

TODAY'S SAPPHIRES

Finishing What God (And You) Started

Thursday, March 5, 2026

Proverbs 19:24 says, "The sluggard buries his hand in the dish but will not even bring it back to his mouth to eat." It's a dramatic picture of laziness to make a point. Many people never see things through; they start and never finish. They start plans they never finish: jobs, marriages, families, big dreams, serving God, and ministries, but they give up. They get discouraged or run into problems and throw in the towel. They shrink back, get distracted, tempted, or they mess up and they give up. You've got to follow through. If you don't follow through you'll never have the blessing. There's always going to be conflicts and challenges. If you don't follow through in ministry, marriage, or with that problem, you'll never gain the prize. If you're doing something and you're in the Lord, it's of the Lord; ministry, marriage, parenthood, fellowship, love... your life is of the Lord. Follow through! Keep going! Press on until you finish the course, win the prize, get the reward, and know the blessing. And you won't end up hungry like the sluggard.

From Message #1017 - The Finishers

TODAY'S MISSION Today, follow through with something for the Lord that you have put off, let go, or just never taken up. Gain the prize!

Scripture: [Philippians 3:14](#) | [Proverbs 19:24](#)

Your Heavenly Genes

Wednesday, November 5, 2025

When I was 5 years old, I saw a girl extremely tall for her age, and we were the same age. My mother told me the reason she was so tall was because of her genes. I thought to myself, "Why would she be tall just because of the pants she wears. I also have jeans but I'm not as big as she is." The point is, if your parents are tall, you're more likely to be tall as well. In the same way, if you're born again, God is your Father. Thus, your spiritual characteristics come from Him. That means that who you are is not based on what you were. You become you based on your parents' DNA. And so if your Father is heavenly, then your identity is now no longer earthly but likewise heavenly. You're born again to become heavenly. And if your Father is holy, then your identity is now no longer unholy, but likewise holy. Holy is what you were born again to become. And if your Father is perfect, then it's for you now to start becoming likewise - perfect.

From Message #1529 - Earthly Fathers & Children of Heaven

Scripture: [Matthew 5:48](#)

Today's Mission - Today, ponder your heavenly DNA. In salvation, you have the spiritual genes of heaven. What does that mean? Live accordingly.

Bait And Switch

Thursday, October 30, 2025

There's a deceptive sales practice called "Bait and Switch." It consists of this: the seller offers a great bargain or savings. Then, when the customers come in, they try to sell them something more expensive. The enemy uses the same tactics. He will always seek to have you switch your love of God for something else. The enemy will try to draw you off track and will do it by attempting to shift your focus and your affections. It happens with many believers. They start out with zeal and passion for the Lord, but then their heart becomes misdirected. They end up doing things out of other motives: for the love of status, the love of approval, the love of a person, the love of money or comfort, or even for the love of religion and ministry; for the house of the Lord instead of the Lord of the house. Has that happened to you? Come back to your First Love. Guard your heart and your affections. Seek to grow even more in love with God than before. God is the real deal - don't be fooled by imitations.

From Message #1421 - Selling The Brooklyn Bridge

Scripture: [Matthew 6:1](#)

Today's Mission - Today, take inventory. Have you in any way been moved from your first love? Turn away. And come back to the joy of your first love.

Living Outside The Container

Wednesday, January 28, 2026

Luke gives the account of Messiah basically being kicked out of His own synagogue. So what happened to that synagogue? They went on with their services, rituals, routines, and their social lives. But Messiah moved on outside the synagogue; the healing, the good news, the release of the captors went on, freedom to the prisoners, sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and all the miracles that His own synagogue couldn't contain. His own religion could not contain Him, and neither can ours. Even when the religion is in His name today as Christianity, He's bigger than that. If you want miracles, blessings, and His presence, then you have to step outside of your routine, your rut, and even the rituals in your life. Because the walls of His religion couldn't contain Him. He had to go outside for the miracles to keep going. You need to step outside the narrow walls and walk with the King in the excitement of the new adventure of Him. For the blessings He has for you are so big, they cannot be contained inside.

From Message #671 - Messiah In The Synagogue

Scripture: [Proverbs 4:12](#)

Today's Mission - Today, stretch yourself and do something outside of the ordinary, outside of what you've ever been able to do before. By the power of God, do something extraordinary!

The Radical Power

Friday, January 23, 2026

Think about the power of the cross. It was an execution stake, a horrible vessel of torture and death that became the symbol of life and hope. Amazing! Death turned into life. It was the worst thing that could happen that became the best thing that ever happened. The worst sin that has ever been-- the crucifixion of God-- became the greatest act of righteousness that has ever been. The ending of Messiah's life becomes the beginning of eternal life. The cross becomes a place of hope, and the tomb becomes a place of new beginnings. The power of Messiah, is to turn everything upside down. You have that power, too. If you're in Messiah, you have the power to turn everything upside down; to turn your sorrows into joy, your setbacks into victory, your failures into triumph, and to turn every bad thing into the blessing of God. Use that power. For the cross is the most revolutionary power in the universe. It's the power of the Lord for you to turn the world - and your life - upside down.

From Message #1201 - Upside Down

Scripture: [Psalm 30:1](#)

Today's Mission - Today, whatever your situation, take the power you have in Messiah and apply it to your life - Turn your life - and the world around you - upside down!

The Prisoner's Love

Thursday, November 6, 2025

Annmarie was a young Slovak Christian imprisoned for her faith in Communist Eastern Europe. While imprisoned, her main desire was to see her torturer saved. So she spoke of the beauty and love of the Lord. Her torturer responded with more beatings, to which she responded with more love. In every pause of his whip, she would share God's love for him. "I'll beat the love out of you," he threatened. "When you beat me," she said, "I saw your hands and thought of how you must hold your wife with them and how blessed she must be... and how when you use those same hands to torture, it must bring pain to others in your life, and to you." Her continual love ended up breaking his resistance. One day he asked her how to be saved and gave his life to the Lord. He then risked his life to obtain her freedom. If she could so love her torturer - shouldn't you too love those who persecute you, certainly those who bother and irritate you? For the faithful and continuous love of God can turn even your torturers into saints.

From Message #1432 - The Upside Down Kingdom

Scripture: [Luke 6:27](#)

Today's Mission - Today, apply the radical, revolutionary, and totally unexpected power of love to those who have sinned against you. Surprise them with grace.

The Scorpion and The Frog

Monday, October 27, 2025

Here is an old folktale: There was a scorpion that wanted to cross a river but was unable to swim. The scorpion saw a frog and said to him, "Carry me across the river." "No," said the frog, "You're a scorpion, and you'll sting me." "But that would be foolish," replied the scorpion, "If I were to sting you, we'd both drown. So why would I do that?" So the frog agreed and began carrying the scorpion on his back across the river. Halfway across, the scorpion stung the frog. "Why did you do that?" exclaimed the frog, "Now we'll both drown!" "I couldn't help it," replied the scorpion, "It's my nature." The scorpion is a fitting symbol for sin. You can't negotiate with sin, reason with it, or change it. Its nature is to destroy. So you can't allow it even the smallest amount of room. So how do you deal with sin and the old nature? Only one way - You crucify it. Don't be as foolish as the frog. For as it is written, that sin "wars against your soul." Why? That's just its nature.

From Message #1418 - The Mystery Of The Ben Adom

Scripture: [2 Peter 1:4](#)

Today's Mission - Today, do not attempt to negotiate with any sin or old nature. Instead just crucify it in Messiah.

The Man in The Dungeon

Wednesday, October 29, 2025

If you went to the castle of Herod Antipas at the beginning of the fourth decade of the first century, you would find the king living in luxury while a man in nothing but a garment of camel's hair languished down below in the dungeon. It would seem clear who the successful one in life was and who the failure was. The man in the dungeon was, of course, Yochanan, John the Baptist. His life would soon be over. And yet 2000 years later, no one thinks of the name "Herod" as something good. And this particular Herod is remembered for being a corrupt, compromised, immoral, evil man. But Yochanan would become among the most honored and revered people who ever lived. He would bring Messiah and salvation to Israel and to millions of lives. So don't ever judge your life, or whether you're a winner or a loser, by the way it looks, or by your circumstance. Only follow the will of God, and do whatever you have to do to fulfill His call on your life. And no matter what - you will be a winner.

From Message #1420 - The Glory In The Dungeon

Scripture: [Ecclesiastes 7:1](#)

Today's Mission - Today, look at your life, not by the standards of the world, but by the will and calling of God - And live accordingly.

Not Even a Billion

Monday, October 20, 2025

Once an interviewer asked the oil tycoon J. Paul Getty, "If you retired now, would you say your holdings would be worth a billion dollars?" Getty paused to do the math in his head. "I suppose so," he said, "but remember, a billion doesn't go as far as it used to." What Getty was saying was that even having a billion dollars was not quite enough. So many people spend their lives seeking more money and worldly things, thinking that more will bring them happiness. But it's never about what you have on the outside - it's about your heart. If your heart is empty, no amount of riches on the outside will fill it. However, if your heart is full of the things of God, no lack of money or anything on the outside will change that. Proverbs 15 says, that the one who has a joyous heart, has a never-ending banquet. Do you want to be truly rich? Then set your heart on becoming rich in God. Give thanks to the Lord at all times for all the blessings and your life will become as a never-ending banquet.

From Message #734 - The Never-Ending Banquet

Scripture: [Matthew 6:19-20](#)

The Ant Hero and the Dumb Ant

I was once attempting to show mercy... to an ant. I was trying to lead it around its obstacles to freedom outside. I was trying to be an ant hero. But the problem was I was dealing with an especially dumb ant. It kept going the wrong way, no matter what I did. Now ants do indeed have brains the size of a small bread crumbs. But the ant didn't have to have a high I.Q. All it needed to do was to trust me. If it trusted me, that ant would have functioned as if it had super-intelligence, as compared to its fellow ants, functioning on the reasoning of a human brain. Compared to God, our intelligence is even less than that of a bread crumb-sized brain. So if you're wise, you won't rely on your own intelligence and understanding. If you do, you'll be living like a dumb ant. But if you trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not to your own understanding....then the Lord will direct your path and you won't live your life like a dumb ant!

Psalm 115:9-15 -- O Israel, trust in the Lord; He is their help and their shield. O house of Aaron, trust in the Lord; He is their help and their shield. You who fear the Lord, trust in the Lord; He is their help and their shield.

The Lord a has been mindful of us; He will bless us; He will bless the house of Israel; He will bless the house of Aaron. He will bless those who fear the Lord, Both small and great. May the Lord give you increase more and more, You and your children. May you be blessed by the Lord, Who made heaven and earth.

Our human nature tends to give us the desert to do things our way, we want control of our destiny. But we need to trust that God has a greater plan for us and let go.

TODAY'S MISSION - What have you been dealing with, struggling with, or concerned about? Today, stop struggling and commit to God. Trust in the Lord and lean not to your own understanding.

God is not bound by reality

People often say, "You have to be a realist. It's fine to have faith and dreams but ultimately you have to be a realist." I've got news for you...You don't have to be a realist. In fact, you shouldn't be a realist. We're supposed to be like God...God isn't a realist. God doesn't just accept things as they are, nor does he limit Himself by the reality of the world. He made the world when there was no world. If He were a realist, He would've just looked at the situation and accepted it. He would have said, "Well there's no light and we just have to accept that." He never did because God isn't a realist. He said, "Let there be light!" And there was light. In the same way, if you call yourself a child of God, then you also cannot be a realist, nor be bound by what is real. You're not called to accept the world; you're called to change the world. So whenever you're faced by a situation of darkness, don't accept it. Say, "Let there be light!" And there will be light. For God is your father, and your Father is no realist!

Matthew 5:14 -- "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.

TODAY'S MISSION - Don't be a realist! Don't be bound by the reality of your circumstances or problems. But, in God, live in faith, by His better and overcoming reality.

