.”

The Lord said, “Why not begin to act as though nothing is accessible to you but praise? I saw what He was saying to me and began dancing around our living room.

In a matter of minutes the boil burst in my mouth, and I was able to spit out the pus. The only reason I suppressed some of the joy I was experiencing was to avoid waking my husband and the neighbors.

I’d rather die than not trust God. I don’t want His first question to me to be, ‘Why did you not trust Me?’

I never ask anyone to pray for me. I get more results from first reminding God of His promises that are written for everyone, and then praising Him for those promises and acting like He did not lie. You see, I believe God’s Word is true. I believe He made the body to heal itself. Personally, I’d rather die than not trust God. I don’t want His first question to me to be, “Why did you not trust Me?”

A Time To Pray And a Time To Praise, Part 3

As I read my Bible, I have not found where God ever suggested that a scalpel or any other surgical instrument should ever be used on His temple. In fact, when men built Solomon's temple, the stones had to be chiseled at the quarry before they were brought to the building site. No chisel was to be used in the temple area.

I observe many who stand in healing lines walk away disappointed because they expected someone else's prayer to obtain their healing. They come hoping to receive their healing because they have not learned to come in faith, believing they are already healed. They don't come merely wanting someone to agree with them that, according to God's Word, they are already healed.

Trust in Me with all your heart. Lean not unto your own understanding (Proverbs 3:5).

The prayer of agreement is an effective way to pray. But praising God that you are healed is also effective, and it is available to you when no one else is around to agree.

We may at times experience discomfort and pain, but obtaining relief using any means other than the Word of God will cause us to depend on something other than Him. He said, "Trust in Me with all your heart. Lean not unto your own understanding" (see Proverbs 3:5). He did not say that you and I would be exempt from pain and discomfort. He said to trust Him in it.

No one wants to be in pain or to hurt. By trusting Him, you will either get relief from the pain or experience His grace to take you through it. If you are not yet at this level of faith, begin to retrain yourself now so you can handle it the next time you face a physical challenge.

Be Certain in Your Uncertainty

Ephesians 6:13—*Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*

I wish the writer of this verse did not put the punctuation after the word “all.” I sense that it should have read, “*having done all to stand, stand.*” Punctuation marks and division into chapters often hinder people’s understanding of Scripture.

When you have done all to stand, then stand. You must stand when that is your mission and purpose. When you have purposed to stand, nothing can move you. When you are moved, you didn’t do all to stand.

We recently sold a piece of property for six figures that had been on the market for two years. More than 100 people had viewed the property during that time. We would not lower the price or take it off the market. The devil even tried to convince us to change our real estate agent, But just about the time “ol’ slew foot” was trying to get us to change, I was privileged to lead our agent to the Lord. At that point, I didn’t care if she even sold the apartment. I was able to sell her on Jesus!

When you don’t faint or lose your confidence, you will experience the fruit of your faithfulness.

When you have God’s promise on anything, be certain in your uncertainty. He does not lie, disappoint, fail, or fool you. It matters not how long an answer takes to manifest, you are certain of what seems uncertain. When you don’t faint or lose your confidence, you will experience the fruit of your faithfulness. Wait on the Lord and be of good courage, and He will strengthen thine heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord!

You Call the Shots

James 4:7 (NKJV)—*Submit yourself unto the Lord. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*

On my way to my apartment this afternoon, ice cream was not on my mind. Then a co-worker came in my office with a bag of single-scoop ice cream in cups and said, “So-and-so was in this donut shop, and they were selling these for 31 cents. They brought one for everybody.”

I saw the person in the lobby and said I’d have to confer with the Lord before I could accept. Before I took two steps into the sanctuary or even asked, the Holy Spirit spoke and said, “The devil can’t get you in the flesh with high gas prices, so he’ll try it with low-price ice cream.”

The devil can’t get you in the flesh with high gas prices, so he’ll try it with low-price ice cream.

I yelled, “Thank You, Lord!” Then I called all those individuals together and explained what the Holy Spirit had said to me—not to make anyone feel guilty, but to show the importance of our conferring with God about everything that concerns us.

Three days earlier, the co-worker who delivered the ice cream had shared how the devil can’t make us do anything we don’t want to do. The enemy has no influence over us unless he can find a place in us. Left to ourselves, you and I do what we want to do, and the devil knows that. All he does is reveal to us what is already in us. This is why it is so important to ask the Lord first in any situation.

In my case, God knew I only wanted to do what was pleasing to Him, so He gave me the desires of my heart without my having to even ask Him. He is only asking that we be honest with ourselves.

Take Over and Live on What God Has Given You, Part 1

Numbers 33:53 (NKJV)—*You shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land and dwell in it, for I have given you the land to possess.*

Dispossess" and "drive out" mean the same. In 1985, God gave my late husband and me the building to house RLCC. There was no doubt in our minds it was ours, so there could then be no doubt that we would have to possess it His way. What was His way? Verse 55 (AMP) gave us our answer: *"But if you will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then those you let remain of them shall be as pricks in your eyes and as thorns in your sides, and they shall vex you in the land in which you dwell."*

There are a couple of "shalls" in that verse that let us know we had a responsibility to fulfill in taking what God had given us. But it was verse 56 (AMP) that established in us what God wanted us to do: *"And as I thought to do to them, so will I do to you."*

Somehow the 18-acre parking lot next to our building had become an area of commuter parking for the riders of the express busses to New York. God showed us if we did not take back that acreage in the beginning, it would not be so easy to exercise our rights when we needed it later. In addition, God said if we did not obey His directions, He would do to us what He planned to do to them.

In the *Message Bible*, verse 55 reads, *"They would be cinders in our eye and a splinter in our foot, they would give us trouble in our own backyard."* We decided we'd rather deal with the commuters than to make God upset with us!

Take Over and Live on What God Has Given You, Part 2

Numbers 33:53 (NKJV)—*You shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land and dwell in it, for I have given you the land to possess.*

Since Clinton and I were moving to a new state to live among a majority of a different race of people with whom we would have to deal for years, we wanted our taking possession of our new property to go as easy as possible. But God doesn't care about easy; He wants *obedience*.

While we were planning how to do it, the commuters continued to use the lot. At the end of the day, beer cans, cigarette butts, and trash were left all over the lot with no offer to pay for its cleanup. The headline of the local newspaper blared, "Fundamentalist Church says, "Thou Shall Not Park." This, along with threatening letters, came when we gave the city 30 days to relocate their residents. It was ugly and evil—but God had spoken, and we were going to obey.

"Dispossess" and "drive out" means the same thing. Believers do this by *occupying*—by driving out previous tenants and possessing in their place. It also means to seize, to rob, to inherit, and to succeed.

Had we not obeyed God, our position where we live and minister never would have turned out the way it has. Twenty-three years later, we are considered an asset to the community. In 2007, the town was voted as number 24 of 100 of the top U.S. cities to live in.

When you obey what God tells you, He supports you in your effort. He causes your enemies to be at peace with you.

Take Over and Live on What God Has Given You, Part 3

Numbers 33:53 (NKJV)—*You shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land and dwell in it, for I have given you the land to possess.*

Requiring the former tenants to vacate our newly purchased property was not the first or only thing God required of my late husband and me that didn't make us jump for joy. But the Lord cannot move any of us to the next level until we have obeyed Him in what He has told us to do and determined to yield up our members as instruments of righteousness unto God (Romans 8:13). Just as Israel had to dispossess the occupants of the land in order to please God, we have to do the same to satan and sin.

As believers, we have been given a new house with new rules. The devil

and his partners must not be allowed to stay around to influence and negatively affect us. We go to church regularly, pay our tithes, treat our neighbors right, and obey the law; however, we continue to indulge our physical senses with junk food while we talk about the need to discipline ourselves. Some of us would not think of touching a drop of alcohol, but we think nothing of the poison we pour into our bodies daily as we gulp down soft drinks. (Trust me—there is nothing soft about them!) Those soft drinks may taste good going down, but they only show that we have indulged our taste buds instead of permitting our spirit man to dominate us.

Some of us would not think of touching a drop of alcohol, but we think nothing of the poison we pour into our bodies daily as we gulp down soft drinks.

Corruption of the Flesh

Romans 7:24,25 (NKJV)—*O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death—I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So with the mind I serve the law of God but with the flesh the law of sin.*

The mind is our intellect and can be geared toward the divine or the human side in our thoughts, feelings, and will. Therefore, Paul advised us by the Spirit of God to renew our minds, training them with God's truth to serve the divine side because the human side leads to corruption.

As Christians, we need to walk and live in two kinds of perfection: our justification in Christ and our sanctification in the Holy Spirit.

**A Spirit-led mind will
always dominate the body.**

**A flesh-led mind will
choose sin every time.**

Jesus makes the difference.

Justification makes us pure before God when He wipes our slate clean. Sanctification makes us holy before God and man.

Since Jesus was made unto us sanctification (1 Corinthians 1:30), we are to walk out that state of purity in this life in order to allow others to see what can be done while they remain in the flesh. Uncontrolled flesh will serve the law of sin, which will result in corruption. A Spirit-managed mind will control the flesh in order to serve the law of God, resulting in life here and there. A Spirit-led mind will always dominate the body. A flesh-led mind will choose sin every time. Jesus makes the difference.

Israel's Temporary Rejection of God

Romans 11:29 (TM)—*God's gifts and God's call are under full warranty—never cancelled, never rescinded.*

I am amazed that so many in the Church seem to want to believe that the covenant God made with His friend, Abraham, is revocable. Instead of celebrating the possibility that the Jews are lost forever, we should be rejoicing that God allowed us who are Gentiles to be grafted in.

Paul does not teach in Romans 11:26 that all the seed of Abraham will be saved. All who receive Jesus by faith will be saved, but those who refuse to receive Him will become chopped-off branches.

However, a change of heart and mind will allow them to be grafted back in.

Surely, since God grafted us in as branches of a wild olive tree—He has plans to

reunite the original branches to the tree they grew from in the first place. We can see this mystery from our point of view and embrace it, or we can look at it from God's long-range perspective and His overall purpose.

In their ignorance and blindness, the Jews slammed the door on God, leaving it open for us to come in. With the door held open for us, they can also return at will.

Let's not get cocky about our position in Christ and forget that not too long ago, we who are Gentiles were not a people. In their ignorance and blindness, the Jews slammed the door on God, leaving it open for us to come in. With the door held open for us, they can also return at will.

Why Blame God? Part 1

1 Peter 2:13 (NLT)—*For the Lord's sake respect all human authority, whether the king as head of state or the officials he has appointed.*

This scripture reads, “all human authority.” How often we forget to include those in the ministry as a part of this group! Hebrews 13:17 (NLT) reads, “Obey your spiritual leaders and do what they say....” Why are we to obey our spiritual leaders and do what they say? One very good reason is that their assignment from God is to watch over our souls.

Christians are to be led by the Holy Spirit, but spiritual leaders are to help them renew their minds and get their thoughts in agreement with God so they can be led by His Spirit. You can rest assured that Christians who have no

Spiritual leaders don't qualify for their calling because they are perfect; they qualify because the Lord selected them.

respect for their spiritual leaders will not have respect for God whom they cannot see. Spiritual

leaders understand that they are accountable to God concerning His sheep's spiritual growth. However, that growth cannot be accomplished without the sheep's respect and cooperation.

You are not expected to like every word uttered or every instruction given by your spiritual leaders. However, you should follow their guidance anyway. Of course, you should be able to express your concerns with those in charge—just don't grumble, criticize, or complain.

Spiritual leaders don't qualify for their calling because they are perfect; they qualify because the Lord selected them. Leading God's flock is a little like parenting—sometimes it's on-the-job training.

Why Blame God? Part 2

1 Peter 2:13 (NLT)—*For the Lord's sake respect all human authority, whether the king as head of state or the officials he has appointed.*

I often say to those who work with me, “You get to do almost anything when you get permission.” Each department in the church also has a manual. Why? So that particular group can be found pleasing to God as they work together in unity and harmony with each other and with all others.

Brother Kenneth Hagin tells a story of a family member who inadvertently violated a company rule that resulted in his death in his early forties because he didn't heed a sign warning him to make sure a rubber mat was in place before he flipped a certain switch. The man had left his workplace for a little fresh air, without thinking about the fact that the night dew on the grass was getting his feet wet. Upon returning to work, he

turned on the switch without ensuring that the rubber mat was in place. That act cost him his life. God could do nothing to prevent the man's death because he disobeyed the posted warning sign. But, of course, God was blamed for his early departure.

Are we listening and hearing what God is saying to us every day? I have an iPod with earplugs. There are times I shut it off, even though I only play the Bible, Christian music, and inspired sermons. Why? Because my spirit man knows when I need a fresh word from the Lord. That word could save my life.

Are we listening and hearing what God is saying to us every day? My spirit man knows when I need a fresh word from the Lord. That word could save my life.

God Answered the Best Way

Matthew 7:8 (TM)—*Everyone that asks receives.*

It is interesting that a wicked man like Herod was willing to honor his word to Herodias' daughter, yet we struggle to believe that God will honor His Word to us, His children! Herod's word brought no benefit to John, nor did it bring any glory to God. Yet Scripture reads that Herod was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, he would not reject the daughter's request (Mark 6:26).

