

JANUARY 2024

inspiration

M A G A Z I N E



IT'S A
New DAY

Creator
Confident

Where's
YOUR Focus?

Delight in
His Love



PAGE 10

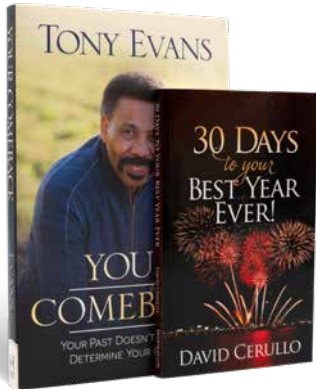


It's A New Day!

Read David's article on **page 5**, and see how God wants to make 2024 a phenomenal year of breakthroughs and blessings.



PAGE 16



Turn to page 28 for details about our THANK YOU GIFTS this month. Act quickly—our supplies are limited.



PAGE 53

EDITOR'S CORNER



Roone Acree

As we head into 2024, I am very grateful for all the ways God has blessed this ministry and our Inspiration partners. Over 5 MILLION PEOPLE said yes to Jesus in 2023 through the evangelistic outreaches of Inspiration Ministries!

Isn't that a mind-boggling harvest of souls? We praise God for His favor, and we thank YOU for your faithful partnership. Our Lord's ultimate plan is to make ALL things new (Revelation 21:5). And He can use that same transforming power to give you a breakthrough TODAY in the area of your life where you need it most. It's a new day!

10 Creator Confident

By David Jeremiah

The state of the world might cause us to doubt whether God is in control, but our peace and happiness—and our confidence as Christians—rest in believing He is.

14 Nothing's Gonna Stop Me

Somewhere in his darkest moment, recording artist Daniel Evans found a new song.

16 Where's Your Focus?

NEW SERIES! Keys to Abundant Life

If we look to Him instead of looking at our problems, then our circumstances won't seem so overwhelming after all.

19 Your January Devotions

Your daily guide to living in the covenant promises of God.

53 Delight in His Love

By Ben Cerullo

We do not follow Jesus because He forces us to. Our relationship with God is our pleasure, and our hope in Him is our greatest joy.






Empower Your Revival

Sign up today for our FREE, brand-new Inspiration Ministries E-Newsletter!


Here at Inspiration Ministries, we make it our goal to provide you with the most relevant and Spirit-filled resources available anywhere! Now we make it easier than ever...

Starting January 1, we're launching our FREE, daily e-newsletter, and we invite you to sign up today! From our daily devotions and *Strengthen Your Walk*™ videos to our faith-boosting Scriptures and articles, you'll never miss a day of amazing, faith-building, life-changing inspiration.

Today's Articles

 Regain Your Losses During the recent economic downturn in the world, many people were affected. Millions...	 Be a Blessing to Someone For more than thirty years, millions of people have received...	 The Messy Life of Parenting One summer we attended a family reunion in H Beach, North Carolin
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Tonight On Inspiration | TV



CAMP COOL KIDS
FACE YOUR FEARS


Camp Cool Kids - View Full TV Schedule
Wednesday, August 2 at 3:30 a.m. ET / 03:30 UK
At Camp Istrouma—aka Camp Cool Kids—Spence makes friends with guys in his cabin. He gains confidence and a sense of belonging. Meanwhile, Zach falls in with a team that likes to pick on Spence's. An all-out battle ensues... Continue Reading

Daily Devotional - August 2

Power to Witness
"Paul ... came to Ephesus, and found some disciples. He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said to him, "No, by no means." He said, "Into what baptism were you baptized?" They said, "Into the baptism of John." He said, "John baptized with the expectation of the Holy Spirit." And he said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit." Acts 19:1-7
NASB As a former slave, Amanda Smith ... Continue Reading

STRENGTHEN your walk
with David Cerullo

My Lessons From Heaven
After having a near-death experience in a South American river, Dr. Mary Neal shares how her hope and faith in God's promises were transformed ... Watch Now



Today's Prayer
"Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord."
Hebrews 12:14



Help me to embrace holiness and be at peace with the people in my life. I surrender my life to You.
AMEN

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Together, God has called each of us to do a great work for His glory.