Vulcan and the Aaronic blessing

In the 1960s, 'Star Trek,' a science-fiction series came on television. One of the most famous lines from Star Trek was the Vulcan greeting. Mr. Spock would lift his right hand, part two fingers to the right, and two to the left and say, 'Live long and prosper.' This is an Aaronic blessing going all the way back to Moses. Mr. Spock, Leonard Nimoy, was Jewish, and as a boy in a synagogue, he experienced a descendant of Aaron giving the Aaronic blessing. When he became Mr. Spock, he translated the ancient Aaronic Blessing into the Vulcan greeting. Now, people of all nations can witness a Jewish man giving a condensed version of the Aaronic Blessing (Numbers 6:24-26). Thus, we see that from the Tabernacle in Jerusalem to outer space, the Jewish people exist to give and be a blessing to the world. If you are a child of Israel, in Messiah, you too exist to give and be a blessing. So no matter where you are in life, a desert wilderness or somewhere in outer space, fulfill your calling today; bless and be a blessing. That is your prime directive, your mission on the blue planet.

Numbers 6:24-26 - ““The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.””

TODAY'S MISSION - You've been blessed by God. Today seek to give the blessing of your love, your joy, your hope, your faith, in some way - to everyone you come in contact with.

Answering the wrong call

Hineni is the word that God's people used to answer His call down through the ages. It means 'Here I am!' Jacob said it. The problem was, it wasn't his call that he was answering. His father was expecting his older brother Esau, and Jacob said, 'Hineni!' He was pretending to be Esau. Though his father unknowingly blessed him, Jacob would pay the price of his dishonesty for years. His true blessing would only come after a wrestling match that ended with the Lord asking him, 'What's your name?' This time he said the truth, 'Jacob.' By doing it, his name was changed to 'Israel.' A profound truth for your life is you can't answer someone else's calling. You'll never find God's perfect will for your life if you're trying to be somebody else. Hineni isn't about trying to be anything other than who you are. Hineni simply means, 'Here I am, as I am, with no pretense.' You can't answer the call of Esau. God has a better call with your name on it. Stop trying to answer a call or fulfill a role that isn't you. You've got your own calling.
Answer it.

Genesis 27:18-19 -- And he came unto his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I; who art thou, my son?

And Jacob said unto his father, I am Esau thy first born; I have done according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me.

TODAY'S MISSION - Today, seek to please no one but God Himself. Seek to do all things for His eyes only. And simply be who you are in His presence.

You like an airplane

Believers and airplanes... what do they have in common? Airplanes are unique among all transportation. You can stop a horse, you can stop a car, and all of them will simply stop and stay there. But if you try to stop a plane in mid-air, the plane will descend and crash. Further a horse can back up, a car can back up, but a plane can't. So for a plane, there's no backing up, and there's no standing still. So it is for a believer. Other people can back up, but you can't. Your walk in God has no provision for backing up. That's why, when you start going backwards you're so miserable. Maybe your walk isn't going anywhere and hasn't been going anywhere for a while. Don't let it crash. Turn on your spiritual engines and start moving forward.

For Paul wrote, 'But this I do, forgetting what lies behind, and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Messiah Yeshiva, Jesus. You, my friend, are like an airplane. Press on, press on, press on, and you'll find yourself flying in the heavenliest.

Philippians 3:13-15 - **13** Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, **14** I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. **15** Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you.

TODAY'S MISSION - Think of a way to move a step forward in the Lord today - and go forward (especially in an area where you may have been slipping backward)

Your Traveling 18.5 Miles Every Second

It may seem quiet where you are. It may seem that nothing's really happening, but it's not really the case.

Every second you're travelling 18.5 miles. That's the speed of the earth. Every tick of the clock, you're 18.5 miles away from where you were before the last tick. If that's not enough, when you count to ten, you end up 200 miles away from the place you were when you started counting. Can you imagine how long you've traveled just reading this message? Even though it may not look like it, everything is moving. Every soul is moving, either toward God or away from God. It's not just true for the earth. It's true for you. Your life is heading somewhere. It's meant to head to glory. God wants to bring your life to a good place. You should decide that since you're going places anyway, it can't ever be away from God, but to Him. Move closer.

You can't stay where you are. Move ahead in love, faith and in God - because God definitely wants you and your life...to be going places.

Jeremiah 29:11-- For I know the plans that I have for you, says the Lord, plans for peace and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

TODAY'S MISSION - Take a look at your life. What direction is it moving in? Seek today to move in only one direction, closer to the Lord.

When Imperfections Turn into Blessings -

So [do not fear](#), for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. --[Isaiah 41:10](#)

Snowflakes are fascinating.. They come in all different shapes and sizes. Some appear as delicate lace doilies others as shining stars. Yet they all have their similarities. Each snowflake has six points, is made up of molecules of hydrogen and oxygen, and is symmetrical in shape.

But did you know that the ice that makes a snowflake collects around a particle of dust floating in the atmosphere? The tiny imperfection may be as small as 1/100,000 of a millimeter in size, but it has to exist for a snowflake to form!

In the same way, imperfections in life can often be the catalysts that cause something wonderful and beautiful to happen. A "foreign invader" that crashes into our lives—such as a terminal illness, an accident, or a heartbreak—can actually turn into a source of blessing.

As it says in [Ecclesiastes 3:11](#), "He has made everything beautiful in its time."

When you encounter obstacles in life, remember that they give you, as a believer, the chance to let God make something wonderful happen. If you are struggling with a difficult situation in your life, seek the Lord and wait for Him to create from it a beautiful blessing. Because I promise...if you're looking for it...He will!

PRAYER CHALLENGE: Thank God that when hardships come, He makes something beautiful as a result! Pray that He would continue to transform your trials into blessings by surrounding you with His grace, love, and mercy.

What Christmas Can't Do

“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” ([John 10:10](#) nkjv).

As the Christmas season descends, we're seeing countless commercials of things we're supposed to buy.

The implied promise is that if you give this, or if you receive that, then you'll be happy. Certainly, there's a rush of excitement in receiving a very special gift. But for the most part, you probably can't remember what you got for Christmas last year, even though it seemed so important then.

It reminds me of the husband and wife who went Christmas shopping at the mall. The husband wandered off, so his wife called him and asked where he was.

“Remember that jewelry store we went to 10 years ago?” the husband asked. “You saw that beautiful diamond necklace, and I said that I couldn't afford it then, but one day when I had a little more money, I would buy it for you.”

“Yes, I remember,” his wife said, trying to catch her breath.

“Well, I'm at the donut store next door to it.”

Christmas, commercially at least, cannot live up to the promise, to the standards we've set in our minds. At best, Christmas is a promise of greater things to come. However, it's not Christmas that will give us life; it's Christ.

Jesus said, “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” ([John 10:10](#) nkjv).

Christmas without the X

"...But the angel said to them, Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people. For to you is born this day in the town of David a Saviour, Who is Christ (the Messiah) the Lord!..."
- [Luke 2:10-11](#) (AMPC)

So often these days we see Christmas with the 'Christ' taken out and replaced with an 'X'. It's almost as if it's a nameless celebration. We as Christians know how far from the truth that is. We read here of angels appearing to the shepherds and declaring the birth of Jesus, the Son of David - who is the Christ (the Messiah). It is in no way a 'nameless' event, but a wonderful celebration of the greatest event - the birth of Christ and the reconciliation to God He brought to us all.

So let's keep the 'Christ' in Christmas.

Christmas must always start with Christ

For He has saved us and changed our lives.

What Rembrandt didn't know

He went bankrupt, lived in poverty, and died in obscurity. He didn't have enough money to pay for his own funeral. A friend put up the money - the equivalent of five dollars and twenty cents. Who was this unknown impoverished man? Rembrandt - one of the most famous and celebrated artists of all time. He who lived as poor and unknown is now considered to be one of the greatest masters in the history of art. If you're born again, then you're like Rembrandt. You can never judge your life by your circumstance. The real picture is much more glorious. You may be living in obscurity, feeling that no one knows or cares. However, you're not obscure to God. You're very well known to the angels. You might feel poor. The fact is you're rich beyond your wildest imagination, with eternal riches. You might feel like a failure. You're not a failure if you're following and serving God. In the light of eternity you'll see the riches, majesty, and glory. Be encouraged and press on to the upward call. Heaven is watching, the angels are cheering, and your life will turn out... a masterpiece.

Colossians 2:2-3 -- My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

TODAY'S MISSION - Don't live your life today dwelling on what you think you don't have.

Bad bible interpretations and the Nazis

In Germany, the Protestant Reformation began and the Word of God was lifted up as the sole authority in matters of faith. Later the school of Higher Criticism developed. Higher Criticism said that you can't take the Bible literally - it's the work of man. This weakened the church. By the time Hitler came to power, the church was powerless to stop him or the decay of German culture.

Messiah calls His people, the "salt of the earth." He warns us that if we lose our saltiness, we'll be good for nothing but to be thrown out. In Biblical times, salt was used as a preservative to keep food from going rotten. If we're the salt of the earth, then we're the ones responsible for keeping our culture from going rotten.

The Church of Germany got away from the Word, from the simplicity of the faith and lost its saltiness. The result was Hitler and a rotten and rotting culture.

What about you? Have you gotten away from the Word and away from the simplicity of your faith? Have you lost your saltiness? Get back, my friend. Be salty. The alternative is only rotten.

Matthew 5:13 -- "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

TODAY'S MISSION - The Kingdom at Broken Crosses
Keep it simple today:
your faith, when you pray, when you read His

Hymns of Zeus

When the apostle Paul spoke on Mars Hill in Athens, he did an amazing thing. In sharing the Gospel, he quoted from pagan Greek writers. He even quoted from a hymn they used, and yet used it to speak of God.

How could this be? How could he use something so pagan for such a holy purpose? God is not so much looking at the outward thing you're dealing with, but the heart, the purpose, the reason, and the goal of all you do.

Paul determined to use all things, "by all means," to spread the Gospel, to be a Gentile to the Gentiles, in order that people would come to salvation. In the same way, you need to have the same heart, to be so zealous for salvation, to use all things in your life for the glory, the purposes, and the heart of God for the salvation of the lost.

Use every situation, every circumstance, everything you have and know for the glory of God. For if Paul could use a hymn to Zeus to accomplish God's purposes and glory, then there is nothing in your life that cannot be used likewise.

Acts 17:22-23 -- Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.

TODAY'S MISSION - Today, seek to use every situation you have for God's purposes and glory.

In a backyard near Bethlehem

It was the last day of our tour to Israel. I had it all planned that we would end up on the road to Emmaus and a very special conclusion. But they want to first take us to this place near Bethlehem. So we go there. It's poor, dusty, depressed. And just as we're about to leave, our bus breaks down.

Our tour is ending in the middle of nowhere. I'm praying and I sense the Lord saying, "It's not where you are that matters..." So I ask an Arab household if we can use their backyard. They say "yes." We get a guitar and start praising the Lord. And the Spirit of God is there. And the father of the Arab family - and later, his entire family - pray to accept the Lord.

It was a perfect conclusion to our pilgrimage. We often judge our lives by our surroundings, our circumstances, our problems. That's a mistake. It's not where you are that matters - It's Whom you're with. Wherever you are, rejoice in the Lord; glorify His name, lift Him up, and give thanks - and wherever you are will become a place of glory, victory, and joy.

Romans 4:17 -- As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not.

TODAY'S MISSION - Is there anything in your past that still haunts you or defines you? Lift it up to the Lord - and then believe, receive, and rejoice in your freedom.

Talking to the Western Wall and McDonald's

The story is told of an Israeli on visit to a friend in America. His friend takes him to McDonalds where they go through the drive through, give their order and then to the window to pick up their burgers and fries.

The Israeli is amazed, awestruck. He has tears in his eyes. "Why are you so amazed and getting so emotional?" his friend asks him. "Because," says the Israeli, "in America you talk to a wall and out comes a hamburger, a shake, and fries. In Israel, we've been talking to a wall for 2000 years and not once have we ever gotten a hamburger!" Talking to walls... it's a Jewish tradition. The Jewish people have lifted up prayers at the Western Wall from ancient times. God's people are to talk to walls... and mountains... and obstacles... and barriers.

The Lord has given you the power to say to the mountain, "Be removed." And if you can talk to mountains, then how much more to that problem and hindrance in your life. Go ahead, do it, by the authority of Messiah. You may not get a hamburger, but you will get a victory!

Matthew 21:21 -- Jesus replied, "Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt,(A) not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done.

TODAY'S MISSION - Is there a wall in your life that shouldn't be there, a mountain, an obstacle? Talk to that wall today - in the name of Messiah, tell it to get out of the way.