Herod made a rash oath because the damsel's dance pleased him (v. 23). But how much more can we expect from God when we bring Him pleasure? God has never regretted any promise He has made us, nor is He unable or unwilling to provide the fulfillment of His promises. He never has to take from another to give us His best. Make no mistake

God tells us to ask for what He has already promised us and then to expect to receive.

about it. It gives Him pleasure to give us His Kingdom—all of it.

We are not like Herodias' daughter, who asked her mother what she should request. God tells us to ask for what He has already promised us and then to expect to receive. He doesn't want us to inquire of others what we should ask of Him.

And when we do ask, God always answers in the best way. This is why He didn't spare Jesus—the Father gave His all and His best. There is nothing we need or want from Him that the beatings, the bruises, and the blood of Jesus did not provide. The Father will never refuse to give us whatever we ask according to His will.

When you are the Father's child, you don't have to dance for your need. Just believe and ask for what is already yours.

Don't Just Hold On to His Hand; Hold On to His Love

Acts 2:33—Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted and having received of the Father, the promise of the Holy Ghost.

You may lose your grip on God's hand, but in everything, His never-changing love will continue to uphold you, even when you let go. Jesus was exalted to the position of a seat at His Father's right hand, but it was His Father's love that propelled Him there. God's love is more powerful than His hand. This is why Jesus' last command to those of us intending to identify with Him was that we demonstrate His love toward each other (John 13:34,35).

We often try to separate the Father's love from His Spirit, but they are one and the same. His Spirit raised Jesus from the dead—a divine act that was motivated by His love (Romans 8:36). The Bible didn't have to say, "Nothing separates us from His Spirit," because His love is His Spirit. We can't have His Spirit without His love, and vice versa.

**We can't have God's Spirit
without His love, and vice versa.**

The world's attraction to God is not just what we do by the power of His Spirit; it is also what they sense from His love in us. He will do exceedingly abundantly above all we ask or think according to His power working in us (Ephesians 3:20). What is that power? His love. It's not how many miracles we perform or how much we pray in tongues or prophesy; these gifts will pass away. But God's love will last forever. When it appears that we have lost our grip on His hand, His love will never let go of us.

Zeal Without Knowledge Is Ignorance

Romans 10:2—For I bear them record that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

Paul was aware of Israel's devotion to God. He was at the top of that class. He knew better than they did that they were ignorant of God's righteousness. They thought, just as Paul had once thought, that they could be righteous without submitting to *God's* righteousness.

Paul constantly and consistently prayed for his fellow countrymen because they were doing the right thing the wrong way. They understood salvation was God's business,

**Salvation is of God through
believing in His Son Jesus.
There is and always has been
only one way to Him.**

but they thought their way of attaining righteousness through rituals, rules, and routines was as good as God's way.

When we fail to understand faith and refuse to deal with God on His terms, we have nothing to show for all our effort. This was the mistake the unbelieving Jews made. Although the revelation of the Messiah was to prepare them and all mankind for the coming of Jesus and His truth, the Jews thought that God would be impressed with their works and their efforts to ascend to heaven without faith. They understood not the saying of Moses: "The word that saves is right here, as near as the tongue in your mouth, as close as the heart in your chest" (see Romans 10:8).

Salvation is of God through believing in His Son Jesus. There is and always has been only one way to Him. Be not deceived; God is not mocked.

Speck, Spot, Wrinkles— All Blotted Out

Romans 8:33 (NLT)—*Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for His own? No one—for God Himself has given us right standing with Himself.*

What God did through Jesus for you and me so we could be justified could not be done through Moses and the prophets. Jesus forgave our sins and justified us before God the instant we accepted Him (Acts 13:38,39).

It was not Jesus' death that saved us; it was His resurrection. He accomplished the work of the new creation in everyone who believes in Him—a work that His own people despised. This very thing that the Jews marveled at yet rejected would ultimately cause their spiritual death—something that had been prophesied long before. God had declared that the work He would do in their day would cause them to mock and not believe, even though someone told them it was so (Habakkuk 1:5).

When we fail to believe in the resurrection of Jesus, we are no different than the unbelieving Jews. Just as faith is now, so is our justification before God. Justification by faith is not a future promise. It is not

Jesus forgave our sins and justified us before God the instant we accepted Him.

something we're going to receive because of our works and service to Him, for it happened when we believed.

There is not one sin in God's Book of Life against me. I am equal with the Apostle Paul, as well as the repentant thief on the cross. The three of us became justified because we believed, not because of what we did. We did not earn our salvation. We believed that Jesus died to provide it freely.

Sin Is a Habit

Romans 6:14 (NLT)—*Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law, instead you live under the freedom of God's grace.*

Prior to our receiving Jesus as Savior and Lord and being baptized into His death, satan and sin were our masters. We did what our masters said even when we didn't want to (Romans 7:21). We were trained to obey our passions and desires. The training process of our carnal man was no different than what is done to train circus animals. The repetitive dictates of our previous masters became a habit because we had little or no power to resist the lusts of our flesh. We lacked teaching regarding the difference between our spirit

man and our carnal man, and it didn't help to discover that those responsible for teaching us had the same bad habits we had.

Once we allow sin to become a habit, we will need the Lord's help to overcome that habit.

I remember when I learned by the Holy

Ghost that I was no longer under the law that represents sin and death but could retrain my new recreated spirit to act and walk under the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus because His grace has freed me (Romans 8:1,2). I asked the Lord to show me how to break the old habits of sin, and He was more than happy to assist me.

Once we allow sin to become a habit, we will need the Lord's help to overcome that habit. Habits are controlling; they don't like it when we change masters. The good news is they have no power to prevent it.

Jesus Broke Sin's Power So We Could Resist It

Romans 6:10 (NLT)—*When He died, He died once to break the power of sin. But now He lives, He lives for the glory of God.*

The influence the devil once had over us is broken. Sure, the devil tries to make us think he's still in control, but he's the same liar he always was.

When anything is broken, it is never as strong as it once was. Therefore, you should consider yourself dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus (Romans 6:11). Everyone who dies in the natural is free from sin. But you don't have to cease to breathe to be rid of sin. You just have to crucify your flesh so your spirit man can dominate you. You have to determine that you will not let sin control the way you live or give in to sinful desires (Romans 6:12).

You have to determine that you will not let sin control the way you live or give in to sinful desires.

The power of sin was broken at Jesus' death; now He lives all for the glory of God. We are called to do the same, but we can't live for God's glory without His help.

If we find that some of our previous habits still try to surface, we should ask ourselves, *Will God be glorified if I yield to this, or will my flesh just be satisfied—which will never bring Him glory?* Masturbation, drinking, gambling, smoking, overeating, shopping, or pampering our flesh when we can't afford it are all habits you and I can resist. To the flesh it will be painful, but to our spirit man, it will bring godly fruit.

Faith Is Faith When It's All You're Holding On To

God permits crises in our lives so we can discover the level of our faith. He doesn't cause the crisis, but He does permit it.

We say we have faith. We often assist others when their faith appears to be lacking. But any area of our lives that we haven't submitted to the grace of God will stumble us when we come face to face with it at an unsuspecting moment.

All of us have emotions that often manifest in a variety of complex reactions, such as love, hate, fear, and anger.

**Uncontrolled emotions
will move us to act based
on circumstances or
conditions around us.**

Emotions are hooked up with our feelings. [I don't understand the difference.] Uncontrolled emotions will move us to act based on circumstances or conditions around us.

I have learned that my emotions are not reliable and that faith in God's promises and in His written Word holds me steady when everything around me is in chaos. I can never trust my feelings, for they are subject to change.

So I ask God often, "Are You ready to reveal Your plan to me in the midst of adversity?" At times, He answers that question with further guidance. Other times, He is silent, which causes me to retreat to His promises. Those promises always seem to anchor me until I am on the victory side of the present condition. I find that God has confidence in me in both situations because I have chosen to use my faith to hold fast to His Word.

Christ, Our Liberator

Galatians 2:4—*And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:*

A word from the Lord came through a relatively new sister at RLCC during prayer service, encouraging the people to walk and live in the freedom Christ gave them because He had already won the battle for them. She shared that liberation is a military term for the war being over.

Afterward, the Lord began to speak to me further. He reminded me of old WWII army photographs I had seen of U.S. troops in prison camps and their reaction when they saw the American tanks and planes arriving to liberate them from the clutches of the enemy. That welcome sight meant they were going home free and alive.

That's what the Word of God and His promises should do for us. Jesus has come as our Champion. He is our Liberator from all the old habits, lusts, and passions of our past. Some of us were so imprisoned that it appeared we would never be free. But Jesus, the only One capable of freeing us, suddenly showed up in our lives. Thank God, we recognized Him and received Him as our Lifeline to freedom—and like Paul, we never looked back.

Man offers external freedom when we have met society's requirements. But Jesus does His liberating work from the inside out, whether society's requirements are satisfied or not.

Jesus, your Liberator, sets your spirit man free the moment you receive Him; then He helps you experience that freedom in your mind, your emotions, and your physical body. Many of those working for the Lord are still incarcerated. Are you?

Searched For

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

God does not close His ears to the cry of His children. He hears and is attentive to each of us when we search for Him diligently. He knows when we are in need of His intervention and He knows when we selfishly call on Him. When you and I earnestly search for the Lord, we will leave no stone unturned. This is what we can expect when we really pursue Him. *The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry* (Psalm 34:15). He sees our need and He hears our words. Verse 17 reads, *The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.*

The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry. (Psalm 34:15)

What are some of the troubles we find ourselves in: tight spots, adversities, afflictions, anguish,

tribulation, distress and fears? These things come, they are real and they are designed to frighten you. So, what is your rebuttal?

Search for the Lord, not the doctor, lawyer, your parents, siblings or offspring. They may hear you, but are they in a position to deliver you? While they are trying to organize, He has already delivered you because you sought Him. He does not give us a diagnosis, prognosis or surprises. He handles everything the moment He hears us.

What are you saying? Are you speaking words of faith to Him?

Nothing Takes God by Surprise

Psalm 56:9 (NKJV)—*When I cry out to you, then my enemies will turn back: this I know; because God is for me.*

What a comfort to know of a certainty that our God has us covered. Scripture tells us in both the Old and New Testament that God is for us.

My late husband wrote a verse in a song that said, “Nothing in my life will take You by surprise.” Recently I began to meditate on that truth, and much to my amazement, I discovered that the word “surprise” is not found in the New Testament and only three times in the Old Testament. The scripture that got me thinking is found in Isaiah 33:14. It reads,

“The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites.”

The next two verses tell us of our position in Christ, who is our Zion.

**God does not surprise us.
He leads us by His Spirit
and reveals everything to
us we need to know.**

Nothing should surprise you when you are anchored in Christ, when your life is one of truthfulness, and when you understand that God is for you. So examine yourself and ask, *Am I a sinner or a hypocrite?* If the answer is no to both options, then you should be fearless as you walk through every situation.

When we follow Christ and submit our all to Him, the enemy cannot frighten us with his surprises—and God does not surprise us. He leads us by His Spirit and reveals everything to us we need to know.

‘Prefer Me First, Last, and in Between’

Luke 14:26—*If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.*

In any assembly of believers, we will find many with various motivations for following Christ. Jesus is commanding us to *love less* all our earthly relations, involvements, and attachments in order to follow Him. He may at a moment’s notice give us a directive that will measure our love for Him. Are we prepared to die for Him?

Jesus may at a moment’s notice give us a directive that will measure our love for Him.

In most instances, we have to die to self first, but we may be put in a position to give up our very lives in order to hold fast to our love for the Gospel and its effect on others.

Renouncing tradition, culture, personal involvements, and so forth, is part of what Jesus requires if we want to be His true disciples. Until we settle this without negotiation, we are not ready to walk in the fullness of His life.

Like you, I have family, friends, habits, and treasures. But, thank God, there is nothing and no one I have been privileged to enjoy I am unwilling to walk away from in order to be found in Him. My choices make those around me uncomfortable; I understand that. However, I am after the prize, Jesus Christ, and He does not allow for competition.

I prefer Him first, last, and in between.

You Can Fall From Grace!

Galatians 5:4—*Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.*

My heart grieves when I see or hear of my sisters and brothers falling from grace because they failed to be controlled or led by the Holy Spirit within. It also helps keep me humble as I ask the Father on a daily basis to help me value and esteem what He has done in and through me for His glory.

Barnabas was used to pave the way for Paul's ministry, and later he traveled extensively with Paul after being sent out with the apostle by the Holy Ghost. At the same time, Barnabas allowed himself to be influenced by Peter and the Judaizers who had crept into the Church to bring back into bondage those whom Christ had set free (see Galatians chapters 2 and 3). After Paul confronted and rebuked Peter, Barnabas was never mentioned again as one who worked with Paul for the building up of God's Kingdom.

**Sometimes we get so
prideful in our relationship
with the Lord, we think He
can't do without us.**

I'm saying this to you today because sometimes we get so prideful in our relationship with the Lord, we think He can't do without us. Yet anytime we revert to our earlier state of bondage and refuse to walk in the liberty Christ has made available to us, God will just lift His anointing from our lives so we can see who we are without Him.

With His grace, you can do all things. Without it, you're about as useful as a wet cornflake. Never allow yourself to fall from God's grace.