GREATER Things Than These



STRENGTHEN your walk
with David Cerullo

As we come into a new year, I'm excited about the new strategies God is giving us to make an even greater impact for His Kingdom. Just as the apostle Paul sought to win the lost "by all possible means" (1 Corinthians 9:22 NIV), we are following God's directives to embark on new initiatives to become more effective "fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19).

Today, we are sending the Good News of Jesus Christ to more than 200 nations through Inspiration TV. And we are increasingly interacting with people around the world through Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. God is using these powerful tools to win someone to Christ every six seconds through our evangelistic website iprayedtheprayer.org!

Thanks to our faithful ministry partners, we are able to bring people the message of Christ right where they are—through their TVs, computers, or smart phones!

SETTING CAPTIVES FREE

As I've reflected on the goodness of God in allowing us to be part of such a great harvest, He's reminded me of a powerful Scripture passage about His desire to fulfill our dreams:

*When the LORD brought back the
captivity of Zion,
We were like those who dream.
Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
And our tongue with singing.
Then they said among the nations,
“The LORD has done great things
for them.”
The LORD has done great things for us,
And we are glad (Psalm 126:1–3).*

Just as in the days the psalmist describes, many people today are in “captivity” to Satan’s snares. Psalm 126 refers to the Israelites’ captivity in Babylon, but much of our captivity comes from demonic influence released through television, movies, music, websites, video games, and other forms of electronic media.

Thirty-four years ago, the Lord gave me a vision to penetrate the spiritual darkness influencing people through media and to turn on a revolution of the light of the Gospel. I continue to pursue this vision to share the Good News.

As the psalmist says, “*We were like those who dream.*” At the time God first gave me this vision, it seemed ridiculous, something akin to David battling Goliath. Yet today we are seeing an amazing harvest to the glory of God.

The battle is certainly far from over, but I look in amazement at how far the Lord has already brought us. I can testify, as the psalmist proclaimed: “*The LORD has done great things for us, and we are glad!*” Instead of being the result of human effort, “*This was the LORD’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes*” (Psalm 118:23).

YET MY HEART BREAKS

As grateful and awestruck as I am about what God has already accomplished, I am aware

that the battle for the airwaves is just beginning. After the psalmist’s great testimony about what the Lord had done, he changed his focus to the work that still remained: “*Turn back our captivity, O LORD*” (Psalm 126:4 KJ21).

You might say at this point, “Wait a minute! I thought he said the Lord had already brought the people out of captivity. But here he’s praying again for people to be released from captivity.”

That’s exactly where I find myself today. Hundreds of thousands have already been brought out of captivity, but my heart breaks for the *millions* who still sit in darkness, waiting for the light of Jesus Christ to set them free.

Thankfully, the psalmist ends with a note of promise and instruction to those who yearn for the great harvest still to come:

*Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy.
He who continually goes forth weeping,
bearing seed for sowing,
Shall doubtless come again with rejoicing,
bringing his sheaves with him
(Psalm 126:5–6).*

It’s so encouraging to have God’s promise that seed sowers will become reapers. Harvesting and rejoicing are sure to come when we sow seeds of tears and intercession because of our broken hearts for the lost. God’s *weepers*...and *sowers*... will *always* become His *reapers*. Genesis 8:22 promises that as long as the earth remains, the law of seedtime and harvest will never cease.

TO GOD BE THE GLORY

The Lord wants to bless you with an increasing harvest of His blessings. You can boldly come to Him with whatever need you have today: a financial breakthrough...healing in

**“The LORD
has done
great things
for us, and we
are glad!”**

Psalm 126:3

**You can boldly
come to God
with whatever
need you
have today.**

your body...restoration of your marriage...reconciliation with your children...deliverance from addiction...or the salvation of your loved ones.