American Education and the Bible

In the early 1960s, prayer and the Bible were banned from the American public school system. And yet what was the reason the American school system came into existence? The reason was given at the time of its birth, in 1647, in Massachusetts - It was "to ensure that no one be kept 'from the knowledge of the Scriptures.'" So it's not just that the Bible was part of the

American educational system - It was that the American educational system itself came into existence for the purpose of teaching the Bible. And yet today, the Bible is banned from the school system, while sexual immorality is taught even in the nation's kindergartens. How could this happen? Only step by step - whether for a nation or a person. So even a little step away from God now, can end up, in time, leading to total apostasy and destruction. So guard your steps, even better, seek that every step you take brings you one step closer to God - and you'll never have to worry about falling away.

2 Timothy 2:5 -- And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.

TODAY'S MISSION - Get closer to God. Establish a time to read and study your Bible every day and stick to it.

The Blessings of your Haman

Haman was an evil man. He breathed evil, schemed evil, committed evil.

And yet because of Haman, Esther finally rose up to her calling. She stopped living a lie. Because of Haman, Esther grew to become a truly great person, a woman of righteousness, one of the great saints of the Bible. Because of Haman, Esther finally became free to fulfill her calling. Without Haman, all that would never have happened. What does that tell us? It tells us that even the worst things, the most evil people, the greatest calamities in your life, will be turned around for your good, for your blessing. That problem, that crisis, that worry, that burden, that discouragement, those enemies, that hindrance, that opposition, that set back - don't worry, but praise God anyway. The promise is that even these will work out for your good. Start thanking God for that, in advance. For if Haman could work blessing in the life of Queen Esther, then that problem will certainly work blessing for yours. So give thanks to God, because all your problems - they're just Haman's blessings.

Romans 8:28 -- And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who[a] have been called according to his purpose.

TODAY'S MISSION - Thank and praise God as much as you can throughout your day - then you will have less time to worry.

The Separated One

Hebrews 5:1 says, "For every high priest is taken from among men." The Levites were taken from Israel. The priests, or kohanim, were taken from the Levites. The High Priest was taken from the priests. Each was taken and was separated and that was key for their calling.

The word holy, "kadosh" in Hebrew, implies being separated. The Bible says if you're "born again" you're now a priest. That means you're also taken from among men, not just chosen but separated.

That is key. If you want to fulfill your calling, you have to be separated. Not so much from specific people, though it can mean that, but from sin, the world, carnality and the flesh.

In the New Covenant, a priest could only fulfill his or her calling by separating oneself. You, as God's priest, ecclesia (church in the Bible) means the called-out one, separated.

Fulfill your calling! Doors are going to open! Separate from the sin. Separate from the world. Separate from whatever you have to separate from. Take yourself from among men that you may enter the presence of God. You're called to be holy, "kadosh", separated - a priest unto God taken from among men.

Romans 9:23 -- What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory—

TODAY'S MISSION - What has hindered or even distracted you from God's calling on your life? Come out from that today.

The Devil's Venom

Psalm 58:4 says, "They have venom like the venom of a serpent, like a cobra."

Venom is injected through the snake's teeth. Once inside, it destroys the victims by hemorrhaging the blood vessels. The poison kills the prey. All the serpent needs is one good bite, and the venom does its work. The Bible says the enemy is a serpent - one that has fangs and venom. The enemy works by seeking to bite and inject a lie into your heart. He's the father of lies: God doesn't love you; your life has no purpose; you have to live in sin, fear, depression and gloom; and you can't get close to God. His goal is to get lies into your system through wounds and hurt, tearing you apart emotionally and spiritually.

You need to do something. You might have venom in your system right now, in your heart, maybe for years, crippling you. Face it, confess it, deal with it, and renounce it. Get it out of your system, heart, soul, and life. Get that venom out and the Lord will give you healing and wholeness. It's not an option. You have to get the venom out!

1 Corinthians 15:56-58 -- The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

TODAY'S MISSION - Is there a place in your life or soul where you've been bitten, wounded, defiled by the enemy. Take that area, and apply the antidote, the grace, and love of God, to wash it away.

Praise after the bomb

I know a Jewish believer in Israel who was in a congregation of believers and there was opposition. The Orthodox bombed his congregation. He knew it was the enemy trying to intimidate him, so days after the bombing they held a service right there in the bombed-out room, with dancing, joy, praise, and thanksgiving. He took the enemy's attack not as a discouragement but as an encouragement. He had something to do that must have been very important or the enemy would not have bothered.

Since then, God has only blessed His ministry. Likewise, the enemy is going to try to intimidate and stop you from moving forward in the Lord's will. In fact, if you are being attacked, discouraged and intimidated in following the Lord, don't stop - It means you're blessed. You must be doing something worth his effort and his time. Give thanks, rejoice, and press on all the more. You're doing something right. And keep doing it because the enemy can never stop you from doing God's will unless you stop yourself.

2 Timothy 2:3 -- Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy 2:9 -- Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound.

TODAY'S MISSION - Take something in your life that the enemy sought to discourage you with... or something you've been discouraged about... & thank God instead - knowing He will use it for good.

His Present Absence

There are times in our walks when we sense God's presence, His blessings, His favor, His love, and His moving. And there are other times when we don't. He seems to be far away. His presence seems withdrawn. You don't hear Him talking or feel that joy or assurance. You wonder what happened. If you're in His will, consider this: The Lord spent several years with His disciples. Then He left them. He had to. Otherwise the Spirit wouldn't have come, the disciples wouldn't have gone forth and matured, and changed the world. Sometimes the Lord has to withdraw, but not His love, not His grace, or favor, not even His presence, but the signs of His presence and the feelings which surround it . He does this not because He doesn't love you but because He does - so that you can grow in faith, in hope, in perseverance, in ministry, in your calling. The next time you don't feel God, don't panic, but step out. There's something for you to rise to. It is time for you to graduate and to go forth as His disciple.

Psalm 5:11-12 -- But let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you. Surely, Lord, you bless the righteous; you surround them with your favor as with a shield.

TODAY'S MISSION - Whether you feel His presence today or not - rejoice in the Lord and take a step to move forward in spiritual maturity and victory.

Your Miracle Tomb

It wasn't just an empty tomb. It was a specific empty tomb. It was somebody's empty tomb. It belonged to someone - Joseph of Arimathea. It was borrowed. It was loaned. God came to earth with no provision to purchase a tomb so a tomb could be given him. So that, in this sense, the resurrection could be a joint venture. It was true for Joseph and it's true for you. The resurrection won't happen in your life unless you take part in it, unless you choose it. The resurrection is not just an event that you read about; it's something that you participate in. God wants your tomb. In Hebrew, tomb means "a hollow place, a void." Your tomb is the empty place or places of your life. Your empty places include your sins, sorrows, your wounds, valleys, your despairs, your hopeless dreams. Give it to Him and it will be changed. He only wants to borrow it. And He won't return it in the same condition. No. Instead, it will become a place of miracles - because the miracles begin when it stops being just the empty tomb and becomes your empty tomb.

Luke 20:36. -- and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God's children, since they are children of the resurrection.

TODAY'S MISSION - Take any part of your life or past that has been empty or dark, sorrowful or wounded, and invite the Lord into it.

Only God Can Make What Was Become What Never Was

The first miracle Messiah is ever recorded as having done was to turn the water into wine. How does water become wine? Wine, by definition is aged.

Wine takes years to age. So God made the wine complete with age, complete with a past that didn't exist before. God is able to even touch the past. So it is written, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." How do you make sins as white as snow? God can even change the past. How? How can the living God die? It's all a miracle. If God can die, on a cross, for our sins, then the past can be changed, and your sins become as white as snow. In the world, the future is bound to the past. But for you in Messiah, that's all changed. Be no longer bound to anything of the past, to no sin, no shame, no sorrow, no abuse, no rejection, no failure, and no darkness - because in Messiah, your past is as white as snow - just as the water has turned to wine.

Romans 4:17 -- As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not.

TODAY'S MISSION - Is there anything in your past that still haunts you or defines you? Lift it up to the Lord - and then believe, receive, and rejoice in your freedom.

The Festival of Going Out

Remember when you were a child and the months of May and June came around? It was a time of going out. Vacation was coming. Summer was on the way. Ancient Israel had something like that too. Every year around May and June, Israel would gather in Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Harvest; Shavuot known in Greek as Pentecost. After celebrating, they would all go out to their fields and vineyards and reap the great summer harvest. And they wouldn't see each other again until the fall. It was the Feast of Going Out. And so it was no accident that on this celebration of going out - 2,000 years ago, God sent the Spirit. They had to go out into all nations - into the harvest field of the Great Commission. They had to leave home and the comfort of the familiar. Do you want to live in the Spirit and fulfill His will in your life? Then leave the comfort of the old and the familiar that you might have the freedom of the new and the joy and the adventure of God's best. For those who live in the Spirit must go forth in faith.

2 Corinthians 3:17 -- Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

TODAY'S MISSION - Today get out of your comfort zone and share the gospel with somebody that needs to know about His love and joy!

Come To Me Present Tense

On the Feast of Tabernacles, the nation of Israel would pray for the outpouring of rain and God's blessings on the land. So it's no accident, that on that same feast, the Feast of Tabernacles, that Messiah said, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water." He spoke of the Spirit. And He did so on the Feast of Tabernacles because it was then that Israel was praying for a future outpouring of rain and blessings. But notice something - they were praying for water, for rain, to be poured out in the future. But Messiah spoke in the present tense. In other words, the life of the Spirit, and the life of abundance, is never dependent on waiting for some blessing to happen in the future. It's now. So don't live a life waiting for God's blessings. Enter His blessings now. Enter the abundant life now. For the Spirit and the blessings of abundant life are now. And the only time to enter it - is now!

2 Corinthians 6:2 -- For he says, "In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you." I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.

TODAY'S MISSION - What blessing from God are you still waiting for? Live in the blessing of God now, start walking in it, start living it.

The Experiment of Your Faith

The Bible speaks of the testing of our faith. You probably think about it in negative terms... what God is going to lay on you next. The Greek word for testing or a trial means 'EXPERIMENT.' Our English word 'Experiment' comes from the Latin - 'Ex-Peritus' which means 'To Try Out.' It means you have to TRY OUT your faith. You have to use it, prove it - experiment with it. God gave us wings, but most believers keep their wings all locked up.

They'll say they believe that the wings work, but deep down, they're not really sure. The Bible says that faith must be tested... must be tried out.

Your faith is never based on experience, but it must produce experience.

You have to experience the real power of God. However, if you want to experience it, you have to experiment with it. The Lord says, 'Test me and see if I will not open the windows of heaven.' Therefore put on your lab coat and start experimenting into the power of God in your life. Take out your wings, try them out, and start flying.

Hebrews 11:1 -- Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

TODAY'S MISSION - Stretch your faith today and see what the Lord will do.

The Mars Hill Secret

In Athens, Paul saw all the idols and altars to the false gods of Greece and, as a Jew, he was grieved in spirit. When he spoke on Mars Hill, he didn't dwell on all their false gods. Nor did he write them off as hopeless, or simply condemn them for their paganism. Instead, he found a bridge to reach them, in the form of an altar, the altar to the unknown God. Even with the most ungodly person, there's always a hope, a bridge, a connection. As long as the person is in the image of God, then there's always a hope and a connection. There is always an altar to the unknown God - a God-shaped vacuum that only God can fill. Don't write them off as hopeless. But look for the altar, an unmet need, an emptiness, a hurt, a "something". Paul didn't give up until he found it. Do likewise. With every person, even the most ungodly, there's an altar to be found. And with every situation, even the most hopeless, there's an opening for the power of God to come in.

Acts 17:23 -- For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.

TODAY'S MISSION - Think of someone who's lost - Pray for a way to bring them salvation (& be open today to share with anyone the Lord brings you into contact with).

Reward of the Angels

You have heard of the angel Gabriel and the angel Michael, but did you know that there's another kind of angel - earthly angels - as in "you." In the Bible the Hebrew word for "angel" is "malach"; in the Greek, it is "angelos."