Keep the Fire of Prayer Burning

1 Thessalonians 5:17—*Pray without ceasing.*

Our natural minds balk at the very idea of our praying continually, frequently, consistently, and without distraction or interruption. I pray, but I'm dissatisfied with both the quality and quantity of my prayer life. I have asked the Godhead to assist me in this area because I'm sensing that with improved prayer life, much more will be accomplished in the spiritual world.

As serious Christians, there should always be an eternal flame ablaze in our hearts, compelling us to draw closer in our fellowship with God. I can hear the flesh protest, "But I run out of things to say." That is because our training concerning prayer has been wrong. Too often we are taught that our conversation with God must be lengthy and loud. I question that assertion, unless one is called to be an intercessor, spending extended times in prayer standing in the gap for others. I'm learning that, first of all, God would like me to ask Him to help me just talk to Him.

When we are not inspired to pray about specific areas, we can talk to God about our church, our present assignment, the health of our souls, our offspring, or our relationships, both personal and professional. And what about praying for our neighbors, for the government, or for God's perfect will to be done and His truth shared with everyone in every place? This list by itself can keep us busy, but we don't have to pray for all these matters at once. One thing I know for sure: As we determine to keep the fire of prayer burning in our hearts, we'll keep the devil busy, trying unsuccessfully to silence us!

Time Does Not Diminish True Love

A five-year-old girl's puppy found his way under the family fence and was missing for five years. All she had to remember her pet by was a stuffed toy cat and her love for him. The family gave her no hope of ever seeing her puppy again. They bought her another dog, and she learned to become attached to him. But although she had a substitute, she could never find a replacement for the one she loved.

Every night the little girl asked her puppy to come home. Five years later, the dog was found in a shelter 850 miles away. Although the two barely recognized each other at first, the love they had for each other, plus his toy cat, made the reconciliation easier.

How many of us have had to find our way back to God after a long absence, only to discover that His love was still the same? A number of things in life change with time, but true love does not. How much more confident should we be that God will meet us with open arms when we stop running from Him and begin to pursue Him?

**A number of things in
life change with time,
but true love does not.**

I cried every time I shared that story the day I first heard it. Just think of how Heaven and all of creation are waiting for us to take our rightful place as the manifested children of God!

If you've been running, come on home. All Heaven will rejoice and declare God's glory because you are so loved.

The Value Is the Same

God uses ordinary things to show us our prejudices and our smelly attitudes. He does this for the purpose of highlighting our need to grow spiritually in certain areas of our lives.

A member once approached me and said, "Ever since you shared with us that you still pick up pennies off the street, I decided to do the same." The woman then proceeded to tell me that a few days earlier, she'd seen a grubby, grimy-looking penny on the street and, because it was so dirty, had decided to skip that one. After all, it was a "bad" penny. As she reached her car, the Holy Spirit spoke to her heart and said, "Shirley, it has the same value as the clean ones." She repented of her attitude and then went back to retrieve the dirty penny. It had not lost its value because of its appearance.

What a lesson! What must we have looked like when the Father received us while we were still His enemies? Imagine sending His prize Treasure to the Cross for us while we were in such a deplorable condition. That is called *love*—not the emotional, mushy-gushy stuff the world calls love. We were as valuable to God before He cleaned us up as we are to Him today.

To God, our value is the same, both before and after He made us new.

I thank God for that story of the dirty penny because it will help me to remember the meaning of true value. One hundred dirty pennies make a dollar, just as 100 clean ones do. Aren't you glad that, to God, our value is the same—both before and after He made us new?

Let Each New Day Be the Apex of Your Life

Proverbs 8:26—*While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world.*

You and I didn't just become "somebody" when we arrived at the position we presently occupy. Since the time of creation, God has viewed man as the highest level of "the dust of the earth." God and His wisdom was all that existed before us, and we must always remember it was God in His wisdom that placed us at the summit of His love and will keep us there.

Never try to live on yesterday's manna or receive assistance from any source but God. As Charles Spurgeon once said, "Old anointing will not suffice to impart unction to our spirit." God's word to and for us is new every morning.

It's sad to see elderly actors and entertainers dressed up in the attire that once made them famous in the world. The

same is true for you in your walk with God. Why settle for being yesterday's hero? Who does God want you to be for Him and to others *today*? Why not look and act like you're a new creature in Christ Jesus, robed in His righteousness and ready for service in the Master's house? Lay aside the past—forgetting its victories *and* its defeats—and rise up in the newness that is yours in Christ Jesus, allowing each new day to be the apex of your life.

Rise up in the newness that is yours in Christ Jesus, allowing each new day to be the apex of your life.

My Strength Should Equal My Days

Deuteronomy 33:25—Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.

Moses blessed the sons of Israel before he passed. As for Asher, he was to be blessed with children, acceptable to his siblings, and the oil of his olive trees so abundant that his feet would be bathed in its richness (v. 24). The gates of his palace would be as secure as iron and brass, and his strength was to equal his days.

What an encouragement to us who have received everything we want or need in Christ Jesus! I really enjoy the latter part of Deuteronomy 33:25 because I sense that my God is equal to every situation I am confronted with or challenged by in my life. When I awake each day, I am aware

We must open our eyes and thank God for each new day we are able to work with Him, asking Him for His strength and grace to be equal to the day's exposures.

that many new challenges could come my way. Some will be of God, and others of the devil.

It's easy to receive the blessings of God. We should have no trouble recognizing them. But what about the problems we'd like to avoid or ignore? Since challenges are inevitable in life, we must learn how to deal with them. How do we do that? We must open our eyes and thank God for each new day we are able to work with Him, asking Him for His strength and grace to be equal to the day's exposures. As we do, our souls will look back and wonder how we ever made it through some of the trials we faced. But our hearts will know, because God's promise is clear: Regardless of the challenges that come our way, His strength will equal our days.

Refuse To Be Driven

Luke 8:29—*(For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil in the wilderness.)*

There is no question that demonic spirits can influence people at times, but they are not all-powerful. If demons can do whatever they want, why did they need Jesus' permission to enter the swine? Mark's version of this account says that when the demon-possessed man saw Jesus from afar off, he immediately ran to Him and then fell down and worshipped Him (Mark 5:5,6). If the mob of demons in the man truly controlled him, they would never have permitted him to get to Jesus. Although the devil somewhat occupied the man's body, his heart wanted to be free and recognized Jesus as his deliverer. After the man's deliverance, the devils couldn't take over even the pigs without Jesus' permission. So how much more can we resist demonic spirits when they seek to attack us?

Very often what we label as "demon-possessed" is nothing more than a case of being controlled by undisciplined flesh. Jesus has never given His Church permission to be driven by the devil.

It's when we neglect to follow God's Spirit and we follow our flesh instead that we get into trouble (Romans 8:1-10). Since we belong to Christ, satan cannot gain access to our lives unless we cooperate with him. The law of Christ's Spirit has already set us free from the law of sin and death. It was part of the completed work at Calvary that was ours when we received Him.

I didn't let bullies frighten me when I was a child, and I refuse to let satan bully me today. I know who I am in Christ, and that puts me in the winner's circle.

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He Never Hides From Me

Psalm 69:17—*And hide not thy face from thy servant; for I am in trouble: hear me speedily.*

One of our very dear friends sings a song that says, “You never hide from me; even in the deepest darkness, You’ll be the face I see.”

All of us find ourselves at times in what appears to be a place of trouble. But even in the midst of difficult times, we can rejoice because God’s face is never hidden. And since He specializes in delivering His people from trouble, He hears us *quickly*.

All trouble comes from the adversary. Satan wants to bind us from operating in our freedom. He wants to besiege us, bring distress, oppress us, and shut us up in the narrow ways of this world’s system. But he *cannot* vex us, God’s liberated children, when we understand our liberation!

The devil and his imps are always attempting to bring intense opposition against God’s desire and plan for us. But because God never hides from us, all we have to do is acknowledge that we appear to be in trouble and then call upon Him. Immediately God is right there, ready to show Himself strong on our behalf because we walk uprightly before Him.

Remember this in your darkest moment: *Faith in God’s promises becomes the light that enters to help lead you out of trouble.* As you shine that light on your path, you will quickly find your way into God’s presence—and in that place, freedom and victory always define your outcome.

Why Stay Where You're Not Received?

When Peter went up to Jerusalem for the Passover. Herod apprehended him to kill him as he'd already done to James, John's brother (Acts 12:1-4). Peter was innocent, so he slept, trusting God for his deliverance. An angel of God was sent to set Peter free because some of the believers in Jerusalem gathered together to pray when they heard of Peter's plight.

After Peter was free, he acknowledged that his deliverance had been wrought by a work of the Lord (v. 11). "Map Quest" was not available to direct Peter, yet he was led by his spirit to the place where the believers were praying for him. Once he identified himself to the prayer group, he departed to go to another place (v. 17). It is evident that Herod and company wouldn't welcome Peter's arrival, so where did the apostle go? Verse 19 tells us that Peter went from Judea to Caesarea.

As I studied this passage of Scripture, the Holy Spirit led me back to Acts chapter 10, where Peter's words had been received and his work rewarded. He left Judea to return to Caesarea, where the people he once thought common were hungry for the truth he possessed.

Are we ready to break tradition and familiar culture ties in order to feed those hungry for God's Word? The world is interested in those who are hungry for natural food, and that's a good thing. But *our* responsibility is to feed their spirits. We don't want anyone going to hell on a full stomach. We don't want anyone going to hell—period!

If you keep trying to force what you have on others who don't want it, you miss your purpose. Go where God sends you, and don't stay where you're not received. Peter could have been killed trying to feed the Jews. In so doing, he would have missed the Gentiles who were ready to hear every word he had to say.

Are You Inspiring Worship of God or of Yourself?

Colossians 3:17—*And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*

Who gets the glory when we share our gifts and talents? I learned years ago to freely give what God had blessed me with, then trust Him to provide for my needs and bless me with His promises.

When He commanded me to write *Horizons Unlimited*, He said, "Sow it—don't sell it." There is no finer publication in print than this daily devotional. Thousands of lives have been eternally impacted by it. When God told me to do the "Choice Is Yours" live broadcast on a weekly basis, I obeyed. Again, this outreach benefits His Body and brings glory to Him.

The Lord never promised me a nickel of profit, personally, yet He has made me healthy, wealthy, and wise. All of these are blessings that money can't buy.

Less than two percent of the people benefiting from the two outreaches I mentioned support them. However, God has never allowed us to get behind in the costs required to fund those outreaches. I neither asked for nor wanted either of those avenues of ministry, so I've never tried to figure out how they would continue. When the funds dry up, it will be my signal that God no longer wants it or that He has something else for me to do. He always supports what He authorizes.

**God always supports
what He authorizes.**

Are You Trusting God or Your Next Engagement?

Psalm 112:7 (NLT)—*They do not fear bad news; they confidently trust the Lord to care for them.*

Scripture tells us in several places, “The just will live by faith” (Romans 1:17; Hebrews 10:38). However, every year I get phone calls or letters from ministers who tell me they are quickly filling their calendars, so if we’d like to invite them to minister at RLCC, we need to sign up or be left out.

This approach isn’t scriptural, and I choose to abstain. First of all, at RLCC we extend invitations to ministers as directed by the Lord. Anyone whom the Lord asks us to invite is always available; otherwise, why would He ask us to invite that person on that particular date?

Oh, what a blessing it would be to find ourselves once again so confident in God who orders our steps that we don’t have to lean to our own understanding!

I would rather go where the Lord sends me for one person, than to minister with no anointing to many.

I never want to find myself in a place of my choosing. Why? Because if I do, I will probably discover that even though I

may receive a large offering, I have done so without imparting any anointing as a blessing to His people. I would rather go where the Lord sends me for one person, than to minister with no anointing to many. *He* provides my need. Anything above what He provides for me is excess that will have to be managed but *His* blessings are without grief.

Love and the Fear of the Lord

Thank God, once we are received and approved by Him, we remain attached to Him for all eternity! Although we don't fear man, demons, or the devil himself, we do walk in godly fear, which aids us in our walk with the Lord. We love Him beyond expression.

This world, with all its deceptions and attractions, sometimes causes us to stumble and to momentarily take our eyes off the Lord. That's why I am so grateful for the Person of the Holy Spirit, who gives me the confidence I need to repent and turn away from all ungodly and rebellious activities that rob me of my joy in fellowshiping with God.

Although God never condones our acts against His truth and His love, there is nothing He won't forgive when we return to Him

with truly repentant hearts. Let us determine never to grieve His Holy Spirit. God's Spirit was sent to illumine our

God's Spirit was sent to illumine our steps by clearly making known to us God's plan for our daily lives and our future.

steps by clearly making known to us God's plan for our daily lives and our future. That divine plan will not be altered by any force not in agreement with the Lord.

I don't know what God has charted out for my life. Nevertheless, my prayer is that, no matter what, I would stay on course.

Is This Your Spiritual Profile?

Psalm 112:1-7 (NLT)—*Praise the Lord! Happy are those who fear the Lord. Yes, happy are those who delight in doing what he commands. Their children will be successful everywhere; an entire generation of*

Happy are those who fear the Lord. Yes, happy are those who delight in doing what he commands. Their children will be successful everywhere; an entire generation of godly people will be blessed.

godly people will be blessed. They themselves will be wealthy, and their good deeds will never be forgotten. When darkness overtakes the godly, light will come bursting in. They are generous, compassionate, and righteous. All goes well for those who are

generous, who lend freely and conduct their business fairly. Such people will not be overcome by evil circumstances. Those who are righteous will be long remembered. They do not fear bad news; they confidently trust the Lord to care for them. They are confident and fearless and can face their foes triumphantly. They give generously to those in need. Their good deeds will never be forgotten. They will have influence and honor. The wicked will be infuriated when they see this. They will grind their teeth in anger; they will slink away, their hopes thwarted.