Yet when we receive our breakthrough, we need to be careful to acknowledge where it came from. God has truly done great things through Inspiration Ministries these past 34 years, and we want to be careful to give Him *all* the glory:

*Not to us, O LORD, not to us
But to Your name be the glory,
Because of Your love and faithfulness (Psalm 115:1).*

I encourage you to take a few minutes right now to give thanks to the Lord for the things He has done in YOUR life. Take time to give glory to God for His blessings in the midst of your circumstances. He is worthy.

THE BEST IS YET TO COME

When the Lord blesses us with a great harvest, it's sometimes tempting to rest on our laurels and quit seeking Him for a further increase of our fruitfulness. But God is challenging me to never allow this to happen at Inspiration Ministries! Until Jesus returns and every tongue confesses that He is Lord, we will keep pressing for more souls to come into the Kingdom!

Let me leave you with a verse that is both encouraging and challenging. Nathanael was

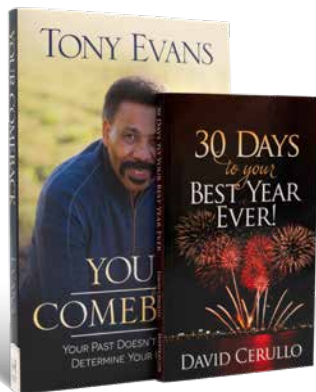
understandably amazed when Jesus gave him a supernatural word of knowledge, but Jesus told him plainly: *“You will see greater things than these!”* (John 1:50).

I believe this is an important word for you and for the ministry we share together through Inspiration Ministries. Yes, the Lord has done great things for us, and we are thankful. But Jesus is also encouraging us that we will see even *“greater things than these.”*

I'm convinced that wonderful victories lie ahead as we pursue this great, God-given mission to see the knowledge of the glory of the Lord cover the earth as the waters cover the sea (Habakkuk 2:14). And I'm eternally grateful to the Lord for His favor and to *you* for standing with me to reach the nations with the Gospel.

David

P.S. I can't wait to send you our powerful THANK YOU GIFTS this month! Turn to **page 28** for all the details.



New Joy and Peace

**What God has done for Tina,
He can do for you.**

An **Inspiration Ministries Monthly Partner** is someone who faithfully sows *monthly seeds* into God's Kingdom through the Good Ground of Inspiration Ministries. Our partners make it possible for us to touch people around the world **every day** with the hope of Jesus Christ.

Within three days after I sowed my first seed, God miraculously lifted the sadness and depression off of my shoulders. I felt new joy and peace, and I know this is the Lord's doing. I am now hopeful about the future, and I'm convinced this turnaround is because I released my seed and then trusted God for a harvest.
—Tina, Virginia

To be a blessing to others as God is blessing you, call us toll-free to *automatically* sow a monthly seed for souls. Your financial seeds will make an eternal difference in the lives of people around the world who are making Jesus Christ the Lord of their lives through the outreaches of Inspiration Ministries.

Thanks to partners like you, last year over 5 MILLION people responded to our evangelistic efforts and indicated that they prayed to receive Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Don't wait. Please contact us TODAY to find out more about this convenient way to automatically partner with Inspiration Ministries and participate in the Great Commission.

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inspiration.org/mmp



Creator Confident

The world's in chaos, but He isn't.

In 1958, a Gospel song flew to the top of the charts and became the #1 US pop single. It was the old African-American spiritual that said:

He's got the whole wide world
in His hands...
He's got the little, bitty baby
in His hands...
He's got you and me brother
in His hands...
He's got everybody here
in His hands...
He's got the whole world
in His hands.

What a message for troubled times! God is as strong as ever, and I want you to know: He's got the whole world in His hands. The state of the world might cause us to doubt whether God is in control, but our peace and happiness—and

our confidence as Christians—rest in believing He is. If you don't have confidence in the Creator of the world, you cannot have confidence in the condition of the world, and you're left with nothing but chaos.