That's why in English, the word "evangelist," which has the word "angel" right in the middle. Both the Hebrew and Greek word for angel are used not just for heavenly beings, but for flesh and blood people - as in John the Baptist, called an "angelos," and Haggai, called a "malach". An angel is one who is a messenger of God, who carries forth the gospel. And that's exactly what you are to be. So how do you live an angelic life? Angels don't get paid on earth - they can't, they're working for heaven. They never seek earthly rewards since their employer is not man but God. Therefore, to live an angelic life you have to stop seeking praise from men, and blessings from earth. Seek your reward only from God and your blessing only from heaven. And you will be blessed from His heavenly payroll and your life will be angelic!

Luke 20:36 -- and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God's children, since they are children of the resurrection.

TODAY'S MISSION - Your assignment today is to be one of God's angels. Touch someone with an encouraging word or an act of kindness or the message of salvation.

Wherever you go

In a dream, God spoke to Jacob: "I am with you and will keep you wherever you go." Jacob's reaction to the dream was to focus on the place where it happened. He called it "Beit El," which means "God's House." In a way, Jacob missed the point. It wasn't so much about the place where God appeared. It was that God would be with Jacob regardless of the place, regardless of any place - wherever. God's promise to you is that He will be with you wherever you go. He's there when you are worshipping in His house. He's with you when you are in the parking lot and when you walk into your home. He's there in your mountaintop experiences and in your valleys, in your good times and your bad, when you're doing great in holiness, and when you've fallen in sin. So don't dwell on your situation, on how things are going, or even how you're doing. It's not about where you are. It's about Who is with you. Rejoice in that. He's not the God of where. He's the God of wherever!

Matthew 28:20 -- teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age." Amen.

TODAY'S MISSION - Wherever you go today, take time to stop to be in and enjoy the presence of the Lord.

Maya

The Eastern religions and new age philosophies hold to a concept called "maya." "Maya" means that everything is basically an illusion. But that creates a problem. Because if everything's an illusion, how could you ever know it - Then that too would be an illusion. And without truth, how could you ever determine an illusion. And if everything is an illusion, a lie, then what choice does anyone have. That's why Eastern religion is ultimately hopeless. On the other hand the Bible never says that reality is an illusion. Rather it declares that Truth is real. And where there is Truth, there is also falsehood. And where there is truth and falsehood, there is a choice. So in biblical faith, everyone has a choice. Therefore God says, "Choose life."

Every moment of your life, every moment of your day, there are choices, choices between good and evil, truth and falsehood, the spirit and the flesh, the best and everything else. Make the right choice, choose the good, choose the truth and every choice will propel you up to the next level. For Messiah is the Truth - and it's for us to choose Him, every day, every moment.

1 John 2:21 -- I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth.

TODAY'S MISSION - You know what to do. Make the right choices today; choose to live each moment, each day choosing the good.

The Supernaturally Practical

Rabbi Shaul, or Saul, the apostle Paul, was one of the most influential people who ever walked the earth. He changed the world. He changed history. He lived a practical life, a strategic life, an effective life. But notice something else about him. He also was a man of the Spirit. He would pray and fall into a trance. He would receive supernatural words and dreams. Paul treasured being intimate with God. That's why he was able to do such great things. That's why he was unstoppable and why he changed the world. Prayer is not often seen as something practical but prayer is the most practical of things. Without prayer, everything else you do, every plan, every effort, every work, will be hindered. It will be like walking against the wind. But with prayer, everything else will fall into place. So if you want to do great things. If you want to live an effective and powerful life... then be practical - get into God's presence. Become a person of prayer and the Spirit. Yes, it's supernatural - but it's the most practical thing you can do!

Luke 1:19 - And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings.

TODAY'S MISSION - Take time to pray and get into the presence of God.
Great things await you.

The Titanic director and Messiah's tomb

A few years ago, the director of "The Titanic" called a press conference announcing a discovery that was supposed to shake the world and disprove the Gospel. What was it? The discovery of the "real tomb" of Jesus, full of the bones of Jesus and his family. The media swarmed around it. It turned out that it was all based on the fact that there seemed to be an inscription reading, "Yeshua bar Yosef," or "Jesus son of Joseph." Israeli archaeologists scoffed at the "revelation." The fact is "Yeshua" and "Yosef" were among the most common names in first-century Judea. It would be as ludicrous as going through the records of everyone born in an American city named "Joe" with a son named "John" - and concluding that they all had to be the same person. The claims were dismissed and this "titanic theory," promoted by the director of "The Titanic," hit its iceberg and promptly sank. It was just the latest of two thousand years of attacks against the resurrection. And the attack failed. The resurrection stands. And nothing will overcome it or the one who walks in it.

John 16:33 -- "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

TODAY'S MISSION - Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might - Take on the day and all its challenges with confidence in your Messiah who overcame the world.

The Fall of the Ottoman Empire

The land of Israel had been under the rule of the Islamic Ottoman Empire for four centuries. But being Muslim, the empire was hardly sympathetic with the idea of the Jewish people returning to the land of Israel. And yet the Bible said it would happen. So what happened? The First World War happened. And because of a series of geopolitical factors, the Ottoman Turkish Empire became involved in the conflict and sided with Germany against the British Empire. And because of that war, the great and many-centuries old Ottoman Empire, suddenly collapsed. The British entered Jerusalem and granted the Jewish people the right to return to their homeland. The words of the ancient Hebrew prophecies were fulfilled. Think about that. God allowed a whirlwind of history to cause the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, in order to be faithful to His people and to fulfill His promise. That same God will work all things together, even the entire world, and every event of human history, for your good and to fulfill the promise of your life.

Romans 8:28 -- And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

The Scare House

Did you ever as a child, go through an attraction that was supposed to scare you? It may have been called a scare house or a haunted house. And you rode or walked through it, and it was dark. You might have even felt hands touching you and heard scary noises. You had to tell yourself that it was just part of an amusement park ride, the danger wasn't real, the monsters were fake, and, ultimately, nothing was going to happen to you.

In this world there are many threats, dangers, problems, and other things to fear. And yet, if you're a believer, the Bible says that God causes all things to work together for good for your sake. What does that mean? It means that even the scariest of situations and the worst of problems for you is like being in one of the those rides or houses at a carnival. Though the problem may look scary, ultimately, it's nothing.

Even the enemy's worst attacks are, ultimately, going to be turned around for your good. Believe the good. Don't believe the evil and trust in the Lord. For at worst, your biggest problem is only a carnival ride.

Psalm 55:22 -- Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous be shaken.

TODAY'S MISSION - Take the worst problem that you are facing today and know that it's just another attack of the enemy trying to take you on a scary ride. Trust in God and watch how He will turn it around for you.

There Is No Country

At the end of the Civil War, the Southern Confederate General Robert E. Lee was being pursued by the Union General Ulysses S. Grant. Lee told his associate he could not surrender his country, meaning the Confederacy. The associate replied. "There is no country, sir. There has been no country for the last two years." In other words, the Confederacy was, for all intents and purposes, non-existent. If Lee had only realized that it didn't exist, he wouldn't have wasted so much effort fighting a fruitless battle. If Lee had only realized he had nothing to war about and nothing to lose, there would have been peace much sooner and Lee would have been a much happier man.

It's the same with us. So many of our battles, our conflicts, our problems, our anxieties and before our fears happen because we still think we have something to lose. But in Messiah, our old life is over. So don't be Robert E. Lee and keep fighting and striving and worrying about something that no longer exists. Your old life is over, be free. Because when you have nothing - you have nothing to lose.

Ephesians 4:22-24 -- You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

TODAY'S MISSION - If worries and problems try to overcome you during the day, cast them aside. Remember that it's only the old life - you have nothing to lose - be free.

What are you doing??

James 1:22-25 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

An old mountaineer and his wife who were sitting in front of the fireplace one evening just whiling away the time. After a long silence, the wife said: "Jed, I think it's raining. Get up and go outside and see." The old mountaineer continued to gaze into the fire for a second, sighed, then said, "Aw, Ma, why don't we just call in the dog and see if he's wet."

Uggghhh! We're so lazy sometimes! One thing that has really been on our hearts recently is doing more doing and less talking about doing! God wants us to be doers not talkers.

God has a specific purpose for our lives at such a time as this. Let's start giving Him our all. There's so much work to be done!

Getting The Flow Of Your Poem

In Ephesians it says in the original Greek, "For we are His poema." From "poema" we get our English word "poem." If you're born again your life is now a work of God - a poem of heaven. One of the things that defines a poem is flow. If your life is to be a poem of God, it's got to flow. It's got to have a harmony, a rhyme and a reason -- a flow. The nature of the Spirit is to make your life flow. The nature of sin is to take away the flow of your life. The more sin in your life, the less your life will be the poem it's supposed to be. It's easy to lose the flow through sin. If you want your life to be beautiful, then you have to get the flow back into it. And if you want the flow back, then you have to get back into the flow of the Spirit. Repent of sin or else it just won't flow. When you commit your life to living and walking by the Spirit, your life will be as beautiful as a poem from heaven.

Galatians 5:16 -- So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

TODAY'S MISSION - Seek to flow today in God's flowing. Let the Spirit lead everything you do and go with the flow.

The God Who Loves His Neighbors as Himself

The greatest command after loving God is to love your neighbor as yourself. It's definitely no easy thing.

This command is the Gospel in a sentence. There's only two things in existence, God and creation. We, being part of creation, are God's neighbor. God loved

His neighbor. He looked down and loved you. He didn't just love His neighbor - He loved His neighbor as Himself. There's no greater proof of that than Him giving up His life for you. That's the greatest demonstration of loving one's neighbor as yourself.

So when God asks you to love your neighbor as yourself, He's not asking you to do anything He hasn't done already. He's only asking you to do for another, what He has done for you. Now if God could value your life as much as His own, how much more can you love your fellow human being. Just remember, when you think it's so hard to do what the Lord said, He's already done it for you. You are more loved than you'll ever realize. It's already been done, because God is your neighbor. Now do the same.

John 3:16

TODAY'S MISSION - Today seek to love your neighbor as God has loved you - do something to bless them.

Batch is an active verb

Proverbs 3:5-6 says: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not to your own understanding, acknowledge Him in all your ways, and He will direct your path." When most people talk about "trusting God" - they mean "Just trust in the Lord. Don't do anything. Stop trying, just trust." We use the word 'trust' in a negative sense... not in the sense of doing anything but rather in the sense of not doing anything. That's not really what the Bible is saying. The Hebrew word for trust is Batach. Batach means to hide in for refuge, to be confident in, to be sure, to hope in something concrete and definitive. Faith, or trust, is really a verb that requires acting and choosing to act. One of our mistakes in the Lord is we tend to think about faith primarily as a noun. We speak about "having faith" or "not having faith"... or having doubt. Doubt is a verb and so is trust. Even if you don't have faith and you are not a great faith warrior, its okay. Choose to trust and you will have faith. For faith, batach, is a verb.

Psalm 37:3 -- Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.

TODAY'S MISSION - In every situation, challenge, and problem today, choose to actively put your trust in the Lord and His power.

Sunlight and the Menorah

In the Temple of Jerusalem was a room called the "Holy Place." There was only one door and no windows. The Holy Place was lit up by a golden seven branched lampstand filled with oil and the menorah. It didn't matter how bright it was outside or if it was morning, noon, or night. The light of the holy place was an inner light. You are the Temple of the living God. The primary light of your life must also come, from within. If you're seeking your joy from a person or circumstance, then you're seeking to be filled from the outer light. However all the outer things can never fill up your heart with true light. The more you seek to be filled up by the things which are outside, the more empty your inside will be. If you are God's child, then you have the honor and privilege of being filled up from the inside out. Stop living from the outside in. Live from the inner lamp of Messiah in your heart. Then it won't matter rain or shine, morning, noon, or night - your light will shine and your life will be full.

Isaiah 60:1 -- "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.

TODAY'S MISSION - Today, seek to live not from the outward light, the brightness of circumstances, but by the inner shining light of God's joy and presence.

The Other End Of The Leash

When I was growing up, I used to take my dog, 'Pudgy,' for walks. Whenever Pudgy saw something of interest, another dog, a rabbit, a mailman, she would take off after it – or she would try. I was on the other end of the leash and it was my job to restrain her. Either I was going to be pulled by Pudgy, or Pudgy was going to be led by me. It's the same way with our feelings, our emotions, our desires, our lusts, even our thoughts. Our thoughts and feelings tend to go all over the place, and to things they have no business going after. And most people are led by their emotions and their thoughts, even many believers. But that's like a man being led by a dog. God has called us to take every thought captive to the obedience of Messiah. That means you can have victory over every thought, every whim, desire, lust, and feeling. But you have to choose to take control. The next time that thought, that feeling, that temptation comes up, you reign it in to the obedience of God – just remember whose on the other end of the leash.