Can you say “yes” in your heart to this biblical definition of someone who walks in the fear of the Lord? Can you break out in heartfelt praise to God because this description is a tangible reality in *your* life? If not, you now have a very specific goal to strive for! *What are you waiting for?*

The Bible Means What It Says

John 8:47—*He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.*

What we refer to as the Bible is the inspired Book that contains the collection of God's spoken words. These divinely inspired words were written to provide us direction, instruction, reproof, correction, and doctrine concerning how to live in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16). What is the purpose of this teaching? To cause us to take heed to ourselves and to continue in truth, for in doing this, we will both save ourselves and those who hear us (1 Timothy 4:16).

As we are instructed in righteousness and in the doctrines of God that are morally right, fair, and just, we will be used of God to save those who hear us—

and we won't be concerned about being ostracized by those who reject the message. Jesus doesn't refer to non-Christians as anything other than sinners. We must train ourselves according to the words of God, which don't make allowances for "modern" Christianity, and return to New Testament Christianity. The inspired teachings of the Lord will always mean what they say and say what they mean. It's great to believe in Jesus. However, if you don't allow what He has said to impact your life, you are still living a tragedy. To hear and yet fail to *do* carries no profit for you.

It's great to believe in Jesus. However, if you don't allow what He has said to impact your life, you are still living a tragedy.

Numbers Increase When You Believe

Acts 4:4 (NKJV)—*However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of men came to be about five thousand.*

We have to remain faithful to preach truth, which always talks about Jesus and His resurrection. Then it's up to the listeners to believe the truth that was shared in order for increase in God's Kingdom to occur.

Peter preached to the people, "For Moses truly said to the fathers, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you'" (Acts 3:22 NKJV). This was the message the people believed. Because they chose to believe Moses' words through Peter, they became followers of Jesus.

**Sadly, many who are
sharing about Jesus today
are not living the
Jesus life.**

Those listening to Peter believed him when he said that God was going to raise up a prophet like Moses. They *heeded* what Peter said to them. So what is the problem today?

Today the Church is listening, but many are not hearing what the Spirit of Christ is saying to them. To hear what the Holy Spirit is saying requires more than two ears. It requires an open heart to receive and accept truth with a commitment to do what one hears. It's called *responsibility*.

Sadly, many who are sharing about Jesus today are not living the Jesus life. I suspect that this is contributing to the lack of increase among those who listen but do not believe what's being taught. Respect for the Church will only be restored as people see more Christians living like modern-day Peters in their midst.

Pray Without Ceasing

Acts 12:5—*Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.*

When we fully grasp that the Church I comprised of people and is not merely a building, we'll walk more in our authority and in the exercising of our privileges.

There are those in prison who are guilty and those who are innocent, as Peter was. I do not judge the guilty ones because they may one be one of God's new creatures in Christ. But I will begin to pray more for those whom I know are innocent.

Constant prayer is praying without ceasing. Praying without ceasing doesn't mean you can't go to work, grocery-shop, cook family dinners, or clean your home. It means that while doing your ordinary, everyday duties, you continue to confer with the Lord.

Let's not forget that Jesus loves us so much that He will intervene to help us when we trust in Him.

When we yield to God, He will tell us who or what to pray about. I suspect that we waste a lot of time praying about what others are requesting as opposed to making ourselves available for the service of the Lord.

Hebrews 1:14 tells us that God's angels are sent to minister *for* those of us who are heirs of salvation it does *not* say they minister *to* us. Therefore, let us look only to *Jesus* to comfort us. Angels come at Jesus' command to assist us in His plan for us, but only *He* ministers to us.

Let's not forget that Jesus loves us so much that He will intervene to help us when we trust in Him. Angels are our servants, but *He* is our Savior.

Worry About Nothing— Trust God Always

Philippians 4:6—*Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.*

As I was preparing to go on vacation, the text for an issue of *Horizons Unlimited* arrived for me to review and return within a quick turnaround timeframe in order to meet the deadlines of those God has assigned to assist me with publishing this precious book for the precious people whose lives He wants to impact. No one told me the copy was coming, and it wasn't on my calendar of things to do. I answered that I would consider taking it with me, and that if God wanted me to include it in my schedule, He would give me the time and the inner witness to do it.

When I left, I thought I had the copy with me. When I discovered I didn't, I enjoyed the rest of my vacation and thought no more about it.

Returning home, it still was not one of my priorities. I did what I had vowed to the Lord, leaving the text to be read later. The day I decided to read it, I couldn't keep my eyes open. I decided to nap awhile and read it later. As I was about to wake up, the editor of the magazine phoned me to say, "I don't know where you are with this, but I have redone it and taken out all the errors. A new copy will be in your office in the morning."

Because the Lord loves me and knows that I trust Him, He didn't permit me to waste several days on this project for nothing. I didn't worry or fret; I just rested in Him. In the end, He worked all things together for my good and His glory. Don't worry about a thing. When you place your trust in God, unexpected events will work for your good and His glory.

Does God's Voice Make You Glad?

Acts 12:14 (NKJV)—*When she recognized Peter's voice, because of her gladness she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter stood before the gate.*

Rhoda never saw Peter. Instead, she shared by faith that it was he because of the familiarity of his voice. How do we respond when the Lord speaks to us? Are we willing to announce what He tells us, or do we wait for physical evidence before we share? One is faith; the other is not.

I thank God that I have sought Him in such a way that His voice is familiar to me now. I no longer question who is speaking to me. I've learned to obey instantly and let the proof speak for itself as it confirms that what was said or done was indeed a result of hearing His words.

The Lord has given me some helpful hints to help me identify the source of what I hear:

- 1. Does it benefit others and bring glory to Him?*
- 2. Does the spirit of what was said to me lead me or drive me?*
- 3. Do I dread the message or rejoice over it?*
- 4. Are others receiving the message or rejecting it?*
- 5. Does my spirit man bear witness to it and does the Word confirm it when those around me attempt to discourage me?*
- 6. Do I fall asleep instantly, or do I stay wake pondering what was said?*
- 7. Can I meditate on the message and mutter it in peace, or is my heart troubled as I contemplate it?*

These are just a few of the many ways the Lord directs my life and provides the comfort needed to keep me on course with Him.

Spend time with Him. Get to know His voice so that when He speaks, your glad heart will obey.

The Good You Do Will Come Back To You!

Isaiah 38:2—*Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall and prayed unto the Lord.*

Hezekiah was told to set his house in order. He was going to die and not live because he had left the door open to sickness and death (v. 1). But when Hezekiah reminded God of his former acts and deeds toward Him and wept bitterly in humility (v. 3), God granted him 15 additional years.

A late acquaintance of mine used to say, “It’s just nice to be nice.” Never let anyone tell you that there is no profit in doing good or being nice. The seedtime-and-harvest principle works all the time.

Another friend of mine was led to the Lord by his wife. That same wife later charged thousands of dollars on his credit card, committed adultery, divorced him—and the list goes on and on. The man has since been called into the ministry, paid off the credit charges, forgiven his wife, and remained faithful to his God. Meanwhile, the woman has lived a life of defeat.

The Lord recently told me to tell this man that because his wife led him to the Lord (even though she didn’t stay with the Lord), God was going to restore her to Himself for her part in bringing my friend to Jesus so he could become a blessing to many others. The Lord didn’t tell me that their *marriage* would be restored, but He wanted my friend to know that He was going to remember the good his wife did and restore her to Himself. That caused all of us who knew about this situation to rejoice because we realized what matters most to God: that this woman come out of the devil’s darkness rather than die in defeat. God acted in a similar way on Samson’s behalf.

God will never forget your acts of kindness toward Him. Leading someone to Him may one day be your saving grace.

The Lord's Presence Blots Out Sin

Acts 3:19—Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

You and I cannot spend time in God's presence without repenting of any sin for which we are guilty. His very presence convicts us. When we repent of our sins, He doesn't just convict us, He *converts* us. When we repent and become converted, our sins are then blotted out as His presence returns to refresh and restore us to pure fellowship with Him.

Recently as I read Smith Wigglesworth's daily devotional, I was struck by these words: "*We are in God's plan.*" We are on God's mind all the time. He wants nothing more than to communicate *to* us His plans *for* us. Yet too often we are stubborn, hardheaded, and rebellious, a response that leads only to depression.

An inmate acquaintance of mine shared the most accurate definition of clinical depression I've ever heard. He wrote, "It usually comes after a person has lived a life of rebellion, and that life finally collides with reality. That person's false presumptions and disabling misconceptions simply fail to sustain him or to provide meaning and purpose to his life. To sum it up, depression usually is a result of running from Jesus."

If you want peace and joy in your life, run to Jesus, not from Him. The sooner you yield, the better you will be.

What do I say? If you want peace and joy in your life, run *to* Jesus, not *from* Him. The sooner you yield, the better you will be.

Don't Share Your Gift Out of Desperation

If God has called you to a traveling ministry, He knows the grace you need in order to trust Him for places to minister. He also knows what the offering must be to meet your need. But do you find yourself saying yes to a ministry invitation without first conferring with the Lord to make sure that's the place He desires you to be on that particular day?

Some people think that a pastor is more secure in his ministry position than a traveling minister because a pastor has his own pulpit to preach from; therefore, he doesn't need to "kiss up" to people in order to find a place to preach. But no minister should have to "kiss up" to anyone but the Lord. A traveling minister may not have the security of knowing where he'll minister next Sunday the way a pastor does, but

he also doesn't have to come up with a new message two or three times a week like a pastor does. He can preach or sing the same thing over and over again to different audiences. Yet both the pastor and the traveling

**God meets our needs, and
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minister can enter into the rest of the Lord and draw from His grace as they inquire of Him and then share what He is telling them.

Never allow desperation to dictate where your gift and anointing is to be shared. When you act out of desperation, you'll be disappointed both by the lack of fruit produced and by the finances. Trust God to assign and support you.

You and I think we know what we need. However, God is more familiar with our needs than we could ever be. We must learn the difference between our *needs* and our *desires*. God meets our needs, and He will grant our desires as we walk in a manner pleasing to Him.

Never Question God's Next Move by What You See

2 Kings 7:2 (NKJV)—*So an officer on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God and said, "Look, if the Lord would open windows in heaven, could this thing be?" And he said, "In fact you shall see it with your eyes, but you shall not eat of it."*

Who are we to question God's provisions for His people? I say to all God-doubters, "Hide and watch. When God—the God who permitted your lack in the first place—declares it is over, it is over. So can you wait for His tomorrow?" (*see v. 1*).

Instead of questioning God and His ability, listen for His promise to you and then praise Him for it. If you don't believe He will fulfill what He has said, then get out of the way so you're not trampled by those who *do* believe His Word!

Can't you see that the challenge you face right now is a test? How can God give you more when you won't trust Him for what He has promised? Believe that what God has promised, He *will* perform. As you do, the enemy will leave behind whatever he has stolen as he starts to flee from you. God *will* come through.

Never take God for granted, especially when you don't yet see what He has promised. If you could see the manifestation before you believed Him, there would be no faith involved. And when no faith is evident, you are not pleasing to God.

Take a moment and ask God to teach you how to trust Him. Learning to trust is the only way I know for you to walk in all His benefits. When God says it, let that settle it for you. Let the fact that He has given you His promise establish its truth for you. There is no other way to win.

The Outcast Could Be Your Resource for Good

2 Kings 7:9 (NKJV)—*Then they said one to another, "We are not doing right. This is the day of good news and we remain silent. If we wait until morning light, some punishment will come upon us. Now, therefore, come let us go up and tell the king's household."*

Four leprous men, considered unacceptable by society, made a decision. Rather than starve from famine, they would risk their lives by surrendering to the enemy camp. What did they have to lose? When they arrived at the camp, they discovered that God had scattered all its inhabitants. The enemy army had fled and left behind all their supplies.

There is a lesson in that biblical account for you. Your seemingly negative circumstances can be changed overnight when you allow God to manage the situation for you. Your lack today can become your ample abundance tomorrow.

So when you are desperate, don't give up. Also, don't reject whom God will use to meet your need. The person you least expect—even someone from "the enemy camp"—could become God's chosen source for good in your life.

And when you experience a breakthrough, don't hoard the blessing for yourself alone. Sharing brings relief for all. Society may label you the outcast and withdraw from you, but remember that God may be positioning you for future service to others.

Don't allow yourself to remember how others mistreated you in the past and thus withhold a blessing when you're able to meet a need. If you do that, you'll only sever your own resources. As my mother always said, "You can't do wrong and get by."

Are you failing to receive from God because of preconceived attitudes of how God will provide? Stop now and thank God for His blessings, no matter how He brings them to you.

Rejoice in the Prospect of His Promise

Acts 16:25 (NLT)—Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God and the other prisoners were listening.

Anyone can belt out a tune when the surrounding conditions around him are favorable. But what does that person do when he find himself in a tight place?

Paul and Silas had just experienced an unfair, brutal beating that resulted in their being thrown in jail, with their feet securely fastened in stocks in order to prevent their escape. Then an earthquake secured their deliverance—certainly *not* the kind of deliverer one normally welcomes or looks forward to!