Christians can live with confident assurance because our Jesus is Lord of all.

HE IS CREATOR OF THE WORLD

Let's remember the first words of the Bible, *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth"* (Genesis 1:1). Without a Creator/God, there's nothing but chaos and ultimate despair. Without a Creator/God, there's no one in charge—there never has been and there never will be. Everything is an accident, including the

existence of the universe, the condition of the world, the trajectory of history, and you and me. This is a terrible philosophy.

The psalmist said, *"My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth"* (Psalm 121:2). We can be Creator confident because we have a Creator who is competent in all things.

It's logical to assume the Creator is also the Controller. We can tackle life with confidence because the same God who originated the universe oversees it. In the book of Daniel we read, *"The Most High rules in the kingdom of men"* (4:17, 25, 32; 5:21).

God is God, and He is the Supreme Commander of Heaven and earth. Nothing comes close to the power of Him who raised Christ from the dead. His is an inevitable, indomitable, unconquerable power.

HE IS COMMANDER OF THE FUTURE

The Creator of the world and Controller of the universe is also the Commander of the future.

The Bible devotes thousands of its verses to reassuring us about the ultimate future. Anything that so occupies the mind and the Word of God should be of special interest to us. Start your thinking with the reality of the Second Coming of Christ, and then evaluate the times in light of His return.

That's the best way—really, the only way—to live every day with confidence, come what may. Jesus told His followers, *"Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near"* (Luke 21:28).

When we have this kind of confidence in our Creator, it shows up in every zone of life. We have peace in the face of danger, faith in the face of the unknown, purpose in the face of chaos, love in the face of our enemies, and joy in the face of sorrow.

You can be confident in life. Your God is the Creator of the world, the Controller of the universe, and the Commander of the future. He's got the whole wide world in His hands. ❖



David Jeremiah is the senior pastor of Shadow Mountain Community Church in El Cajon, California, and the founder and host of *Turning Point*. Watch on Inspiration TV Sundays at 10 a.m. ET.

Excerpt provided by Turning Point Ministries, © 2022.



ANYTHING *is* POSSIBLE



music can heal
a broken heart

A feel good movie for all ages! Piano prodigy Ethan Bortnick plays Nathan, who runs away after his mom goes missing. Can the power of music show him the way home?

Saturday, Jan. 27 at 9:00 p.m. ET
Sunday, Jan. 28 at 5:30 p.m. ET
Wednesday, Jan. 31 at 9:00 p.m. ET

Program times subject to change.
Check inspiration.org/tv for details.

YOU are a
NEW CREATION
in CHRIST!



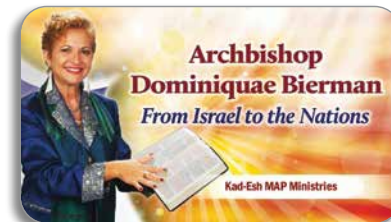
Saturdays, Jan. 6-27 at 2:00 p.m. ET

The Chosen

Watch episodes of *The Chosen* every Saturday in January! In this powerfully human portrayal of Christ's life, follow Jesus (played by Jonathan Roumi) as He heals, laughs, and shatters what seems impossible.



Saturdays at 4:00 p.m. ET



Thursdays at 9:30 p.m. ET



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Roku, Apple TV, or the Inspiration Ministries TV app.

Nothing's Gonna Stop Me!

Somewhere in his darkest moment, recording artist Daniel Evans found a new song.



None of life's highways lead us directly to fulfilled dreams. We all need the courage and fortitude to go off road, blaze new trails, and persevere through gullies and thorns. We also need people who love and encourage us along the way.

At least that's how it has been for Daniel Evans, an award-winning, hip-hop artist and long-time Inspiration partner. His music is often a product of personal passion and pain. But Daniel believes the gifts God gives to each of us are worth stewarding—and he shares his story to encourage other budding artists!