2 Corinthians 10:4-6 -- The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete.

TODAY'S MISSION - Today make it a point not to be led by your feelings, or your flesh. Learn to not be led, but to lead these things, even your emotions as you are led only by the Word and Spirit of God.

The God Of Vegetables

What father would give his son a stone instead of bread, or a snake instead of a fish, or a scorpion instead of eggs? No normal father would. Messiah used that illustration to share how God our Heavenly Father would only give good things to his children. Now if Messiah went on, he might have noted that most good fathers will also make their children eat vegetables, lima beans, asparagus, broccoli, spinach. But most of us didn't ask for those things, and didn't want them when they came. You see, a good father will also give his children what they need, even if they didn't ask for it and don't want it. In other words, God also gives us what we don't ask for, and don't want - but need - like that trial, that problem, that person, that disappointment, that crisis. Those are God's vegetables. We don't have to like them, but when you see them on your plate, start looking for the good, if not in the way they go down, then in what they will produce for you in the end. For God is not just the God of bread and fish; but of vegetables.

Matthew 7:9-11 -- **9** "Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? **10** Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? **11** If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

TODAY'S MISSION - Give thanks to God today for all those things you don't want to give thanks to God for.

The Lesson Of King Hasnu

A Japanese legend: One day, a man named Hasnu was cutting a stone and he became miserable and discontent. He despised his life as a stone-cutter. As he complained, he saw a king ride by on his horse. "I want to be king," said Hasnu. His wish was granted. Hasnu became king. But while king, Hasnu looked up in the sky and realized that the sun was stronger than any king. So he wished to become the sun, and his wish was granted. But then a cloud came and blocked out the light of the sun. So Hasnu became the cloud. Then the cloud burst on the land, flooding everything, moving everything in its path, except for a huge rock. The rock was stronger, so Hasnu became the rock. Then a man with a hammer and chisel came to the rock and began cutting it. Only then, did he realize, that the stone-cutter was more powerful than all of them. Remember this, no matter what your situation, your position, your station, or your circumstances in life, there is no one so blessed, so well-off, and so mighty on earth as the one who loves and follows the Lord.

Psalm 18:31 -- For who is God besides the Lord? And who is the Rock except our God?

TODAY'S MISSION - Count your blessings today - how blessed you are because you're a child of God, a servant of God, and one who knows the Lord.

Where to Find Direction for Tough Choices

Psalm 32:8 -- I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.

During World War II, the British Secret Service broke the Nazi code and informed Prime Minister Winston Churchill that the Germans were getting ready to bomb the city of Coventry.

This presented Churchill with a very painful choice. On the one hand, he could evacuate the city and save hundreds of lives. This, however, would tip off the Germans that their code had been broken, causing them to use another one and take the upper hand away from the Allies. Or, Churchill could take no action, which would lead to more deaths but keep the information flowing and save even more lives in the long-term.

With a heavy heart, Churchill took no action. Yet, his decision that day did, in fact, give the Allied Forces access to much more intelligence, a tremendous advantage moving forward, and saved more British lives overall.

Not every decision is black or white, right or wrong, good or evil. If it were, there would be no difficult decisions. Yet, when we encounter these “gray areas” in life – and we will – it’s crucial then we listen to the guidance of the Holy Spirit to lead us in the way God wants us to go.

When life gives you hard choices, seek God’s guidance. Ask Him to open your heart to His Spirit within you. Trust God, in **faith**, to lead you down the path that will bring about your good and His glory!

Prayer Challenge: Pray now and ask God to give you guidance in the difficult decisions of life. Trust Him as you step out in faith in response to His leading.

Questions for Thought: Think of a time when you encountered a tough decision and didn’t know what to do. How did it make you feel?

What are some difficult decisions you’re facing today? How can you seek God’s guidance for wisdom in these areas?

Jesus at Large (Easter)

Scripture Reading — [Mark 15:40-16:8](#)

“You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here.” . . . They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid. — [Mark 16:6, 8](#)

Some women watched from a distance as Jesus died on the cross. They had followed him for years and had “cared for his needs.” They loved him. They also saw Joseph take down Jesus’ body and wrap it in linen. They followed and saw Joseph lay Jesus in a tomb and then roll a stone across the entrance.

After the Sabbath they came back as soon as possible. They would care for him in death as they had in life. They were so intent they almost forgot about the stone blocking the tomb.

But when they arrived, they saw that the stone had been moved—and someone was in the tomb! “Don’t be alarmed,” said a young man dressed in white (an angel), but they had little time to be afraid of him. Jesus was missing! More accurately, Jesus had escaped.

The women did what anyone else would do in a tomb where a dead body had gotten up and walked away—they ran!

Every time we think we have Jesus figured out, Mark throws in a twist. That’s because Jesus never follows our rules. He’s powerful and unpredictable—and that’s unsettling to the way we would like to live. That’s why the authorities killed him. But that didn’t stop him either—then or now. Jesus is alive, and he could turn up at any moment, anywhere, and turn our world upside down.

Prayer

Dear Jesus, I have to admit there are times when you scare me. You change all of the things that need to change, and I’m scared to let some things go. Please be gentle and gracious as you change me. Amen.

The Joy Prophecy

Palm Sunday is Jewish! - A Hebrew holy day foretold by the prophet Zechariah who wrote: "Rejoice greatly O daughter of Zion. Shout O daughter of Jerusalem. Behold, your King comes to you... he is humble and riding on a donkey." What does that mean? It means that we, as human beings, actually have a part in fulfilling prophecy. Part of the prophecy is a command to be followed. "Rejoice greatly... shout!" This is the only proper response to Messiah's coming. So if Messiah has come into your life, the only proper response is joy - such great joy that you almost have to shout about it. What's the evidence of Messiah coming into your life? That you live a life of joy. And notice two keys from the prophecy: Rejoice is a verb and a command. It's something you choose to do. And Behold - Take your eyes off everything else and truly behold Him. When you see who He really is and how blessed you are - you'll rejoice. Rejoice greatly for your King has come and you too must fulfill prophecy.

1 Thessalonians 4:7 -- For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness.

TODAY'S MISSION - Today, choose to walk in the power of holiness. Seek the Lord and receive His righteousness to transform your life.

Ride the Donkey

The writings of the ancient rabbis of Judaism say an amazing thing. There is not one Messiah, but two! How did this happen? The rabbis were confused. They read in Zechariah 9:9 that Messiah would come on a donkey riding into Jerusalem, humble and with salvation - Palm Sunday. And yet, Daniel 7 says Messiah will come on the clouds of Heaven in glory. Other prophets said Messiah would die for our sins - and yet reign forever. The rabbis couldn't deal with it so they came up with two Messiahs. The first Messiah, son of Joseph, would come humbly on a donkey and die for our sins. The second Messiah, son of David, would come on the clouds of heaven and reign forever. But the Bible speaks of only one Messiah. The only answer - one Messiah, two comings. The only one in history to fulfill this is Yeshua, Jesus of Nazareth. And if you follow Messiah, you must follow His example - first the donkey, then the clouds. Walk in humility as God's servant and you will be lifted up in glory - Messiah has two comings - and so will you!

Daniel 7:13 -- "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man,[a]coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.

TODAY'S MISSION - Seek to live this day as Messiah did, coming humbly to glorify God and to bless and save others.

Catch the Spirit

When the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said,
“Surely this man was the Son of God!” — [Mark 15:39](#)

Inspiration is an important part of the Christian life. The word inspire literally means to have a spirit come into you—and for Christians that means having the Holy Spirit in you. In the ancient biblical languages (Hebrew and Greek) the word meaning “inspire” was also related to breathing, since they used the same word for “spirit” as for “breath.”

In this passage Mark does something interesting with this concept. Mark says that Jesus “breathed his last,” and the Greek word for this (ekpneo) is different from the usual word used for “spirit” and “breath” (pneuma). Ekpneo literally means “expired,” as in “breathed out” or “let out his Spirit.”

At first this may seem like just another way of saying that Jesus died. But then Mark tells us that a centurion was standing in front of Jesus—right where Jesus’ last breath was aimed. And something interesting happens to this Roman commander, who probably didn’t even believe in the God of the Jews. The centurion exclaims, “Surely this man was the Son of God!”

The centurion caught the Spirit—he was inspired. And when he caught the Spirit, he knew clearly who Jesus really was. Jesus was more than a great person, a prophet, or even a king. Jesus was God’s own Son—the Savior of the world.

Prayer

Dear Jesus, you are the Son of God. Please put your Holy Spirit into us today so that we can be inspired to live as you lived. Amen.

The Chaldeon Witness

In the Book of Kings, the mighty Assyrian Empire decided to lay siege to Jerusalem. The fierce Assyrian army camped around the walled city and threatened to destroy it as it had countless other cities. The Assyrians were known to be the most savage of ancient armies. Entire cities would surrender out of hand in their presence rather than risk their cruelty. The situation looked hopeless. Just then, an angel of the Lord went out and struck down over a hundred thousand of the Assyrian army. Another miracle of the Bible the world finds hard to believe. Two ancient historians, who weren't believers or from Israel, bear witness to the miracle. One was Berosus, an historian from Chaldea. He records that the Assyrian army was besieging Jerusalem. While they were camped around the city, ready to take it at night, a miracle happened. The Assyrian army was struck down by an invisible hand. This is amazing - a non-Jewish ancient historian confirming the veracity of an incredible and miraculous salvation. God saved His people from the certain calamity of a hopeless situation. How much more will He do the same for you?

The Distance of Heaven

How far away is Heaven? How far away is anything? We often measure distance by time. For instance, the supermarket, we say, is ten minutes away; the nearby city thirty minutes; our vacation site three hours away. So, how far away is Heaven? To find out, you have to measure it by time. How long does it take you to get there? If you're saved, if you're born again, the time it takes you to get to Heaven is just one sigh... your last breath. So, how far away from you is Heaven? Only one sigh. So, remember whenever you sigh, when you feel down, or lost in this life, or confused, or lonely, or far from God.... that sigh is a reminder of just how close Heaven is... And that you don't have to wait until you die to know the joy, peace, love, comfort and wonder of Heaven. As Messiah said, "the Kingdom of Heaven, is in your midst." Reach out today for the love of Heaven. It's the Lord's joy to give it to you. For all the blessings of Heaven are waiting to come into your life, just one sigh away.

Matthew 10:7 -- As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.'

TODAY'S MISSION - Today dwell in the knowledge and reality that heaven, and the presence and glory of God - is all around you.

Exchange your Currency

I once went on a mission trip to Russia. We were coming to the end of our trip and had lots of rubles. We went to a market and I found a book I wanted to buy. I hesitated because I thought it cost too many rubles. I negotiated with the man, but he wouldn't drop the price. Our time was up and we had to head to the airport. While in the airport, I bent down and a few thousand rubles fell out of my pocket. I looked at the rubles and realized that outside of Russia, they would be worthless. A valuable lesson: currency is only good in the land of that currency. If you're going to spend it, you have to spend it while you're there. Everything you have in this life is the currency of this life. It's yours not to hold on to, but to spend and be used for the Kingdom and glory of God. You're leaving this life. Once you leave it, all your possessions will be worthless. Be wise. Give away what you cannot keep, that you might gain what you can never lose. Exchange this life's currency for the treasures of heaven - and you'll enter heaven with everlasting riches, and not a pocketful of rubles.

Luke 6:38 -- Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

TODAY'S MISSION - Has God been tugging on your heart to give? Open up your hand to be a blessing and you too will be blessed.

Beavers and Living Waters

Beavers are interesting animals. They build dams and dam up streams and rivers. Rivers are important in God. Rivers represent the Spirit and Life of God, for the Spirit is always giving and the Life of God is always flowing. The problem is, even though the Spirit is like a river, God's people often tend to be more like beavers. We swim around His blessings, but we build dams. We dam up our lives, our walks, the blessings that God wants to flow in our lives. Dams of unforgiveness, bitterness, compromise, fear, double-mindedness, dishonesty, coldness and walled up relationships. The problem with dams is they stop the flow of the river. Your life cannot flow as long as you have those dams damming it all up. When you build dams in your life you miss the blessings God would have you know. If you want abundant life, then break open those dams. It's going to take some work, but you need to do it. Break that dam open and let the river of God's blessings flow into your life. For you're a child of blessing - not a beaver.