When you know of your innocence—when you know whose you are and what He has said to you—you don't care what time of day it is or who your audience is. You begin to release the joy in your heart to pray and sing thanksgiving at the prospect of His promise fulfilled.

I seldom say more than, "Thank You, Father," when faith becomes sight in the matter for which I've been trusting in Him. However, while my faith is awaiting the promised manifestation, I usually kick up my heels and give loud praise for what I am expecting.

I was once in a jumbo jet, traveling from Montreal to New York. The turbulence was fierce because of the storm we were flying through. Lightning was striking all around us, and the wind and rain were beating against the plane. I don't consider myself a singer at all, but my heart and mouth filled that place with a song. That day I sang "In the Name of Jesus" with all my heart, and not one person on board voiced any objections. (Of course, it sounded better when Clinton joined in!)

We Must Know With Confidence

Hebrews 3:14 (NKJV)—*For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold steadfast the beginning of our confidence till the end.*

It is so important for us to grasp and settle it once and for all that we are who the Word of God says we are. We cannot afford to focus on what we think or feel or what may have been said about us by anyone other than the Lord.

How great is the love that God has shown to us! He calls us His very own children. The heathen don't recognize or identify with us because they don't have God's nature within them. As the old saying goes, "It takes one to know one."

We must have the confidence to know that we are God's offspring now. The future will confirm what has not yet been

revealed. We, however, have no need to wait until Jesus is manifested on this earth, for we are convinced today and every day that we will be

like Him. He has put His seal on us to mark us as one of His. Like branded cattle, it matters not how far we may stray; we belong to the One whose seal has branded us.

We have been positioned in Christ to confidently profess that we are His by His choice. We must come to a place where all doubt is eliminated we are who we are because of *whose* we are. Just because we confess God's promise doesn't guarantee we'll ever possess it. We must confidently believe and not doubt.

**How great is the love that
God has shown to us! He calls
us His very own children.**

Got Doubts? Ask Yourself These Five Questions

What then shall we say, if God is for us who can be against us? How shall He not with Him freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? Who is he who condemns? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

The answers to all these questions are found in Romans 8:31-38. Talk about stacking the deck in our favor! God gives us the questions; then He provides us with the answers to assure us of who we are to Him, as well as who *He* is to us.

In this life, we will experience all the things Jesus experienced. This life presents us with trouble, calamity, persecution, famine, lack, danger, threats of death—and the list goes on. But this does not mean His love for us has waned. In fact, in all of this, we discover that we are super-victorious, overpowering in achieving abundant victory.

Anyone can have ordinary victory. Through Christ, we have more. This is not conceit; it is confidence in the love of Christ toward His people. We must strive

for the inward evidence and certainty that *nothing* can ever separate us from God's love which is found in Christ Jesus—whether it be demons of hell, angels in heaven, principalities and powers, things present or to come, heights, depths, or created things.

If you still have doubts about your salvation, determine to make sure you are saved! Ask Jesus to come into your heart right now.

**Ask Jesus to come into
your heart right now.**

A Corpse

James 2:26 (TM)– *The very moment you separate body and spirit you end up with a corpse. Separate faith and works and you get the same thing: a corpse.*

We must learn the difference between the works of the flesh and the works of faith. “Abraham believed in God and was set right with God,” includes his actions. It’s that mesh of believing and acting that enabled Abraham to be named God’s friend (James 2:24).

When you truly believe, or have faith about a matter, you will demonstrate corresponding actions in order for that desire to be brought into the world as we know it. Of

The Lord has often called on somewhat unsavory characters to have a role in advancing His Kingdom.

course, there may be times when your knees are knocking and the perspiration and the palpitations are almost more than you can handle. But when you truly

believe, you cannot help but act on that belief.

The Lord has often called on somewhat unsavory characters to have a role in advancing His Kingdom. In most instances, they passed His faith test with flying colors. Rahab, a local prostitute, hid God’s spies and assisted them in escaping their enemies. Her actions demonstrated the uniting of belief and action. Her faith and her works gave life to a potentially dangerous situation. Take the work out of your faith and you have only death.

He Is A Prayer Answering God

Ephesians 4:2 (CEV)—Your own Epaphras, who serves Christ Jesus, sends his greetings. He always prays hard that you may fully know what the Lord wants you to do and that you may do it completely.

Because God has laid me on the hearts of others and because I know the Father knows what I have need of before I even ask (Matt 6:8), I find it unnecessary to pray for myself. I find what I pray is for others, unless I am asking for forgiveness or thanking Him for the things He has already provided for me and exposed me to, because of my oneness with God and the love of Jesus shared that He has for me (John 16:27).

Think about it, Jesus has committed Himself to intercede for me and to cause the Father's interest, attention and affection to bring great blessings on me.

Knowing the Father already loves me because I love Jesus allows me to rest in Him and to spend my time praying for others.

Knowing the Father already loves me because I love Jesus allows me to rest in Him and to spend my time praying for others. I say with confidence that my prayers are answered all the time, every time. When it appears that my prayers are not being answered, I don't get mad at God, I pray that God will reveal to me what the one I'm praying for is doing to hinder what I've prayed about. When you ask me to pray for you, I will ask you to line your life up with God's will and word for you.

You Keep It By Giving It Away

Luke 12:15 (NLT)—*Then he said, "Beware! Guard against every kind of greed. Life is not measured by how much you own."*

I was once accused of being too altruistic. I didn't even know what the word meant; I had to look it up. Altruistic or not, I do know when God prompts me to give or to lend without interest. I have learned the joy and peace in giving as God inspires me to do so. I do not try to meet every need nor am I always giving to those of my bloodline. The benefits that accompany giving are divine health, peace of mind, personal needs divinely met and things that money can't buy.

Many people who hoard money make it their god. They look for it to resolve and solve all they are confronted with. Someone once said, "A true follower of Jesus' church must train himself to become detached from property and possessions, for if a man's life is in what he possesses, when

disaster comes to what he possesses, his life goes also."

**The obedience of giving
guarantees that you
always have enough and
more besides.**

It is truly a blessing to have when you understand the purpose for having is to be in a position to

freely give as directed by the Lord. The way to keep what you have is to give it away; otherwise, it has you. The obedience of giving guarantees that you always have enough and more besides.

My Faith Became Sight

On Saturday, August 2, 2008, I was privileged to witness the power of God and His love in the lives of once considered hardened criminals.

About a year ago, an inmate wrote to me. This was not unusual because we have over 6,800 inmates on our mailing list who receive *Horizons Unlimited* quarterly. However, I was impressed to ask God if I was to personally respond to this letter because I did not want to be a respecter of persons. The Lord approved my acceptance of the invitation to an event. It was a day I will never forget as long as I live.

I've always wondered how God reached the Apostle Paul. I understood that when I got an opportunity to see God's manifested work in the hearts and lives of these gentlemen, most of whom will never see the outside of those walls says man. Observing them with their families and strangers like my assistant and myself, my heart was made glad and sad. I was a bit sad because I've been around so-called Christian men, some leaders, who could take lessons from most of these brothers. They know they cannot change the crime they once committed, but they all appear to want to correct in others coming in the things that caused them to be where they are. In other words, they are allowing Jesus to use this time in a correctional institution to correct their hearts, their minds and their souls. I was not sent there just to encourage them, but because of the opportunity to sit, one on one, with many of them. I'll never be the same again. We were encouraged

This visit convinced me that capital punishment is not the answer to any kind of crime. Electrocutation seals the fate of a person and consigns them to eternal damnation. A lifer could be approached by someone on assignment from God to be introduced to Jesus and become effective at impacting others. I had an opportunity to say to a brother with several life sentences that I considered it an honor to be considered his sister in Christ for all eternity. My faith had become sight.

Live On A Higher Plane

Luke 14:10—*But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee.*

The Lord does not want other humans to worship us, but He does want man to honor us. How will they do that? As they watch us control our tongues. Just because we have been given the revelation of another's behavior and attitude, even towards us, does that mean we are released to expose it to another? If the Lord impresses you with truth concerning any matter, He wants you to discuss it with Him

so that your prayer will contribute to it coming to pass in His time and in His way.

Thank God for Jesus who taught me to learn to hold my tongue and guard my words—even if what I was about to say was true.

My mother used to speak these words over me most of my childhood, "with this child, what comes up

comes out." She was intending to speak of my boldness to say what was on my mind. She meant no harm but she released over me a spirit to say things that did not need to be said. Thank God for Jesus who taught me to learn to hold my tongue and guard my words—even if what I was about to say was true. One of the reasons for holding your peace is so you are not guilty of influencing others to take sides. Some have caused more harm with their mouth than with their action.

Have You Met A Person You'd Die For?

Romans 5:7 (NLT)—*Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good.*

I have always wondered about the love of Jesus and His willingness to die for sinners at the request and pleasure of His Father. Until recently, I did not understand that kind of love because I had not met a human that I was willing to give up my life for: sinner, saint, relative or friend.

The Lord allowed me the privilege to meet a person who was living for Jesus and impacting others lives in such a powerful and positive way that I said, "Dear God, if I could exchange my life for theirs, I, with your grace, would. I sensed that

In Revelations 3:21, Jesus promises: I will grant the over-comer to sit with me in my throne. Can you offer that to them?

the Lord was saying to me, "I have that person exactly where I want them for the time being. For now, they have a more powerful ministry than they would have outside of where I have them." Because of their infamous past and their submission to the Lord, Jesus Christ, they are contributing to Jesus' fame, much more, in the hearts and lives of others. Because they have been willing to suffer with Christ in this life, they have overcome already.

In Revelations 3:21, Jesus promises: I will grant the over-comer to sit with me in my throne. Can you offer that to them?

Did God Give You Permission To Say It?

Speaking what God has not approved is another form of fear or gossip. Most of us do not intend to be gossips, but we, even as Christians, fear being abandoned, so we seduce others to take our side by sharing little tidbits with them they have no need to know. The Lord showed me that was insecurity.

Jesus never revealed that Judas was the one that would betray Him. He merely stated that one of them would. Why? He did not want to contribute to their attitudes or opinions in a negative way. What He accomplished was for them to each examine themselves to make sure they were not the one. When God approves our words, they will never

**When God approves our words,
they will never criticize
or condemn another person.**

criticize or condemn another person. I have found myself in mid stride having to stop what was about to proceed from my

mouth because it was not Godly and was not going to edify anyone.

One of the things that helped me was obeying the Lord when He told me to stop reading newspapers or other periodicals and to abstain from watching television. I never realized before how much they were influencing me. I found out that most of what I was reading and watching I had no need to know. Do I feel out of touch? I sure do and I'm glad because it affords me more time in His Word, which puts me more in touch with Him.

Stony Hearts Are Out— Spirit-Directed Hearts Are In

Ezekiel 36:26 (NKJV)—A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

Rebellious, stubborn hearts are never in line with God. Pure hearts and a desire to obey God and to remain faithful is all God has ever wanted from His people. In order for us to stop being self-willed and to become God-willed, we must permit

His Spirit to enter our flesh, which will make it possible for us to obey and live according to God's Word and His

Flesh that is not submitted to God will follow the dictates of the devil.

will. Flesh that is not submitted to God will follow the dictates of the devil. Yet God made our flesh, and everything He made is good.

So stop cursing your flesh. After all, God gave it to you! Through Adam's transgression of giving, dominion of all he had been given was transferred to Satan. In that one act, Adam released a force that would influence the flesh of all mankind, affecting it in a negative, ungodly way. However, Jesus' death and resurrection came to condemn sin in the flesh, bringing deliverance and freedom to every believer willing to let Christ be enthroned in his heart.

Crucifying the flesh begins by allowing the Holy Spirit dominate it.

Oh, What Love

Ephesians 4:2 (CEV)—*Always be humble and gentle. Patiently put up with each other and love each other.*

As Christians we often fail this assignment, but it is not impossible to do. Because we are chosen by God to be one of His, we can live worthy of that position. He only asks that we do our best to permit His spirit to keep us united.

It took me a while to learn and accept that God never asked me to do more than my best. I found that when I did my best, His best took over and infused me with His grace to

I ask the Lord to teach me to be as patient with others as He is with me. It works. Divine love is superior to human love; it's higher and deeper and does not run out.

keep going.

What a comfort it became to know that I didn't have to quit because I had reached the end of my rope. I

know my limitations. Since the Lord does not have any, I persevere in Him. I no longer have to concern myself with proving how tough and strong I am. To be humble before the Lord and gentle with others demonstrates a different kind of strength for me. I ask the Lord to teach me to be as patient with others as He is with me. It works. Divine love is superior to human love; it's higher and deeper and does not run out. It helps me to act more like Jesus. Oh, what love!

Do Not Make Me Repeat Myself

1 Thessalonians 5:19 (TCNT)—*Do not stifle the voice of the spirit.*

One of the things my mother disliked when I was a child was for me to act like I was ignoring her previous remark to me. She would say, “Don’t make me repeat myself.” At the moment when she spoke those words, I would pray for instant recall because if I had not been paying attention and she had to tell me again, I would pay a price. How much more do we take God for granted when we ignore what God is saying to us?