The seeds of Daniel's dream were sown when he began following Jesus around the age of seven—and discovered the Christian rap and rock group DC Talk. Soon after, he started writing his own rap music to share the joy and hope of faith with his friends. Daniel spent hours writing lyrics, trying out new beats, and sharing his work with family and close friends.

At first, nothing was more important to Daniel than telling others about the power and love of God. He carried on with his music for several years, but over time his enthusiasm faded, and his joy dimmed. Slowly, Daniel slid away from daily time with Jesus and stopped rapping about the joys of a faith-filled life. The dark clouds of depression enveloped him.

When friends couldn't get through to Daniel, they went to his dad. "My dad came and said my friends missed how I used to talk to them about God. They told him it had helped them. Just hearing that helped me turn back to God. I had been so depressed, really even suicidal. The first rap I did after that was 'Nothing's Gonna Stop Me.' It was my message to keep

trying. I believe we all have a ministry, and I was determined to be a good example for others, someone who spent time in the Word and in prayer."

God blessed Daniel's efforts, and opportunities to play at church and for community groups began to open up. His mom commented on how much more anointed Daniel's playing became during this time. When an opportunity to submit his work to an Alabama radio station appeared, Daniel jumped at the chance. He was overjoyed when he won the Inspirational Artist on the Rise award the first year. With that exposure and win, he submitted a music video to another industry competition and won Inspirational Video of the Year.

Asked to offer advice to other aspiring Christian artists, Daniel says, "Don't get discouraged, and *always* give God the glory. He will help you grow, and He will open doors for you." Daniel's next goal is to find a manager or booking agent who can help him share his music even more. "I work a regular job selling fish to men (Captain D's), but what I love to do is *fish for men* for Jesus!" ❖

What is YOUR testimony of God's transformation in your life?

Share by visiting inspiration.org/praise TODAY!



Where's Your Focus?

Set your eyes on Jesus, and you'll see the faithfulness of God revealed.

We never want to face difficulties or hardships in life, but even when we do, we can have everlasting hope if we're "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2). For every believer, He should be the focus in every area of our lives.

Why? Because whatever we focus on becomes magnified in our minds. Whatever we have our eyes set on gets top priority in our thoughts and actions.

That's why an attitude of gratefulness is so paramount to having an abundant life; it takes the focus off ourselves and puts it on the

Savior of our souls. It magnifies what should be magnified and gives us a focal point for our faith that leads to God's incredible miracles and truth.

Have you ever had a relatively small matter grow into a large issue simply because you focused on it too much? Have you ever dwelled so much on a problem that you became overcome by fear and anxiety?

We all have to some extent. But if we change our focus and set our eyes on Jesus, then we will see the faithfulness of God revealed. If we look to Him instead of looking

at our problems, then our circumstances won't seem so overwhelming after all.

God is a faithful God in every season of your life. His mercies are new every morning (Lamentations 3:21–23). He will NEVER leave you, no matter how difficult your circumstances seem to be (Hebrews 13:5).

God can turn your barren winters into fruitful springs...times of drought into abundant harvests (Genesis 26:1–14). Those who trust in Him never need to worry about the challenging circumstances of life.

Blessed are those who trust in the LORD and have made the LORD their hope and confidence.

They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water.

Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought.

Their leaves stay green, and they never stop producing fruit (Jeremiah 17:7–8 NLT).

What an encouraging picture of the kind of life we can have when we're focused on the goodness of our Savior and King. Like the virtuous woman described in Proverbs 31, we will be able to "smile at the future," confident that God is preparing blessings and breakthroughs for us in the days ahead (v. 25 NASB). ❖

Meditate on these life-giving Scriptures this month:



Week One

You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.

Isaiah 26:3 ESV



Week Two

Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

Colossians 3:2 ESV



Week Three

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Matthew 6:33 ESV



Week Four

Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:2

NEW Year, NEW Beginning

January 8–February 2

40 Days to Your New Beginning

with David Cerullo

Everyone needs a fresh start sometimes. Join David Cerullo as he shares life-changing truths to help you break free from your past and walk into the new beginning God has planned for you. When difficult situations flare up in your life, it's easy to feel frustrated, stressed, and overwhelmed. No matter what season of life you are in, God wants to step into your circumstances today!