Isaiah 43:19 -- Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.

TODAY'S MISSION - Is there some area of God's will, God's Spirit, God's purposes, that you know God wants to flow into your life - but is being blocked by something? Today begin breaking up the dam and letting the river flow.

The Universal Amen!

What's the most universal word most used in all the world, throughout the nations, throughout the different tongues of man? The most universal word according to many linguistic experts is... Amen. It's a Hebrew word:-that literally means: "Yes!" Yes, I agree! Yes, it is so! Yes, with all my heart, mind, soul, and strength!" So too, the most universal word in your life must also be 'Amen.' The greatest word you can ever say is 'Yes' to God, 'Yes' His promises, 'Yes' to His word, 'Yes' to His love, His hope, His will, His purpose and call upon your life. 'Amen' is the most universal word because 'Yes' needs to be your most universal word to God. Your 'Yes' to God cannot be conditional or particular, it has to be universal. Your 'Yes' to God can't only be applied to one area, but all areas. All He asks of you is a simple, unconditional, universal 'Yes.' His blessings are too good for you to say 'no' or 'maybe' or 'later.' Give Him your unconditional 'Yes' today and you'll find your life unconditionally blessed. For 'Amen' must be universal. Amen? Amen!

2 Corinthians 1:20 -- For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God.

TODAY'S MISSION - Take a word today and give it your total and unconditional "Amen" - The "yes" of your heart, mind, soul, and strength. And hold to that Amen the entire day.

Finding his Henna

In the Song of Solomon, the bride says of the bridegroom, "My Beloved is to me a cluster of henna blossoms from the vineyards of En Gedi." Why the henna blossoms of En Gedi? Why not the henna blossoms of Galilee? Why not just henna blossoms? Why does it matter where they come from? En Gedi is in the barren, rocky, dry, hot and forbidding wilderness of Judea. There's virtually no life. But in the middle of this desert flow waters - the springs of En Gedi. And around the waters, blooms life and henna blossoms. That's why the love of the Bridegroom to the Bride and of God to you is like henna blossoms from En Gedi. You will find even in the driest places of your life that God's love still flows like waters in the desert with blooming flowers. You'll never know God's love as sweet as when you find it in a secret place and away from everything else. Get away today as David did. Get away from all the distractions, problems and temptations. Get refreshed by the pure love of God in the secret place.

From Message #1022 - My Beloved Is An Apple Tree

Scripture: Song of Solomon 1:14 - "My beloved is to me a cluster of henna flowers In the [fragrant] vineyards of Engedi."

TODAY'S MISSION - Seek today to find the henna blossoms of En Gedi - in places where you've never seen God's blessings or presence. Go looking for His blessings and finding His presence.

How you can be used to impact eternity

Remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins. – James 5:20

In 1994, *The New York Times* reported that graffiti from the 1800s was discovered by workers renovating the Washington Monument. It was quite a different tone from much of the graffiti found today on walls, railcars, and street signs. Here's what it said:

Whoever is the human instrument under God in the conversion of one soul, erects a monument to his own memory more lofty and enduring [sic] than this.

The inscription was signed with the initials, *BFB*. No one knows who that is, but this anonymous author's words can now be seen by the thousands who visit the monument each year.

Though written so long ago, those words ring very true today... and they're at the heart of today's verse. Whoever God uses to turn people away from their sin and toward a [faith](#) relationship with Jesus Christ makes an impact on eternity!

Perhaps today, there are people in your life who you can point toward Christ. Maybe they live nearby, shop at the same store as you, or you see them in your daily routine. Whoever it is, God wants to use you to tell them about Jesus. And when you do, you can be confident that you've made an impact that will last longer than any monument ever built!

Prayer Challenge

Ask God to show you people in your life who need to hear about Jesus. Pray that you would be open to being used by Him to impact eternity!

Make today count for eternity.

If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames. - 1 Corinthians 3:15

Chuck Swindoll tells the story of a fighter pilot shot down by enemy fire during World War II...

At treetop level he lost part of his stabilizer, a section of his rudder, a tip of his wing, and the landing gear. Finally, he came down in the top of the trees in his cockpit. He breathed a sigh of relief as he sat there in the cockpit as it rocked precariously back and forth. Enclosed in the cockpit all by itself he was saved, yet so as through fire. He was there intact, but he had very little to show for it.

Too many believers will skid into heaven like this fighter pilot. Preserved by the unwavering grace of God through Jesus Christ, but having very little to show for it. What's more, they will have suffered the loss of so many experiences and blessings God longed to give them throughout their life. This is the message of today's passage.

In Christ, you are fully forgiven and forever loved by God. This is about your life today and your legacy tomorrow. If you would glide into heaven as a pilot coming home after a fruitful and satisfying trip, then make today – and each day till then – count for God's Kingdom.

Prayer Challenge:

Ask God to help you make investments today in people's lives that will count for eternity.

Are you wise, or just smart?

Instruct the wise and they will be wiser still; teach the righteous and they will add to their learning. – Proverbs 9:9

The famous author and inventor, Arthur C. Clarke once wrote,

For every man, education should be a process which continues all his life. We have to abandon, as swiftly as possible, the idea that schooling is something restricted to youth. How can it be, in a world where half the things a man knows at 20 are no longer true at 40-and half the things he knows at 40 hadn't been discovered when he was 20?

There's a misconception many people have today that once they're finished with formal schooling, they have nothing left they need to learn. They passed all their tests and have a diploma on the wall, yet in all their time of growing *smart*, they've never truly discovered what it means to grow *wise*.

The reality is that finishing school should actually be the beginning of a life-long learning process that never ends. It's a starting point that you've reached by becoming smart, but actual wisdom is attained through life experience. That's exactly why you have young men and women who graduated at the top of their class, yet struggle when they get out into the real world-they have to grow in wisdom.

Never, ever stop learning. Immerse yourself in the wisdom of the Word daily. Ask God to give you clarity and understanding when it comes to applying it to your life. When you do, you'll find out that there's so much more to be learned than you already know!

Prayer Challenge

Pray that God would give you the discipline to continue growing in wisdom all the days of your life!

Now What

Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the LORD, saying, "I will sing to the LORD, for He has triumphed gloriously ... The LORD is my strength and my song, and He has become my salvation." (Exodus 15:1a, 2a)

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)

It's the day after Easter. Jesus is risen, the house is a mess (well, my house!), and it's time to get on with life. What comes next?

We celebrate. How could we not celebrate? Jesus has set us free from slavery to sin, death, and the devil. We are God's free children, and death cannot destroy us. Jesus is with us forever, and He will come again to bring us to Himself. How could we not celebrate such great news?

"Praise Him with sounding cymbals; praise Him with loud clashing cymbals! Let everything that has breath praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!" (Psalm 150:5-6)

But there's more. Jesus calls us to share this great news, to tell it to everyone around us, and ultimately to the whole human race. He says, "Go and make disciples ..."

Share this joy that God has given you. Ask Jesus to give you the Holy Spirit's help so you can do this—God doesn't expect you to manage this on your own! Live your life in such a way that people want to know what's going on—why things are different for you than for them. And then tell them. It's the best news ever! May God bless you as you celebrate Jesus and the wonderful freedom He has won for us.

THE PRAYER: Dear Lord Jesus, thank You! Help me to rejoice in You and give me the Holy Spirit's help to tell others about You. Amen.

Reflection Questions:

- * What kinds of things do you do when you're happy and celebrating?
- * How does Jesus' resurrection give you joy?
- * Take a moment to pray and ask the Lord to teach you how to talk about Him with people you love.

April Fools' Devotion

"I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life." John 8:12

One bright spring day my family chose to spend the afternoon deep in the earth. We were enjoying a tour in the world's longest known cave system, Mammoth Cave in south central Kentucky. As we entered a huge open space called "Methodist Church," the guide explained how the area had been used in the 1800s for church services.

At this point our guides demonstrated how little illumination a single oil lantern provides, the only source of light available during that time period. As an April Fools' joke, they informed us that the rest of the tour would be conducted in this way. The electric lights were switched off, and fifty people immediately crowded as close as possible to the guide holding the solitary lantern.

All of us breathed one big collective sigh of relief when we figured out that our guides had only been teasing. The lights came back on and we resumed our tour. But my thoughts kept returning to that instinctive movement we all made the instant the lights went off. I wondered if I do the same thing in everyday life. When I can't seem to find my way out of a problem or trial, do I automatically draw near to the One who called Himself the Light of the World?

Jesus promised that as long as I follow Him, He will provide all the light I need to guide me on my journey. Life will take some unexpected turns. I won't always understand what is happening or why God allows certain things. But I have Jesus' words and His life portrayed in the Scriptures. And I have His continuing presence to lead me. No need to stumble around in the darkness when I can draw near to His light.

Faith Step: Are you struggling with a difficult problem or situation? Ask Jesus to shed His light on that area of your life.

The importance of taking personal responsibility

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. - 2 Corinthians 5:10

Not long ago, a young woman was attacked in a New York residential area while at least 38 neighbors watched from their windows. And during the course of the 30-minute assault, not even one person telephoned the police. The young lady sustained critical injuries and died for the simple reason that no one would pick up the phone and call for help.

Interviews conducted with the people who witnessed this terrible crime revealed that they were not totally indifferent as many had suspected. In fact, many of them were horrified when they saw what was happening. But the main reason nobody did anything was that each person thought someone else would take responsibility and get help.

Now, most people will never find themselves in such a critical situation. But how often, in the seemingly mundane events of life, do you find yourself saying, "I'll let someone else do it"? Yet all the while, everyone else is thinking the exact same thing. This kind of attitude has created a vacuum of responsibility in our society where people simply point fingers instead of doing what's right.

But on the day you stand before God, there will be no finger-pointing. You'll be judged based on what you did with Christ, and then you'll be rewarded for the works you have done in the flesh. So in this life, take responsibility for your actions and stand up for what's right when others sit and point fingers.

Prayer Challenge: Pray that God would give you a strong sense of personal responsibility to do what's right when you're tempted to point fingers.

'Throw Deep' for Christ!

Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ

Jesus. – [Philippians 3:13-14](#)

The NFL Hall of Fame quarterback Ken Stabler was once being interviewed by *Sports Illustrated* when the journalist recited a quote from the author, Jack London...

"I'd rather be ashes than dust! I would rather that my spark should burn out in a brilliant blaze than it should be stifled by dry-rot. I would rather be a superb meteor, every atom of me in magnificent glow, than a sleepy and permanent planet. The function of man is to live, not to exist. I shall not waste my days trying to prolong them. I shall use my time!"

Asked what these words meant to him personally, Stabler replied with the gritty confidence of a veteran, "Throw deep."

Every single day of your life is a precious gift from God. It's an opportunity for an adventure with Christ – a chance to "throw deep" for the Kingdom. And there's no expiration date on that invitation.

Don't settle for mere existence today. Follow in the footsteps of the apostle Paul and press on toward the goal!

[Prayer](#) Challenge:

Ask God to fill you with fresh passion for His Kingdom. And pray for the strength to make each day count for eternity.

Struggling with thankfulness

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. — 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Scottish minister Alexander Whyte was known for his uplifting prayers in the pulpit. That's because he always found something for which to be grateful. One Sunday morning the weather was so gloomy that one church member thought to himself, "Certainly the preacher won't think of anything for which to thank the Lord on a wretched day like this."

Much to his surprise, however, Whyte began by praying, "We thank Thee, O God, that it is not always like this!"

Tough circumstances often make giving thanks a real challenge. And today, on a day when thankfulness is in so much focus, people around our nation and our world are experiencing unspeakable pain. So how, then, can we fulfill the mandate laid out in today's Scripture?

While our situation might make it difficult to give thanks to God, one thing we must always remember is that God is good. And because of that, we have confident hope in tough times that it won't always be like this. A better day is coming.