I’ve never heard Him say don’t make me repeat myself, but I sure have wished I could remember the words He has spoken to me at various times. I’ve certainly learned the value of every word He speaks to me and, with the coming of recorders, many times I have been able to retrieve His

I can’t afford the luxury of stifling the Spirit. He may tire of repeating Himself.

words of wisdom spoken to me personally. Before I learned to appreciate every one of His spoken and written words, I retained some and lost others. I’ve learned that even though God does not permit something to occur when He’s talking to me about them, I stay alert, because it will surely come to pass often sooner than later. I can’t afford the luxury of stifling the Spirit. He may tire of repeating Himself.

God Knows More

Luke 18:27 (NKJV)—*But He said, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God."*

Often the doctor will say, "I've done all I know to do, he/she is going to die." Everyone is going to die; that's nothing new. However, since God knows more than all the humans in the world, let Him make the choice concerning life and death. Confer with Him before you start to repeat any physician's words. Let God tell you what's going to happen concerning your loved one.

A member of our church was told recently that her mother, who was in a coma, died. The call came from a sibling

while she was at work. Her supervisor gave her the time off to handle the arrangements. She called me and we arranged for her to pick up the "Life

Since God knows more than all the humans in the world, let Him make the choice concerning life and death.

Transition" information form we provide to our members when a family member falls asleep in Jesus. She was impressed to call another sibling before she left town and discovered that her mother was still in a coma but alive. The next report was Mom was out of the coma and sitting up.

I was going away for a few days. Having inquired about her mother before I left, she reported that her mother was coming home the following week. That Sunday, she testified that Mom was home as of Friday and went to get her hair done on Saturday. All this in less than four weeks because God knows more! Next report she was taking a driving test.

There Are No Exceptions To The Rule

We tend to think there is an explanation for everything. When we cannot logically explain a thing, we say it's an exception to the rule. Why not just admit that there are some things that God has created that we cannot understand or explain?

What we call "exceptions to the rule" tells us that we simply cannot explain God because He has not revealed to us what we fail to understand. There is a high degree of probability with the majority of things, but God always has the final say about everything. Who made the rules? Who is the expert about everything?

When I taught our kindergarten students, we gave them some very sound rules that applied to phonics. However, there were always "exceptions to the rule," which meant that the rule did not work in every situa-

There are no exceptions to His rules. I have observed what appeared to be impossible situations altered with nothing more than a change in one's attitude about faith.

tion. That is not true with God's rules and His promises. There are no exceptions to His rules. I have observed what appeared to be impossible situations altered with nothing more than a change in one's attitude about faith.

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!

Don't Personalize It

During a time of prayer, I overheard my then mentor say, "Yup, yup, I know that Father, but it's not my concern even though it concerns me." I was so convinced that he was talking to the Lord, I got up from my knees fully expecting to see him and Jesus in conversation. That changed my life forever, over 28 years ago.

I still meditate on it, because it helped me to understand that even things about me did not have to affect me if I chose not to permit it to bother me. I began to run every word spoken through my Holy Ghost filter to determine when and if I would allow words spoken to me, or things that happen in my life, to control my attitude and my actions about what was said or happened. I also began to learn that I don't have to respond or react to anything and everything unless I want to.

Those words helped me to take back control of my life. It also helped me in my personal training to seek what the Holy Ghost was speaking to me about what was being said to or about me. I stopped personalizing most things.

I don't have to respond or react to anything and everything unless I want to.

Jump Flat

Revelations 19:10—...*The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophesy.*

When we hear of the workings of the Lord in the lives of others, we all can rejoice with the person and our faith soars because our spirit identifies with it. I have sat through too many services with worship leaders giving instructions to the congregation to “jump for joy, clap your hands, and say hallelujah,” etc. More often than not, this quenches the spirit in me and I find I don’t want to do anything. Trust me, I don’t need to be told what to do to celebrate Jesus, and if I do anything without the prompting of His Holy Spirit, it’s flat.

My late husband was one of the best Gospel writers, pianists and singers I’ve ever heard. There were times that the anointing of God was all over him and everyone knew it. But he often told how “he could work a crowd and get them to want to bite the carpet or swing from the chandelier.” What was the difference? He knew most Christians were emotion-

ally led and not spirit led so he simply trained himself to arouse their emotions. Thank God, he came to realize that one worshipped God and the other excited one’s flesh.

Worship leaders, pastors and teachers, tell the truth about Jesus and allow the Holy Spirit to take it from there; otherwise, it’s flat.

Worship leaders, pastors and teachers, tell the truth about Jesus and allow the Holy Spirit to take it from there; otherwise, it’s flat.

Shepherdize

Micah 5:4—*He shall stand and feed on the strength of the Lord...*

Progress has its advantages, but because society today has robbed us of so many experiences due to the many machines and modern day conveniences, I question if we could survive if we find ourselves in a real life crisis.

One of the responsibilities for a pastor or parent is to “feed the flock of God” (1st Peter 5:2). Because we have had little or no training in raising sheep, we never learned the principle of what a shepherd does to insure the care, teaching, restoring, tending, guarding, watching and preserving of his sheep. The princi-

ple has not changed. Jesus still does for us all these things because He is the true shepherd. In fact, the

original word for *feed* is *shepherdizing*. Look up the words *feed* and *shepherd*; you’d be surprised at what we have permitted in our lives and congregation.

Another word for *feed* is *rule*. This does not suggest, for a moment, any kind of abuse of the sheep. Neither anywhere in the Bible does God suggest that sheep know more than shepherds. All of these subjects: sheep, shepherds and feed need more light to have the true picture to follow. We are out of balance and corrections are necessary.

**One of the responsibilities
for a pastor or parent is to
‘feed the flock of God.’**

A Message and A Figure

Recently, I was awakened one Sunday morning with a figure and a message. From experience, when God gives me a figure to sow, He is never trying to extract from me, but to get more to me. This is why I don't sow seed until I hear from Him. Otherwise you are sowing in emotions not in faith. There is no return on emotional seed sown but there is in faith seed.

We had provided our facility for use by a group of Hispanic ministers. They had a well-known Hispanic evangelist in as their guest. We invited him to stay over for our mid-week service. He really blessed our congregation. The Lord told us to invite the two couples whom we support from Mexico and they could bring a couple of their faithful

**Pastors, never steal a
Christian worker's seed.
You will not be blessed.**

workers and we were to pay all their expenses. We did and they, too, were blessed. That Thursday, prior to them sharing what God is

doing through them, another couple gave me a belated birthday gift of financial seed.

The Lord's message that Sunday morning after sharing the figure was, "I have not given you seed to hoard but to sow." I knew at that moment God had a plan. After sharing God's message and figure with the congregation, they caught the Spirit and gave abundantly for the work of their ministry. Pastors, never steal a Christian worker's seed. You will not be blessed.

Do You Know What Time It Is?

Ecclesiastes 3:1—*To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:*

In the next seven verses of this chapter, Solomon shares concerning times and their opposites. The problem with this teaching is we lack understanding of it and equate much of it to our dealings with God's creation. We are not called to help God with His timing concerning His people.

All men and women are His people though not necessarily His sons. We don't qualify to decide when anyone is to die; yet we do. We are unable to decide whom to hate, but knowing what to hate is another thing. Whatever God hates, as His child, I am to hate also. If I decide that capital punishment is right because of another's behavior and actions, I could consign that person to eternal damnation because I did not believe that anyone could reach them with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul would be on his way to hell if it were left up to us. David Berkowitz, Nicky Cruz and Maury Davis would never have survived our legalistic cry for justice. I thank God that Jesus intervened and the light of His tender love shown on them and turned them around to reach many for Him. I do not condone their wrong; that's between them and the Lord. Since I am not without sin, I refuse to cast any stones. It's not the time for such judgment. Instead, it is time for each of us to pursue God's purpose. Do *you* know what time it is?

The Holy Ghost Was Sent To Lead and To Guide

John 16:13—*Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.*

The Holy Spirit was sent for many purposes in our life. His primary role is to teach us and to guide us into truth. He is a conductor to show us the way. Sure, we know some things but He knows everything, especially God's plan for our life. One thing we can depend on, if we let Him take the lead, is He will never take us down any path that is not pleasing to God. Don't try to understand Him before you permit Him to guide you; just know God has given Him the whole picture for your life and mine. But, He can't guide unless you and I allow Him to take the lead.

**You'll never be a leader
for God until you are a
follower of His Spirit.**

No guide in the natural can lead you if you put him behind you. Guides must always be in front. You'll never be a leader for God until you are a follower of His Spirit. You and I make

mistakes and wrong choices. He can't and won't. For the Holy Ghost to steer us wrong would disqualify Him to be a part of the Godhead.

It's not a good idea to question God's direction for your life. I often tell Him I don't understand what He is up to, but I obey Him anyway. It's called faith. When I obey in faith I get the understanding. Then we are both pleased. God wants faith; I need understanding.

There Must Be Unity In The Body

1 Corinthians 12:18—*But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.*

Recently, God reminded me of how privileged I was to be a part of what He is doing. He pointed out He had a Puerto Rican evangelist in the streets getting black young men, as well as others, saved. He had a Canadian in Mexico City, having taught him fluent Spanish in three months, to feed His sheep. Also present were two Texans, having gone first to the Artic where it was down to 75° below zero to share with Eskimos for thirteen years, then moving to train pastors and teachers and conduct vacation Bible school for the Mayan Indian children in the jungles of Mexico.

Then God showed me our part in this. He was using me, a black woman, and RLCC's other pastors, a white man and his black brother, with our mixed congregation to support the others in His plan for all the nations.

God desires for all men to be saved and to come into the knowledge of the truth.

Pastors and fellow Christians, please get before the Lord to find out what you can do for others outside of your assembly. God desires for all men to be saved and to come into the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4).

Believers, you may never be required to go into other places but we can obey God and help to send others and support God's work through them. Building the kingdom of God is about home and foreign missions.

Welcome

Mark 9:15—*And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him saluted him.*

Jesus, unlike Moses, attracts people to Him. Moses covered the glory that was shown on his face (Exodus 34:29, 33). Jesus is multiplied in us, a reflection of Him as we walk in His love, and respond to people with His grace and mercy. We have no compassion of our own. It's all about Him. The people, when they beheld Him, were amazed, ran to Him and welcomed Him. They will always embrace and enfold Him into their arm.

How are we presenting our Savior to the world? Jesus is not legalistic although He has boundaries and standards for

us to live by. He is the greatest example of a parent I've ever seen. He does not excuse; He forgives.

He never pauses to

Jesus never pauses to wait for us to get it right. He keeps going expecting us to catch up.

wait for us to get it right. He keeps going expecting us to catch up.

Parents, teachers and trainers, I encourage you to learn to be like Jesus. He makes allowances for us though He never condones our wrong and laziness. I like the fact that I can go on with Him but He sets the pace. When I fail to keep up, He does not make it impossible for me to catch up. The choice is mine. How much do I want His friendship and His fellowship? Thank God that His love and mercy make us welcome.

What Is Our Common Thread?

God's plan is beyond anything you or I could ever think up or imagine. He has a reason for everything He does. Our common thread is we all love Jesus. We desire that all people of every nation come to Christ and become His disciples. We know the value of teaching the uncompromising word to whoever wants to listen. We understand the value of obedience. None of us have it all; we are a part of His whole. Let's let Him lead us as to the part He wants us to play.

I don't expect to ever permit "break dancing" in my church. I do not believe that rap

music or hip-hop is for the church. I believe it belongs in the street and is being used to attract many sinners to Christ, through young people who understand the importance of them getting Godly teaching from men, women, boy and girls that know how to be everything to all men.

Jesus is our focus; Kingdom building is our job. The Gospel is still the power for salvation (Romans 1:16). Who's to say how God will use His message to those needing to reach those that are untaught. Young people, stop thinking that we older Christians are dinosaurs. Give us time to become flexible while you grow more in God's grace. We need each other. We have wisdom that you need. You have the energy and strength we need to go where we can't.

Young people, stop thinking that we older Christians are dinosaurs. Give us time to become flexible while you grow more in God's grace.

When God Speaks

Psalm 119:49—*Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.*

On August 21, 2008, that scripture along with the next verse was given to me through a well-known evangelist while at lunch with a group of other ministers. Formerly a thug and gangster, he encouraged me to always obey whatever the Lord spoke to me. This was a confirmation that I was on the right track in my attitude and reverence of the Lord and His spoken and written word.

There are times that God's requirements of you and me will be different from what is expected of others—do it anyway. I used to have a picture in my office of a lone “buck” on

There may be times you have to forsake all and follow Him. If others join you, they are part of His plan for your life.

top of a rock. The caption at the bottom said, “When God speaks, don't look over your shoulder to see whose following.”

There may be times you have to forsake all and follow Him. If others join you, they are part of His plan for your life. If they don't, you still are expected to make the journey without them. They may have to play catch-up. God does not want to break up families but someone has to be the head and take the lead.

Don't miss your calling because you are waiting for another's agreement; you obey God.

When Adversity Comes, Sway If You Must; Just Stay Rooted

Isaiah 7:2 (NKJV)—*And it was told to the house of David, saying, "Syria's forces are deployed in Ephraim." So his heart and the heart of his people were moved as trees of wool are moved.*

We do ourselves a grave injustice when we focus on the current and forget what God has said and done. He does not share wisdom and revelation with us to cause us to be frightened or moved.

Sure, there are times when we, who are like trees, blowing in category 4 hurricanes, sway and even bend. But when we get rooted in peacetime, we are found standing when our storm is over.