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God Holds the Future

BIBLE READING: ISAIAH 46

James Rowe spent most of his life far from his homeland. Born on this day in 1865 in England, he worked for the Irish Government before immigrating to America where he worked in railroads and the Hudson River Humane Society. A devoted believer, he developed a passion for writing lyrics to hymns, numbering many thousands.

Through his diverse experiences, he had many opportunities to be concerned about the future. In 1922, he authored a poem that reflected what he learned. It was called “God Holds the Future in His Hands.”

He wrote that regardless of circumstances, we should not dread the future. Burdens may seem great, and we may face many trials. But we can trust God.

We may not know what will take place tomorrow, but we can *know* that God will guide us. We need to remember that He is the Creator and sovereign even over the events of life. Years will come and go, but to Him these “are but an open page.”

Rowe gave this advice: “Live close to Him and trust His love.” At times we may roam, but whatever comes, God will guide us safely home. We can be confident that He understands us and that He is our friend.

As you approach the year ahead, don't be filled with dread. Know that God holds the future. He is sovereign over space and time. And He loves you. You can trust Him.

What are your plans and goals for the coming year?

MONDAY

January

1

Only I can tell you the future before it even happens. Everything I plan will come to pass, for I do whatever I wish.

Isaiah 46:10 NLT

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for holding my future. Help me stay in the center of Your will. I trust my life to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good; celebrate his lovely name with music.

Psalms 135:3 NLT

Celebrating

BIBLE READING: PSALM 135

It has become one of the most-watched events of the year. It is the annual New Year's Day concert by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra from Vienna, Austria. This concert features a celebration of the waltz with music primarily composed by Johann Strauss II, who, as the waltz king, became a nineteenth-century celebrity. His music inspired a waltz mania that swept across Europe and America. For many, his music still inspires good times and happy memories.

New Year's Day revelers in Vienna make this a day to celebrate with music. But people throughout the world have found other ways to celebrate the start of a new year. Others celebrate with parades, parties, and sporting events.

Believers have other reasons to celebrate. This is a time to think about God, remember all He has done for us, fill our lives with gratitude, and let our mouths overflow with praise.

But this also is a time of *reflection*, looking back at the past and thinking about the year ahead. More than anything, it is a time to seek the Lord, realize He holds the keys to the future, and remember His faithfulness and all He has done for us.

Commit your past and the days ahead to God. Ask Him to help you prepare for the future. Trust Him. Celebrate His faithfulness. He is worthy of praise.

Reflect on the past year—did you meet your goals? How did you glorify God?

The Old Year

BIBLE READING: JOHN 15

After spending most of her life in England, Catherine Winkworth moved to Germany. This proved to be an important transition. In this new homeland, she was exposed to many German-language hymns, translating many into English. Among other developments, more than any other person, she helped introduce the German choral tradition to the English-speaking world.

One of her most appropriate discoveries was a hymn originally written by Johann Steuerlein, a hymn Catherine found particularly moving. This became known as “The Old Year Now Hath Passed Away.”

As we consider the start of a new year, this hymn calls us to look back and realize the many ways God has blessed us. We can remember His protection and blessings in the past, how He “kept us through the year when danger and distress were near.”

This hymn also calls us to look forward, praying that Jesus would guard us “through all the ages yet to come.” He will keep us free from errors and help us follow Him. He will help us forsake sin and begin “a new and holier course.” Don't focus on “what once was done amiss,” but make the coming year happier and better.

As you enter a new year, remember all God has done for you in the past. But also commit your future to Him. Every decision. Every event. Every relationship. Every opportunity. Moving forward, place your trust in Him.

Write a prayer committing this year and your activities to the Lord.