When that becomes your hope, thankfulness is a natural response. So give thanks today not because of your circumstances, but because you have a God who loves you and gives you hope for better days ahead!

Prayer Challenge:

Ask God to give you encouragement and hope on days when it's hard to be thankful.

Questions for thought:

As you pause to give thanks today, where are you struggling and waiting for God to come through?

What Makes You Uncomfortable?

For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. – 2 Timothy 4:3

Whenever you go to a doctor for your annual check-up, he or she will often begin to poke, prod, and press various places, all the while asking, "Does this hurt?" Now if you cry out in pain, one of two things has happened. Either the doctor has pushed too hard, without the right sensitivity. Or, more likely, there's something wrong, and the doctor will say, "We'd better do some more tests!"

This is often true when pastors preach on touchy subjects, and certain members cry out in discomfort, criticizing the message and the messenger. Either the pastor has pushed too hard, which is possible. Or perhaps there's something wrong underneath the surface.

Today's Scripture is clear that there will come a time when people will stop putting up with sound doctrine. They'll want to hear what makes them feel good instead of the truth. They'll prefer living under the illusion that things are okay with them instead of discovering the truth that there is something very wrong underneath the surface.

The [Bible](#) is a tool that the Great Physician uses to poke and prod in order to identify areas of concern in our lives. So the next time you read Scripture or hear teaching that makes you uncomfortable, ask yourself if the pressure is too high, or if maybe there is something under the surface that needs to be checked out.

Prayer Challenge:

Ask God to help you discern if there are any areas of your life where you have problems under the surface. Pray that He would give you the resolve to react appropriately when the "prodding" hurts!

Leaning on Christ in the Midst of Loneliness

The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. – [Psalm 34:18](#)

A woman recognized the famous pastor F. B. Meyer one day in her neighborhood, and she ventured to share her burden with him. For years she had cared for a crippled daughter who brought great joy to her life. But the daughter had died, and the grieving mother was alone and miserable.

So Meyer told her, "When you get home and put the key in the door, say aloud, 'Jesus, I know You are here!' and be ready to greet Him directly when you open the door. And as you light the fire, tell Him what has happened during the day; if anybody has been kind, tell Him; if anybody has been unkind, tell Him, just as you would have told your daughter. At night stretch out your hand in the darkness and say, 'Jesus, I know You are here!'"

Some months later, Meyer was back in that same neighborhood and met the woman again, but he did not recognize her. Her face radiated joy instead of announcing misery. "I did as you told me," she said, "and it has made all the difference in my life, and now I feel I know Him."

You may be dealing with deep grief today. Or perhaps you're lonely and just need to know someone is there. Jesus is a friend who sticks closer than a brother ([Proverbs 18:24](#)), and is with you no matter what. So let Him be your best friend and cling to Him though any loneliness you face.

Prayer Challenge:

Ask God to remind you that Jesus is a true friend who sticks closer than a brother. Talk to Jesus like you would anyone else because He's there and will always listen.

When You Don't Feel Like It

We all struggle with spiritual discouragement and lethargy. Some days our circumstances threaten to overwhelm us, and we struggle just to pray. Many times we just don't feel like doing the things we know we should. For one reason or another, God sometimes seems far off and unreachable.

David faced times like these in his life. The Psalms are filled with verses that express his despair and feeling of abandonment.

Yet the Psalms also give us the key to living victoriously during the dark periods of life. Let's take a quick look at Psalm 119:89-95*.

“Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven. Your faithfulness continues throughout all generations; You established the earth, and it stands. They stand this day according to Your ordinances...”

My circumstances or feelings have not changed God. He is the same God today as He was when He hung the stars in the sky, led the Israelites through the Red Sea, and fed the five thousand.

“For all things are Your servants...”

All things, even the things affecting me right now, are God's servants. The circumstance, people, and events around me are all under God. They are His servants, designed to help and bless me spiritually.

“If Your law had not been my delight, Then I would have perished in my affliction. I will never forget Your precepts, For by them You have revived me. I am Yours, save me; For I have sought Your precepts. The wicked wait for me to destroy me; I shall diligently consider Your testimonies.”

Recalling God’s faithfulness and control over everything that touches us gives us strength to walk with God even when we feel like giving up in despair. After all, our feelings and circumstances have not changed God. He is perfectly capable of sustaining us if we will only let Him. We simply need to choose to *delight* in and *diligently consider* God’s precepts (His principles and character) despite how we feel. Choosing to delight in God might not be easy. It might even involve hard work. But only God can revive and save our soul from spiritual lethargy.

Next time you feel spiritually drained or inadequate, remember that you have a choice. You can wrap yourself up in excuses and self-pity, or you can choose to draw your strength from an unchanging God.

Are You Missing Your Potential?

Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. -

Hebrews 5:13-14

Leadership magazine once ran an article about the curious growth habits of sharks. As the article explains...

If you catch a small shark and confine it, it will stay a size proportionate to the aquarium. Sharks can be six inches long yet fully matured. But if you turn them loose in the ocean, they grow to their normal length – eight, twelve, sixteen, or even twenty feet!

The same can be said of some Christians. Isolated and protected in a self-made bubble, these immature believers live a life free of the challenges, joys, battles, and opportunities that stretch other Christians to their full maturity.

God has plans for you. Maybe you've been swimming in the wide ocean for years – serving God and growing in your faith – or maybe you feel like you're just now diving into the great deep. Either way, there's no limit to how much you can grow in your faith and how much you can do for God's Kingdom if you just take the leap.

Prayer Challenge:

Pray that God will mature you in your faith as you commit to serve Him today.

Questions for Thought:

What are some challenging things you could do today that you know would make an impact for God's Kingdom?

Is there any reason you're holding back?

Why No Task Is Menial

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. - 1 Corinthians 10:31

A tourist was visiting Italy years ago and decided to take a tour of several old churches. He came across one that was undergoing major renovations. Much of it had been demolished, and was in the process of being rebuilt.

He walked up to three of the masons who were working on the church. In his best Italian, he asked them, "Can you tell me what you are doing?"

The first mason told him, "Yes! I'm cutting stone."

The second smiled and said, "I'm making 1,000 lire a day."

The third joyfully exclaimed, "I'm building a beautiful church!"

It's amazing what a difference perspective makes. Many Christians think of their quiet time as just "reading the Bible," when actually they're learning what it means to walk more closely with Jesus. It's a totally different perspective!

Nothing is menial in God's Kingdom. Every task we accomplish ultimately points to a greater purpose. So whether you're reading your Bible, talking with a friend, or praying, remember that you're doing much more than a simple task. You're serving the Most High God!

Prayer Challenge:

Pray and ask God to help you glorify Him even in your daily routine.

Devotion: Growing Older Should Be Celebrated!

“Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.” (2 Corinthians 4:16)

It comes as a shock, and it shouldn't. We look in the mirror and see new wrinkles, graying hair, sometimes a person we hardly recognize. We wonder, “How did I get this old? It seems just like yesterday that I was a child, a teen, a young man.”

Today I must admit simply that I am old. Not an easy admission because when I was young I remember what I thought of old people. Old people were out of touch, could not do anything fun, mostly sat around getting older. Now I am one of them.

Growing older does not have to be a burden. Though there are some things we simply must accept in an aging body, we need not accept bitterness, grumpiness, or a complaining attitude.

My grandmother collected dolls into her old age. I enjoyed the look on her face when she would pick one of them up. It was almost as if I could see the little girl still inside her.

I think that is the way to be. We ought to grow wiser, more understanding of the faults of others, and generally kinder in our later years. But I think it is important that somewhere inside we keep alive the child, the sense of wonder, the sense of excitement. I think Jesus meant something of the kind when He said we must be like little children to enter His kingdom.

Prayer: Dear Lord, help us to keep the child alive, even as we grow and mature and waste away outwardly, keep us renewed inwardly. Amen.

The Heartbeat of Life

No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. - 1 John 4:12A young man was once determined to win the affection of a beautiful lady who refused to even talk to him. He decided that the way to her heart was through the mail, so he began writing her love letters. He wrote a love letter every single day. Seven times a week, the young woman received a letter in the mail. When she didn't respond after months, he increased his output to three notes every 24 hours.

In all, he wrote her more than seven hundred letters. And she wound up marrying the postman!

God created you for relationships. And there's nothing sweeter or more encouraging than spending time with someone you love. And in Christ, that means everybody. Whether it's with family, friends, people you've known for decades, or only just minutes – relationships are the heartbeat of life.

So seek out healthy, God-honoring relationships with others. They're how the love of God in you is made complete.

Prayer Challenge:

Thank God for building a relationship with you through Christ. And ask Him to help you.

The Incredible Value of What God's Given You

However, as it is written: "What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived"—the things God has prepared for those who love him. - [1 Corinthians 2:9](#)

When the Western Union company asked the great inventor Thomas Edison to "name his price" for the ticker he had invented, Edison asked for a few days to think it over. His wife suggested he ask for \$20,000, but Edison thought that was too much.

So when the time came for the meeting, the Western Union official asked Edison for his price. Edison wanted to say \$20,000, but couldn't get the words out of his mouth. So the official broke the silence. "Well, how about \$100,000?"

It's sometimes easy to undervalue things that haven't come to full fruition yet. Edison hadn't really seen the full potential of his world-changing invention, so he wasn't aware of its incredible value. The same is often true of salvation. You see, no living person has seen what God has prepared for those who love Him, but its true value is beyond what anyone could imagine.

As a believer, what you have in Jesus Christ is the most valuable thing in the world. Yet there are still those who take it for granted, using it as license to live as they please. But a Christian who knows its value will live every day in thankfulness to the glory of God.

Live today in light of your salvation, giving thanks to God and doing everything to bring honor to Him!

Prayer Challenge : Thank God for His saving work in you and pray your life would bring glory to Him!

Questions for Thought: What are some times in your life when you might have taken God's salvation for granted?

What would it look like for you to live each day in thankfulness, bringing honor and glory to Him?

Serving God in the Big and Small

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. - [1 Peter 4:10](#)

Woodrow Wilson was on his whistle-stop train tour of the U.S. when he was President of the United States. The train stopped in Billings, Montana. As was custom, he was standing at the rear of the last railroad car speaking to a crowd from the platform.

Two little boys elbowed their way through the crowd to get close to the President. One of them offered Mr. Wilson a small American flag, which he gladly accepted. The other didn't have a flag, so he reached down in his pocket, took out a dime, and offered it to the President.

Wilson reached down, took the dime, and thanked the little fellow.

Five years later, Woodrow Wilson died. As his wife was going through his personal effects, she stumbled across that dime – wrapped in a piece of paper and tucked in the President's wallet. He treasured that small gift so much that he kept it with him at all times.

That's how God feels about you. He treasures even what you feel like is the most meager display of love – a simple word of thanks or act of service. That's because the heart behind your gift of service is far more important than the gift itself.

Don't ever believe you have nothing to give to God. He loves your faithful service – no matter how big or small!

Good Roads to Travel...

Luke 9:23 -- *And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.*

When missionary Dr. David Livingstone was working in Africa, a group of friends wrote him: "We would like to send other men to you. Have you found a good road into your area yet?" Dr. Livingstone sent this message in reply: "If you have men who will only come if they know there is a good road, I don't want them. I want men who will come if there is no road at all."

There's a big difference between just being interested in doing something and actually making a commitment to doing it! Just being interested allows us the freedom to do a thing only when our circumstances permit. But making a commitment to do that thing means accepting no excuses and no reservations -- it means putting aside our fears and reservations moving forward til we see the end result! Dr. Livingstone was looking for results, and this required men of commitment!



The Greatest of Love:

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." -- John 3:16

Christmas is spelled L-O-V-E. What is the Christmas message? It is John 3:16.

God gave us the gift of love on Christmas Day. It is truly said, "What the world needs now is love." I need it. You need it. Your spouse needs it. Your child needs it. An elderly man or woman sitting alone in a nursing home today needs it. A child abandoned and alone in a children's home needs it, too.

God sent His one and only Son as the Savior. He knew we couldn't save ourselves. So He sent His Son to be born in a manger, to die on a cross, to rise again into glory, and to come again to redeem His church.

Where are you spending your Christmas day? Maybe you can spare a few minutes with your family and friends to share His gift of love with someone who is all alone today.



How hungry are you?!