Tears don't last always; neither do storms. Weeping may endure for the night but His joy comes in the

Weeping may endure for the night but His joy comes in the morning (Psalm 30:5).

morning (Psalm 30:5). Mourning, lamentation, complaining, and tears come and are only authorized for a night or a portion thereof; but gladness, rejoicing and singing must follow in the morning.

We permit grief, distress and sadness to linger past their allotted time. Surely things occur in life that momentarily rob us of our shout, but we hold on to them too long.

Give it its one night if you must, but remember no longer the god of sadness but the God of your joy. Your strength will return immediately.

An Unwise Choice Is Not A Mistake

A co-worker recently wanted to go north on the parkway but because of habit he turned south. That was a mistake that could be corrected at the next exit.

Pregnancy out of wedlock is not a mistake. I have had one, which was the result and consequence of a gamble I took and lost. Mistakes can usually be corrected. Gambles could cost you everything or a long extended price you never intended to have to pay for. Mistakes only require an apology. Unwise choices require repentance and forgiveness.

God says not to fornicate or commit adultery. Even if a marriage follows, disobedience to a commandment of God was still done. We cannot deliberately violate God's commands and call it a mistake.

To remove your clothes and climb in a bed with another person for the purpose of sexual gratification, knowing that the Bible forbids it is wrong and cannot be classified as a mistake. The time

has come for those of us that are responsible to consider our responsibility and rise to the occasion, regardless of who it affects

and stop making excuses for undisciplined choices. God's Word and rules never change. He extends grace and mercy when we are honest with Him.

**God's Word and rules
never change. He extends
grace and mercy when we
are honest with Him.**

Are You In Place?

John 10:27—*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.*

Many call *The Choice Is Yours* or ask me wherever they see me, how I can be so confident that the voice of the Lord is speaking to me?

It started with this verse. I know I'm one of His sheep. I know He speaks to all His sheep. I listen to what is being said. My spirit judges His words to me, for me to walk in His victory in the earth and for all eternity.

He has to talk to me daily in the same way I had to feed my sons daily after I brought them home from the hospital. I do not believe that any demon or man can pluck me from the Father's hand (John 10:21).

Because the Father is greater than all and He and Jesus are one, so no one can pluck me from the hand of Jesus (verses 28 and 30).

God has to talk to me daily in the same way I had to feed my sons daily after I brought them home from the hospital.

Question, do you keep anything from your children that would help them succeed and win every time? Oswald Chambers so wisely said, "Very few of us hear the call of God

because we are not in the place to answer."

Look around. Where are you? Who are you associating with? Are you encouraged to follow the crowd or inspired to go with the Lord? His voice is clever when you remain where He plants you. Trust me, you don't know more than God. Those that are not His sheep believe not. I'm His, therefore I believe.

Who Authorized Choirs and Praise Leaders? Part 1

Ephesians 5:19—Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.

You may have heard the old saying, “When the devil fell, he fell in the choir stand.” That isn’t true, because there was neither a choir nor a choir stand when Satan fell. Where did choirs come from? I don’t know their origin, but I do know God never spoke of them in His Holy Word.

There is no question that God has gifted many people with extremely good singing voices. The same is true of people with the skill and talent to play musical instruments. However, I find nowhere in the Bible that says God provided these gifts for any purpose other than to help lead others in praise and worship to Him.

My heart grieves over the singers and musicians who have prostituted their God-given gifts, talents, and skills.

In the Old Testament, “psalms” are often mentioned, the majority of them written by David in his worship to the Lord. A psalm is a set piece of music, a sacred ode or chant accompanied with voice, harp, or other instrument.

My heart grieves over the singers and musicians who have prostituted their God-given gifts, talents, and skills. They have sacrificed God’s original intention for their musical gifts—to lead others in worship to Him and to edify the Church.

Who Authorized Choirs and Praise Leaders? Part 2

Colossians 3:16—*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*

Thank God, my late husband Clinton began to get the revelation of the influence and effect that music has on people—especially Christians—before he left this earth. Everyone who knew Clinton was aware that he, in his flesh, could make you bite the carpet or swing from the chandelier. He had trained himself to be a showman.

Then my husband began to see what he was doing musically: He realized he was *performing* more than he was

worshipping the Lord. Once the Lord revealed this to Clinton, he changed. It would grieve his spirit when he saw or heard other singers and musicians appeal to people's flesh rather than their spirits. He

Pastor, consider whom you are exposing your people to in this arena of music—performers or worshippers?

always said, "A singer or musician knows the difference." If the music makes people want to dance, it fits in the category of performing. If a singer makes people want to lift their hands in thanksgiving to God or bow in His presence, it's a spiritual act of worship.

Pastor, consider whom you are exposing your people to in this arena of music—performers or worshippers? The spiritual health of your congregation depends largely on the answer to this question.

Provision and Promise Are Not the Same, Part I

Genesis 1:29—*And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth.*

Genesis 12:2—*And I will make of thee a great nation.*

Prior to the Fall, Adam had been given everything he would need on the earth. Although Abram's family was selected of the nations to be the channel through which

to bring forth man's redemption from the Fall, Abram only received God's promise. With Adam, the provision was real. With Abram, the provision was coming because of the

promise. Adam never had to use his faith for anything. Abram was never to have anything without exercising his faith.

Thank God for Jesus! He provides for His people all that God has promised. In Christ, the provisions and the promise became one. All it takes is the same faith to bring the promise into the natural realm so we can use its provision.

I recently watched the movie "The Miracle Worker." Afterward I walked, prayed, and cried. I began to realize that the Body of Christ is like Helen Keller and Jesus is like Ann Sullivan. By faith He saw what was in us and was willing to die in order to enlighten us. Jesus never gives up on us—but sometimes to reach "the real us," He has to remove distractions and hindrances.

Provision and Promise Are Not the Same, Part 2

Hebrews 10:36 (CEV)—*Learn to be patient, so that you will please God and be given what He has promised.*

The key word in this verse is “patient.” The New King James Version reads, “...After you have done the will of God, you *may receive* the promise.” God is giving us permission to *receive* His promises, but we still have to use our faith in order to *enjoy* His promises.

We often endure, but too often we do it with much complaining about the lot that has befallen us. Adam and Eve had the provision needed for *this* life. In Jesus, we not only have provision for this life, but we also have His promise of *eternal* life. Both are ours. We are covered in Him for both realms.

Often we want the promises without the patience to do God’s will. But we must not think we will receive His provision and promise while we spend His dime. When God said, “Bring ye all the tithes...” (Malachi 3:10), He meant all.

When you fail to bring God’s dime to His storehouse, you have not done His will. And failing to do God’s will short-circuits His provision and His promises

to you. God has established His way for you to receive the benefits of His divine provision, and He will not permit it any other way.

So save yourself time and grief. Do God’s will His way, and His provision and promises will come *your* way. Nothing else works.

**Do God’s will His way, and
His provision and promises
will come your way.**

Rest in What God Told You To Do

Psalm 112:5 (CEV)—*Life will go well for those who freely lend and are honest in business.*

One of the many words of wisdom I have received from the Lord is to lend or to give only as directed by Him. When you do it His way, you don't have to be concerned about payback. If you receive back what the Lord told you to lend—great! If you don't, life will still go well for you. However, when the other party isn't honest in his business affairs with you, it will not go well for him. Why? Because God never honors dishonesty.

When people give or lend without the Lord's sanction, they usually expect something in return, such as loyalty, friendship, 'being there when I need you,' etc.

When people give or lend without the Lord's sanction, they usually expect something in return, such as loyalty, friendship,

"being there when I need you," etc. That form of giving or lending is one of two things (sometimes it's both): They're either *bribing* or *controlling*. Too often parents engage in this form of giving with their children and grandchildren.

When you obey God in this area of giving or lending, you can be assured that you're going through a test—but so is the other person. How can you know if you're following God's direction or your own? Ask yourself this: If the person fails to pay you back, will you be able to forgive the debt and keep your Christian witness intact?

My Personal Devotions

My son, attend to my words; consent and submit to my sayings. Let them not depart from your sight; keep them in the center of your heart. For they are life to those who find them, healing and health to all their flesh. Keep and guard your heart with all vigilance and above all that you guard, for out of it flow the springs of life. Put away from you false and dishonest speech, and willful and contrary talk put far from you. Let your eyes look right on [with fixed purpose], and let your gaze be straight before you. Consider well the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established and ordered aright. Turn not aside to the right hand or to the left; remove your foot from evil. (Proverbs 4:20-27 AMP)

The next several pages are some of the writings God has impressed me to read and confess daily from *Horizons Unlimited*. What a difference they have made in my life.

I want to share them with you. Perhaps the Holy Spirit might quicken some or all of them for your use.

Use whatever God gives you, and walk in total victory for the rest of your life here on earth as well as in eternity.

Be blessed in all your effort for Him.

His Joint Heir,
Sarah W. Utterbach

Called by the Name of the Lord

Deuteronomy. 28:10—And all the people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord; and they shall be afraid of thee.

So many things will happen in, around, through and for me shortly, that my reputation and God's reputation concerning me will no longer be something people hear about. The evidence will be so apparent, that every where I go, and everything I do, and every word I speak will carry with it so much power that the godly and the ungodly will be able to see that there must be a supreme being that has **named** me to be His own.

God did that for Israel, and He is about to do it for the Church. I trust that you are a part of the Church. If not, get in now. God is about to do an additional thing that will not be observed by a few, but by all the people of the earth because Jesus wants it that way. Therefore the Holy Spirit is positioning Himself to cause it to be so. Angels in multiplied numbers are in a state of readiness to act on behalf of all who are called by His name.

"Make believe" and playtime are over. You are either in, on your way in or you are out for the count. I don't want people to be afraid of me but there are some things about to surface which will not be comfortable to the flesh. Some may even say God is no longer with me.

However, what God is about to do that people cannot deny will generate awe in them. God will perform great and mighty exploits to be seen by all. The devil thought he had eliminated my spirit, but because I know His name, a strong tower will appear and God's people like me will run into it and be safe. That safety began the day I accepted Jesus into my heart. The evidence of the situation is accelerating as I write this and you read it. I will use His name often and with confidence. The time has come for all to see how He responds to His children called by His name.

Tried By Fire; Separated For Service

It is the trial of my faith—not my faith—that is more precious than gold. You allowed tests and trials to come because I am your child. Trials remove what interferes with my purity. Some things must fall away, for there must not be one ounce of foreign substance present to hinder me from being the golden vessel fit for your use.

I will never run from the pressures that come my way. They are to train me in endurance. You asked me to run with patience. You did not ask me to sit and stare. The reward will not be to the swift but to those who endure. Winners must participate in the race.

Gold and silver are corruptible. They will rust and lose their luster, but as your child, I am born again by the precious blood of Jesus, affected by neither change nor chance. I will go forth in the service to which you have called me. Because I will not always be greeted with hospitality; you prepared me to endure and continue in my call, ignoring the circumstances surrounding me.

In order to endure, I must count it all joy, Count it all joy that the alloy of my nature is being removed and burned away by the fire of adversity. When the temperature is lowered again I will discover that not one bit of my real value has been lost. I will not shrink at the tests, trials and challenges of life. I will rejoice for they have come to develop me to stand in the ultimate position that you have for me.

I am a winner because of my acceptance of Jesus Christ your Son, and His substitution for and identification with me. I am kept by your power. I am cared for, watched over and protected by you.

When my faith is tried, it is part of my preparation for service. You are with me now, you will be with me in the fire, and you will be with when I emerge in manifested victory.

Revelation Knowledge: The Key To Being Filled

Every time you speak an additional truth to me and I receive it and act on it, I am being filled with your spirit. You look forward to the time that I have received so much spiritual revelation concerning who you are and what you say, that no word you utter to me will sound foreign to my ears, because I will have moved from hearing with my physical ears to hearing with my heart.

Those of us with ears to hear will begin to act out all that you will say to us. Speaking in tongues and operating in all

The time will come when I will clothe myself in your Spirit and walk through the remainder of my time in the earth victorious in all things.

the gifts of the spirit are good, but they always benefit others. Hearing what you reveal to me

will start to benefit me in a mighty way, which will result in me being a blessing to others.

The time will come when I will clothe myself in your Spirit and walk through the remainder of my time in the earth victorious in all things. Will I cease to experience the negatives of this world? No, but their effect on me has already lost its power and the revelation of that truth is manifesting itself in spiritual reality as I continue in my search for all of you. Oh how you have waited for this day!

What Did Wisdom Say?

You are wisdom. Every word that you utter to me will make me wise when I listen intently to you. Because of your love and your plan for me, there is no need for me to beg you to speak to me; I merely need to pay closer attention.

You are spirit, therefore you relate to me spirit to spirit. Your voice is distinct from the voice of my flesh. My body will take me in the opposite direction from where you want me to go. My mind is my responsibility. You would not have told me to renew it if it was not in need of attention and construction.

I will train my heart to hear your truth. I will find what you say to me agreeable and delightful. Revelation is my daily diet. You keep nothing from me that I need to know on any given day. You will never withhold from me what is needed to make my day successful.

The advice you have for me will make me cunning so that you can make me know your words are truth. They are stable and solid and everyone that you share will provide me, the hearer with what I need for every circumstance. I will not listen to anyone else, nor be moved by the fads of today. You are the same yesterday, today and forever.