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

John 15:4

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for all You have done for me this past year. I commit my future to You. I trust You. In Jesus' name, amen.

For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even to the end.

Psalm 48:14 NIV

A New Year's Prayer

BIBLE READING: PSALM 48

Born in 1830, Emma Frances Riggs Campbell was one of eleven children. Her diverse background focused on her literary skills. She was the author of children's novels, a collection of verse, and a biography of her brother-in-law. But she gained the most impact through the hymns she composed.

Looking into the future, she wrote a clearly named hymn, "A New Year Prayer." She wrote, "I know not what awaits me along the coming year." The way forward seemed filled with unknowns, "with no clear guiding light." She knew she needed God's help: "I dare not venture one single step alone, lest I in blindness stumble against some hidden stone."

The path forward was filled with uncertainty. It was "all untrodden, no human footfall yet has left a trace to follow and save our vain regret." She needed the guidance of God's hand and was confident in His "higher wisdom." Without His help, she could be a victim of the many dangers and many kinds of snares that could lead her astray and encourage her to wander.

It was a time to turn to God in trust. Her prayer was that He would remove her doubts, give her childlike assurance, and fill her heart with calm, unwavering love.

As Campbell encourages, we are called to "go forward bravely," trusting God each step of the way, believing Him for strength and victory.

PRAYER:

Father, I commit the coming year to You. Help me stay pure and please You. Guide me. In Jesus' name, amen.

What uncertainties are you facing this year?

The Beginning

BIBLE READING: REVELATION 1

The beginning of a new year presents an opportunity to ponder our lives—to reflect on the past, think about the future, and *seek* God. Looking back, we should realize He was with us every step of the way. He was there even in the darkest nights when we did not appear to have any hope and when we felt lost and alone and needed direction.

As we look ahead, we do not know what will happen in the year to come. But the Bible reminds us that God will be with us through every situation. We can trust in Him.

One important way to stay confident and victorious is to *focus* on Him. We need to be people of prayer and commit to drawing closer to Him. Continually fill your minds and hearts with His Word. Daily stand on His promises. Follow the leading of His Spirit.

Remember, He is *both* the beginning and the end. He was with us in the past and will be with us in the future. More than that, He already is in the *end* of every situation. He is not worried, and we have no reason to be anxious.

Use the beginning of this year as an opportunity to focus on Him. Commit the future to Him—every issue, every challenge, every problem. Renew your trust in Him. Begin this year with Him.

How will you actively give your 2024 goals to God?

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

Revelation 1:8 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I commit the coming year into Your hands. Thank You for Your peace. Thank You for being trustworthy. In Jesus' name, amen.

*You crown the year with
Your goodness, and
Your paths drip with
abundance.*

Psalms 65:11

PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, I commit
the coming year to You.
I give my life, present,
past, and future, to You.
In Your name, amen.

How can you remind yourself daily to perform your work duties for God?

Give It to Jesus

BIBLE READING: PSALM 65

Franklin Belden began writing music when he was just a child. In his youth, he began realizing that God had given him musical abilities and dedicated his life to developing this gift. He spent more time composing church music.

He encountered problems resulting from royalties for his compositions. But he kept writing, with many hymns reaching thousands through the ministry of evangelist Billy Sunday.

He urged believers to realize the importance of a relationship with Jesus. These priorities were clearly expressed in his hymn “Give This Year to Jesus,” which underscored the importance of committing each new year to Him.

He urged believers to make a decisive commitment of their time and resources, realize that He is near, make Him the focal point of their lives, “live and work for Him” and “labor for the Master.”

His prayer was that we should be watchful and pray to “strive against the wrong,” confident Jesus will help us all the way along. We should be faithful and earnest in each task, determined to live for God alone, to trust Him, and always confident He will reward us for being faithful.

As you consider the year ahead, make this an opportunity to dedicate the future to Jesus. Seek to grow stronger in your relationship with Him and spend time in prayer. Seek to be more sensitive to His Spirit, more committed to learning His Word, and more determined to walk in His ways.