Matthew 5:6 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

I love fishing... but sadly, I haven't been able to fish for quite a while. There's the Mediterranean, but other than that, the few good fishing spots in Israel are not really available to the public. So sad. Nevertheless, fishing gives me a chance to get a break from the world and just relax and meditate -- and on a good day, maybe catch a fish or two. But there are different kinds of fishermen and different ways of fishing...

I recently saw a fishing cartoon that spoke to me and illustrated something about expectations. Pictured were two Eskimos fishing through holes in the ice. One of them had his line in a normal size hole maybe two or three feet across. But the guy sitting next to him had his line in an enormous hole, in the shape of a whale! This guy was hungry! He didn't want some dinky little fish! He was fishing for whales!

What I like about this illustration is how appetite creates expectation. What is our appetite for affecting the world around us for the Lord's sake? How much do we hunger to change things in peoples' lives through the gospel and through the ministry of our Messiah? And how does that affect our expectations? He said, "Blessed are those who HUNGER AND THIRST for righteousness."

How would you compare your hunger to your expectation? If your hunger is great and genuine then it's likely that God will move you to carve out a "whale-sized" hole in this icy world and expect a corresponding catch!

Making Teamwork Work in the Body of Christ:

As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable... - 1 Corinthians

12:20-22

People can learn a good amount from nature. One way we can learn about teamwork is by looking at bees. On a hot day, about half the bees in a hive stay inside beating their wings while the other half go out to gather pollen and nectar.

Because of the beating wings, the temperature inside the hive is about 10 degrees cooler than outside. But what happens next is truly amazing: The bees rotate duties. So the bees that cool the hive one day are honey gatherers the next!

We, as the body of Christ, can learn a good amount from those bees. First, we can learn that there are different needs for Kingdom service. Some are called to teach, some are called to administrate. That's the nature of any organization – not everyone can have the same job!

Second, we can learn that not everything we do is going to fulfill us 100% of the time. I can imagine a bee would much rather be buzzing around looking for flowers than stuck flapping his wings to cool down the hive.

Above all else, it's crucial we understand that while not all roles in the body of Christ are equally exciting or receive equal praise, they're equally important. Don't despise your gifts. Use them to the fullest for the Kingdom!

Prayer Challenge:

Pray that God would give you a spirit of humility when it comes to fulfilling your role in the body of Christ.

How Can You Grow a Generous Heart

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. - 2

Corinthians 9:6-7

A man was walking one day when he heard a woman screaming hysterically. He looked over to see she was kneeling in front of her child. He was able to get the woman to calm down enough to discover the boy had swallowed a coin and couldn't breathe. So the man picked him up by his ankles, gave him a few shakes, and a quarter dropped to the ground.

"Thank you, sir!" the woman said. "You seemed to know just what to do to get the coin out. Are you a doctor?"

"No ma'am," replied the man, "I work for the IRS."

Many people today would identify with that little boy...and not just when it comes to paying taxes. Many feel like when they go to church, their pastor is trying to shake every last coin out of their pockets. And at the same time, many **pastors** feel that's what they have to do to get people to give!

Prayer Challenge:

Ask God to give you the right attitude toward giving to His Kingdom purposes.

From: Crosswalk.com

Where is Jesus in the Bible?

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.” -
Revelation 22:13

The evangelist Harry Rimmer was speaking to Christians interested in military evangelism. During the speech, Mr. Rimmer displayed his own personal copy of a white Pacific Fleet New Testament, which was issued to servicemen by the Gideons.

After the meeting, a member of the audience walked up and showed Mr. Rimmer another white Pacific Fleet New Testament, one given to his son prior to the bombing of Pearl Harbor. But this one was stained with blood.

The man told Rimmer, “This little book is very precious to me. It’s stained with the blood of my son.” Rimmer paused for a moment, then looked at his personal Bible and said, “God feels the same way about His Word. He loves it too. Its pages are stained with the blood of His Son.”

Every page of God’s Word speaks of Jesus. From the Garden of Eden to the Book of Revelation, even the longest genealogy is written with Jesus in view. So as you read Scripture, remember who’s at the center of it all – Jesus, the Savior of the world!

Prayer Challenge:

Pray and ask God to open your eyes to Jesus’ presence on every page of the Bible.

From: Crosswalk.com

Freckles and Wrinkles

An elderly woman and her little grandson, whose face was sprinkled with bright freckles, spent the day at the zoo. Lots of children were waiting in line to get their cheeks painted by a local artist who was decorating them with tiger paws. "You've got so many freckles, there's no place to paint!" a girl in the line said to the little fella. Embarrassed, the little boy dropped his head. His grandmother knelt down next to him. "I love your freckles. When I was a little girl I always wanted freckles, she said, while tracing her finger across the child's cheek. "Freckles are beautiful!" The boy looked up, "Really?" "Of course," said the grandmother. "Why, just name me one thing that's prettier than freckles." The little boy thought for a moment, peered intensely into his grandma's face, and softly whispered, "Wrinkles."

We were all created as a creature of beauty in the likeness of God.

I am a perfectionist. I recognize this as my strength and weakness. I could never be an artist because I will always find a flaw and have to perfect it.

We are all pieces of art created by God. He created us the way he wanted us. Yes we all have flaws, but God doesn't see them because he loves us as we are. He just wants us, as his children to love him in return and to admire and love the other pieces of art he has created the same way he does, as unique as each may be.

Psalm 139:13-14 — You alone created my inner being. You knitted me together inside my mother. I will give thanks to you because I have been so amazingly and miraculously made. Your works are miraculous, and my soul is fully aware of this.

Isaiah 64:8 — Yet you, LORD, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.

1 Peter 3:8-9 — To conclude: you must all have the same attitude and the same feelings; love one another, and be kind and humble with one another. Do not pay back evil with evil or cursing with cursing; instead, pay back with a blessing, because a blessing is what God promised to give you when he called you.

What do you wish for?

Psalms 27:4 One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.

Three men were marooned on a desert island. As the days slowly went by, they dreamed of what it would be like to be at home with their friends and family, to be back at their jobs doing the things they loved. One day one of the men found a bottle. When he opened it, a genie came out and announced that he would grant each of them one wish.

"Really?" one of the men said, "Boy, I sure would love to be back in Seattle with my wife and kids." POOF! -- in an instant he was gone. Seeing that, the second man immediately gave his request, "I want to be back in New York with my fiancé!" And in a flash, POOF! -- he was gone too.

The third man was left all alone sitting on the sandy beach and said, "Wow, it's lonely here with my friends gone. I sure wish they'd come back. And POOF.

Merriam Webster defines "wish" as "to have a desire for, as something unattainable";. We use that word all too often, don't you think? We're always wishing for something, always yearning for something, always "needing" that one more thing. It seems we can never be satisfied! There is only one thing we should truly desire, that is to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of our lives.

He is the only One who can truly satisfy our longings. Let's give our hearts and desires to Him once again today.

Gotcha!

Numbers 32:23 But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out.

Now I'm not a big fan of drinking alcohol or drunkenness but this story was funny.

He snuck up the stairs as quietly as he could. He looked in the bathroom mirror and bandaged the couple of bumps and bruises he'd received in a fight earlier that night. He was a little drunk, but nobody had to know. He proceeded to climb into bed, smiling at the thought that he'd pulled one over on his wife. When morning came, he opened his eyes and there stood his wife. "You were drunk last night weren't you!" "What? What do you mean?" He replied. "How could you think such a thing?" "Well, if you weren't drunk, my dear," his wife pointed in the direction of the bathroom, "why are there bruises on your face and a bunch of band-aids on the bathroom mirror?"

Likewise, I think sometimes when we sin, we think we're pulling one over on the Lord. Not so. The Lord sees all and knows all. He knows our every move, even before we make it. And one day, we will have to stand before Him and be held accountable. I don't know about you, but I don't want Him to play back those sins, do you?

We may be fooling a lot of people but we'll never fool the Lord. Let's get right with Him today and strive to stay far away from that sin! There's so much work to be done!

How about a good laugh?

Proverbs 17:22a A merry heart doeth good like a medicine:

In my Hebrew class I learned that in the Hebrew language, every noun is either masculine or feminine.

It so happens that the word "question", or "she-eh-la" is a feminine word.

So the next time you wonder why men won't ask for directions -- there you have it, God designed us that way!

Smile! Today is the day that the Lord has made! There is so much to rejoice about!

Proverbs 12:25 Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, But a good word makes it glad.

A friend writes: "My father did some pretty nasty things to me. But at the end of his life, as I kneeled by his bedside, I told him how thankful I was for every good thing he had done and every way he had blessed me, and there were many. We were good friends when he passed away." One of the greatest regrets you can avoid at the end of your life is the failure to praise others when they deserved it, (and even when they didn't).

But why is it that affirming words are so pitifully rare in our conversations, especially when so many people are anxious, discouraged, and depressed by all the negativity in this life? We're living in a world that's constantly knocking us down, from cradle to grave. Is it any wonder that anxiety and depression are rampant at every age level?

But notice the advice that Solomon gives -- a good word makes the heart glad. We should take this to heart. A compliment or blessing can be one of the greatest motivators, and can be truly life changing. And every one of us needs this kind of encouragement to run the race of this life.

Let's be people of encouragement, looking for the word which will lift another person up and bring healing and hope to her soul. A good word will also do wonders for our own hearts.

Teacher? Educator?

According to a news report, a certain private school in Washington recently faced a unique problem. A number of 12-year-old girls were beginning to use lipstick, and put it on in the bathroom.

That was fine, but after they put on their lipstick, they would press their lips to the mirror leaving dozens of little lip prints. Every night, the maintenance man would remove them and the next day, the girls would put them back.

Finally, the principal decided to do something. She called all the girls to the bathroom and met them there with the maintenance man.

She explained that all these lip prints were causing a major problem for the custodian who had to clean the mirrors every night.

To demonstrate how difficult it had been to clean the mirrors, she asked the maintenance man to show the girls how much effort was required.

He took out a long-handled mop, dipped it in the toilet, and cleaned the mirror with it.

Since then, there have been no lip prints on the mirror.

Sometimes there are teachers...And then sometimes there are educators.

Proverbs 22:6 - Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.

James 1:5 - If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

Be Thankful!

Psalms 34:1 I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.

In Budapest, a man goes to the rabbi and complains, "Life is unbearable. There are nine of us living in one room. What can I do?"

The rabbi answers, "Take your goat into the room with you." The man is bewildered and resistant, but the rabbi insists. "Do as I say and come back in a week."



A week later the man comes back looking more distraught than before. "We cannot stand it," he tells the rabbi. "The goat is filthy."

The rabbi then tells him, "Go home and let the goat out. And come back in a week."

A radiant man returns to the rabbi a week later, exclaiming, "Life is beautiful. We enjoy every minute of it now that there's no goat -- only the nine of us."

This is a funny story but how many of us know how to be truly thankful in the face of trial? Many powerhouses of the faith who preceded us realized the importance of mastering thankfulness.

How much more should we who have so much more than they!

We have an opportunity this Thanksgiving week, to practice being thankful! If we're struggling today, let's practice praising God in thankfulness for all the good things He's done! He deserves all of our praise regardless of our circumstance!

A Day for Singing

“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

—Luke 2:14 —

I grew up in a sober, psalm-singing church that allowed a few hymns if their words were straight from the Bible. This angels’ song was the trickiest, fanciest, and most moving hymn we had. We sang its phrases in parts, softly, then loudly—and when we reached the end, we did them over again, closing with a series of amens. Even though we now have hundreds of hymns available in books or on projection screens, I still cannot sing the words of that song without choking up a little.

And why not?

As the angels make the heavens ring with their song, they say it all, don’t they? This is, indeed, “good news that will cause great joy for all the people.” The angels bring glory to God in heaven for his mercy and love. They also assure us here on earth that peace and favor come to us from God. The angels’ song nicely unwraps God’s Christmas present.

Though the words make a perfect summary of the Christmas story, it’s odd that we do not sing them more often.

The shepherds caught on, however. They ran to the stable, saw the Christ child, and went back to work, “glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen.” I imagine they may have sung a few bars of the angels’ chorus along the way.

Prayer -- Father in heaven, we join the angels and shepherds in praising you today for the gift of your Son. We bring glory to you, “in the highest heaven and on earth.” In Jesus,
Amen.