My past is behind me and it did not defeat me because of your words to me. My future is not in your hands, it is in my mouth. What I utter today will become my habitation for tomorrow.

I will guard well my heart. I will never allow bitterness or unkindness to enter because those things quickly accumulate, and the abundance of them must not proceed from my mouth. My words will determine my future.

You have more for me to do because my words have power to create and to destroy. You have waited to see if I understood what I could cause in life. You are convinced that you can release more things to me because as my trust has grown in your truth, your truth has grown in me. I will always ask myself ahead of time, what did wisdom say?

Complete Those Things You Have Been Assigned

The Lord said not to concern myself with the things of this world. He has abundantly provided for my every need. He has made available to me the desires of my heart. I am His child; He desires only my whole heart. The division of my heart is a stench in His nostrils. I am no longer my own. He paid a high price for me. I come unto Him often, for His wisdom is at my beck and call. He knows the beginning from the end. Why waste time trying to comprehend that which He has already resolved?

I will seek Him early; I will seek Him late; I will seek Him often. His words to me are always "yea" and "amen." I will inquire of Him before I make a move. I am your beloved; I can never make you weary with my inquiring. That is my old nature trying to limit my accomplishment by telling me not to bother you. But I will not listen to that old nature, for I have learned to recognize your voice.

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

I am loved, I am blessed. I am set apart from all the rest to do those things which you have called me to do. I'll give you the glory and the praise in all things, and together we will soon accomplish the visible task and rejoice together. I will keep looking up. You are coming soon.

With Your Help, I Will Do It

Psalm 119:32 (NKJV)—*I will run the course of your commandments, for you shall enlarge my heart.*

Quitting is not an option for me as a believer. Of course my flesh tries to get tired; the journey tries to appear long and hard. However, my Lord has never expected me to perform in my own strength, though he does expect me to endure to the end. The psalmist wrote, “I will run the course of your commandments”.

God will never ask me to run a course He has commanded without providing me with the grace to accomplish the task. The psalmist’s next words “for you shall enlarge my heart” simply mean that the Lord will expand me to stay with it, to continue to run the race that He has placed before me. This is what God will do for me as I run the course of His commandments

The greatest help to overcome any obstacle that I face is to be aware that I am not running the course alone. He is with me to help me, to encourage me, and to strengthen me. I will not look at the circumstances or conditions before me; they could overwhelm me. I will remind myself of who God is and that He has ordered these steps that I am presently taking. He did not bring me this far to allow me to fail. I will do what I can do—and that is to always praise Him.

It thrills the heart of God when His children run with His promises. He runs with me and with his help I will do all He has called me to do.

Dear Father God, you are my Father and I love you. Even though the natural situation does not always look good, I will praise you because you are worthy to be praise. I do not praise you for what you do. I praise you for who you are, and that is so reassuring to me. There is no variability or shadow of turning with you. You have no need to change. You cannot get any better than you are, you cannot fail. Trusting you based on our experience together gets easier all the time. I thank you in Jesus name, Amen.

Are You the Jig—or the Saw?

We came into this world as a part of a divine jigsaw puzzle. Then when we received Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we received a distinct advantage, since He is the One who puts each piece in its proper place as we are led by His Spirit.

Whenever we balk at God's direction and think we know more than He does, we experience unnecessary knocks and blows in life. If only we'd submit to God and resist the devil instead of embracing and entertaining the devil! Then we wouldn't have to deal with the consequences of resisting

God's direction instead of enjoying the fruit of resisting the devil's deception.

Too many Christians are afraid

His Word is eternal for each of us who will receive it, internalize it, and act on it in faith.

of too many imaginary things. This fear hinders them from being the precise piece of the puzzle God intends for them to be.

Nothing takes God by surprise. He is so wise. He provided one Jesus and one Cross to cover all the sins of all mankind. And He made His Word powerful enough to sustain us forevermore. His Word is eternal for each of us who will receive it, internalize it, and act on it in faith.

God made many members of His Body as it pleased Him. Why, then, do we work so hard at pleasing others, only to have them constantly "change the goalpost" on us? We have only One to please.

Ask the Lord to help you discover the piece of the divine jigsaw puzzle you are designed to be. Make the choice to become His perfect fit by faithfully fulfilling your role in His plan for building His Kingdom.

Enduring Grief Is Acceptable to God

1 Peter 2:20 (Worrell)—For what glory is it, if, when sinning and being beaten, ye endure it? but, if when doing well and suffering for it, this is acceptable with God.

At a recent church fellowship picnic, a member asked me, “At what point do you stop being affected by others’ unkind words, ugly attitudes, etc.?” I referred the person to this verse in First Peter.

Once I found what was pleasing and acceptable to God, it appeared that His abundant grace brought forth faith in me and for me. What once would have sent me into orbit emotionally no longer moved me; I was totally in control with God’s help. It really became easy to endure. I stopped thinking of the “stuff” that happens in life as something I had to endure; instead, I began to see it merely as part of life in this fallen world. I learned that the real issue isn’t the adversity that comes our way, but *how we handle* that adversity.

I have always been willing to take my lumps when I was wrong, but I’d fight a person “tooth and toenail” when I was innocent.

Once I found what was pleasing and acceptable to God, it appeared that His abundant grace brought forth faith in me and for me.

Now I just smile, shrug my shoulders, and pray that the other person in a difficult situation discovers the same peace I have found in Christ Jesus.

Those of us who are parents or God-called pastors never throw out the babies with the bathwater. We just clean them up and believe that God’s grace really is sufficient for us both.

Either I Got It, or I Don't

Esther 2:15 (NKJV)—Now when the turn came for Esther the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her as his daughter, to go in to the king, she requested nothing but what Hegai the king's eunuch, the custodian of the women, advised....

Esther was just one of many young, beautiful women selected to be prepared as a potential replacement for Vashti, the king's dismissed wife. This position was not a desire of Esther's heart, but she permitted herself to go

It matters not if we are male or female — when we think we have to help God with His plan for us, we'll miss His best for us every time.

through the basic preparations. When it was her turn to spend the night in the presence of the king —

knowing that she was a Jew and he was a foreigner — Esther took the attitude, *Either God is in this, or He's not*. If God was in fact ordering her steps, no one was going to be able to stop it. If it was not God's plan, she wasn't going to waste her time trying to make it happen.

It matters not if we are male or female — when we think we have to help God with His plan for us, we'll miss His best for us every time. Esther ultimately became queen instead of a concubine because she refused to try to impress anyone. She either had it, or she didn't.

God made each of us who we are, and He often takes the foolish things of this world to confound the wise and the mighty (1 Corinthians 1:27). Be who you are, and let God take it from there.

Just Hold the Line

Don't worry about the mule going blind; just sit still and hold the line." Although this statement wouldn't be classified as being scriptural, the principle it conveys is just as profound.

Some of us know that blinders are placed on horses or mules to prevent them from becoming distracted by what they see in their peripheral vision. Horses and mules are trained to respond to the line held by the driver of the wagon, but they can also respond to the things they see.

Think of that driver's line as the Word of God—His statutes, precepts, and commands. When we become new creatures in Christ, God's Word becomes the "line" we are to follow. We are to focus on what is ahead and not on the distractions of the world around us.

When God inspired the Bible to be written, He knew all the inventions

When God inspired the Bible to be written, He knew all the inventions and technology that were going to one day be made available to try to influence our children and us.

and technology that were going to one day be made available to try to influence our children and us. He knew that if we'd keep our hearts according to what He had inspired to be written, we would handle every situation victoriously.

The bottom line is this: "Just hold the line."

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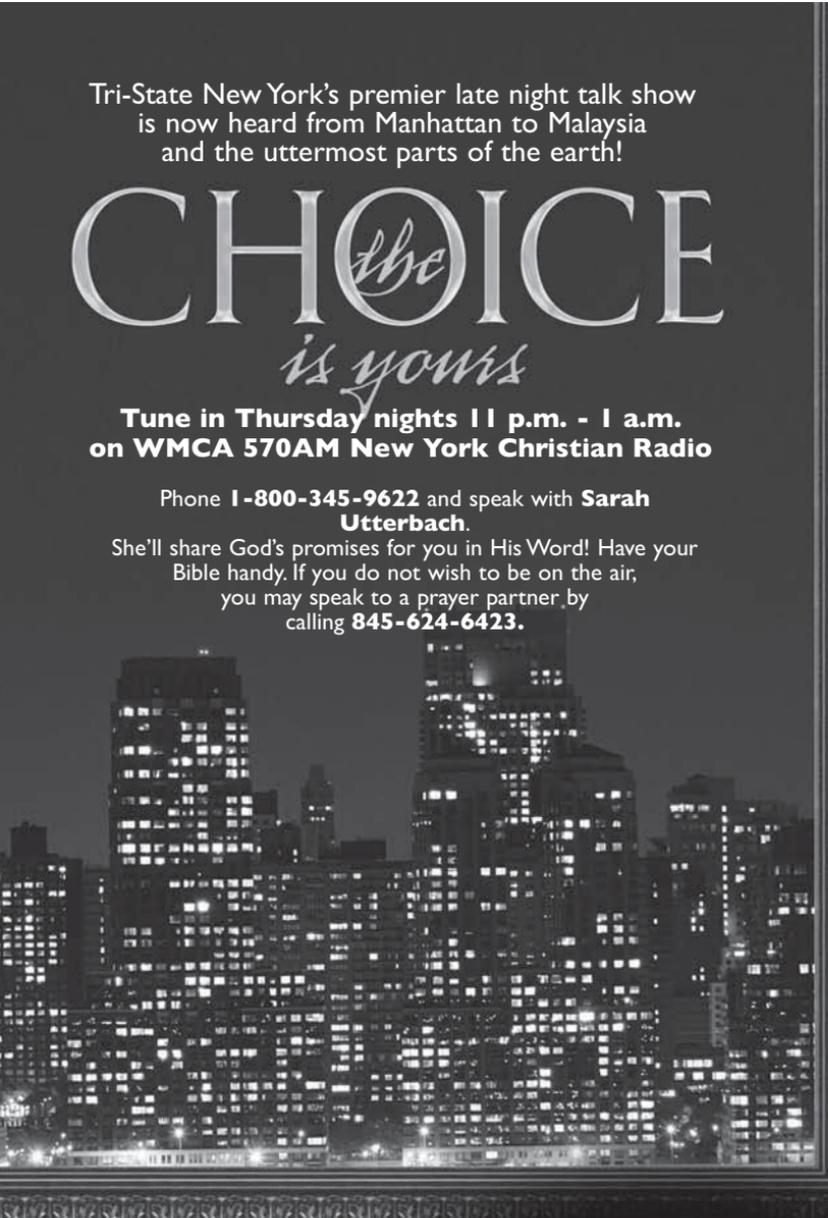
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Special Announcement

from Pastor Sarah W. Utterbach

To my Christian family and friends,

There are beginnings and endings, and endings and beginnings. The time has come to end the quarterly production of *Horizons Unlimited*. To say I have mixed emotions about this would be a gross understatement.

I, like the children of Israel, in the Old Testament, knew when the cloud of God rested and when it moved. They did what it did, when it did it.

Nearly 30 years ago when I began chronicling the words that God would speak to me in my personal time with Him, no thought ever entered my mind about these words ever getting in print to be a blessing to thousands and impacting their lives beyond anything I could have imagined.

I clearly recall the night the Lord spoke to me through one of His servants to "Get it in print and get it in print now. Do you understand me? Sow it and don't sell it." I remember where I was. I even remember what I had on.

I said, "O.K. Lord", but I had no clue how to proceed. The following week, He provided the editor, the graphic artist and the publisher, all in another state, none of whom I had ever seen or met.

Horizons Unlimited was the name given, which I had received on a plane from New York to Los Angeles years earlier, as it made a turn showing only the sun disappearing beyond the horizon outside.

Horizons Unlimited has been a first class, quarterly publication for years with fresh manna from the Lord to every reader daily. However, when the Israelites reached the Promised Land, the manna ceased. God, the provider of the manna gave no warning; He just stopped the manna though he still met the need of His people.

I have no clue as to what God wants me to do next, but I sense that the era for

a quarterly magazine is over. Will there be future editions on a less regular basis? I don't know, but I can assure you, it will be fresh from His throne if and when there is another one.

It is my understanding that every issue of *Horizons Unlimited* text starting in September 2001 through this final issue is available on the Internet. Starting in the summer of 2005 to February 2009, every issue can be downloaded for your spiritual enrichment.

You have been wonderful. Your letters and comments have been more than I could have expected. The relationship that I have been privileged to establish with so many inmates has been glorious. Some of you found issues in a trash can, on your meal tray, desk, tables, anonymously in some of the strangest places that only God could have arranged.

Know that I am going on with the Lord and whatever else is His intended purpose for me. I will continue to record my conversations with Him. What He will have me do with them, I do not know at this point.

It has been my pleasure to serve you and Him all these years. Write often and pray much that I might forever be found in His perfect will, doing what is pleasing in His sight.

As the Lord directs, I will pray for all of you, knowing He's the same yesterday, today and forever and He will always be there when you need Him.

Words do not express the love God has put in my heart for you. We're connected by the thread of His love in Jesus Christ His Son.

Keep looking up; Jesus is expected!
Remember: *I've never been better in my life.*

Love for all eternity,
Sarah

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