Fervent Praise

BIBLE READING: REVELATION 8

John Newton may be best known as the composer of “Amazing Grace,” but he also wrote many other hymns. One particularly reflected the way he approached a new year.

Called “Now May Fervent Prayer Arise,” this hymn is a call to prayer, taking the form of a prayer. He focused on the importance of prayer for believers, praying that God would bless His people with power and protection. He also prayed that we would be more willing to serve God.

He prayed that fervent prayer would “arise winged with faith” and “bring us down gracious answers from the throne.” We should be committed to prayer.

Newton realized the importance of believers staying sensitive. Prayer helps believers be more pliable and compassionate. God will “teach the stony heart to weep; let the blind have eyes to see, see themselves, and look on Thee!”

Concerned for young people, Newton wrote, “Let the minds of all our youth feel the force of sacred truth.” He prayed they would mature and become conscious of the dangers of sin.

He prayed God would give His people strength to run the race, scatter darkness, doubts, and fears, and wipe away every tear. Newton prayed that God would bless all people, both old and young, and fill them with praise.

Ask God to help you make this a year of prayer. Seek God.

Write a prayer asking God to help grow your prayer life this coming year.

*The smoke of the
incense, mixed with the
prayers of God’s holy
people, ascended up
to God from the altar
where the angel had
poured them out.*

Revelation 8:4 NLT

PRAYER:

Father, I praise You.
May my life bring You
praise. In Jesus’ name,
amen.

What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life.

1 John 1:1 NASB

PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, thank You for changing my life! Help others see the difference You have made. Use me as Your witness! In Your name, amen.

Reflect on the visible difference Jesus has made in your life recently.

Reality

BIBLE READING: 1 JOHN 1

John stressed that Jesus was *real*. He was not a myth. His life was not a story. John had heard Jesus speak. He saw Him with his own eyes. He touched Him with his hands.

John felt compelled to testify about what he had seen and heard. It was so life changing that others *had* to know about it. While He was a teacher of truth, Jesus also was concerned with practical living and the issues people faced every day. And He impacted people in tangible ways.

John wanted others to share in this experience for themselves “*so that you too may have fellowship with us.*” They could enter fellowship “*with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ*” (v. 3).

John stressed that our joy is complete *only* when we share this experience with others. The world needs to know this life-changing message. The Gospel makes a difference that people can see and hear! It changes everything about our lives in practical ways.

What impact has Jesus made on you? How has He changed you? What difference has He made in your thoughts and relationships? What problems has He solved? What prayers has He answered? What miracles have you received?

Live so others can see the difference Jesus makes. Dedicate your life to sharing the truths of the Gospel with others, helping others know the Gospel is *real*—for you, for them, for everyone.

Fellowship

BIBLE READING: 1 JOHN 1

John experienced a fundamental fact: God desires fellowship with His people. But He also desires that we have fellowship with other believers.

This helps us understand John’s message about light and darkness. Darkness doesn’t just pollute our minds and hearts. It poisons our character and prevents us from having a relationship with God. It even *contaminates* our relationships with other believers.

If we want to fellowship with the Father, we can’t walk in darkness because “*God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all*” (v. 5). Walking in the light means allowing Him to penetrate our hearts and minds, to expose actions and attitudes that are displeasing to Him and harm us.

Walking in the light is central to having fellowship with God and other believers: “*If we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another*” (v. 7). It means realizing we have been cleansed from sin.

As believers, we need to realize that God seeks to fellowship with us. But for this fellowship to take place He needs to discipline, correct, and refine us (Hebrews 12:4–11). This means walking in the light, ever alert to the threat of darkness.

Today, ask God to help you be alert to the threat of darkness. Practice walking in the light. Always seeking to fellowship with Him. Have a life that is pleasing to Him.

How do you respond to God’s discipline?

What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

1 John 1:3 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I seek to fellowship with You. Help me put aside distractions and concentrate on You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

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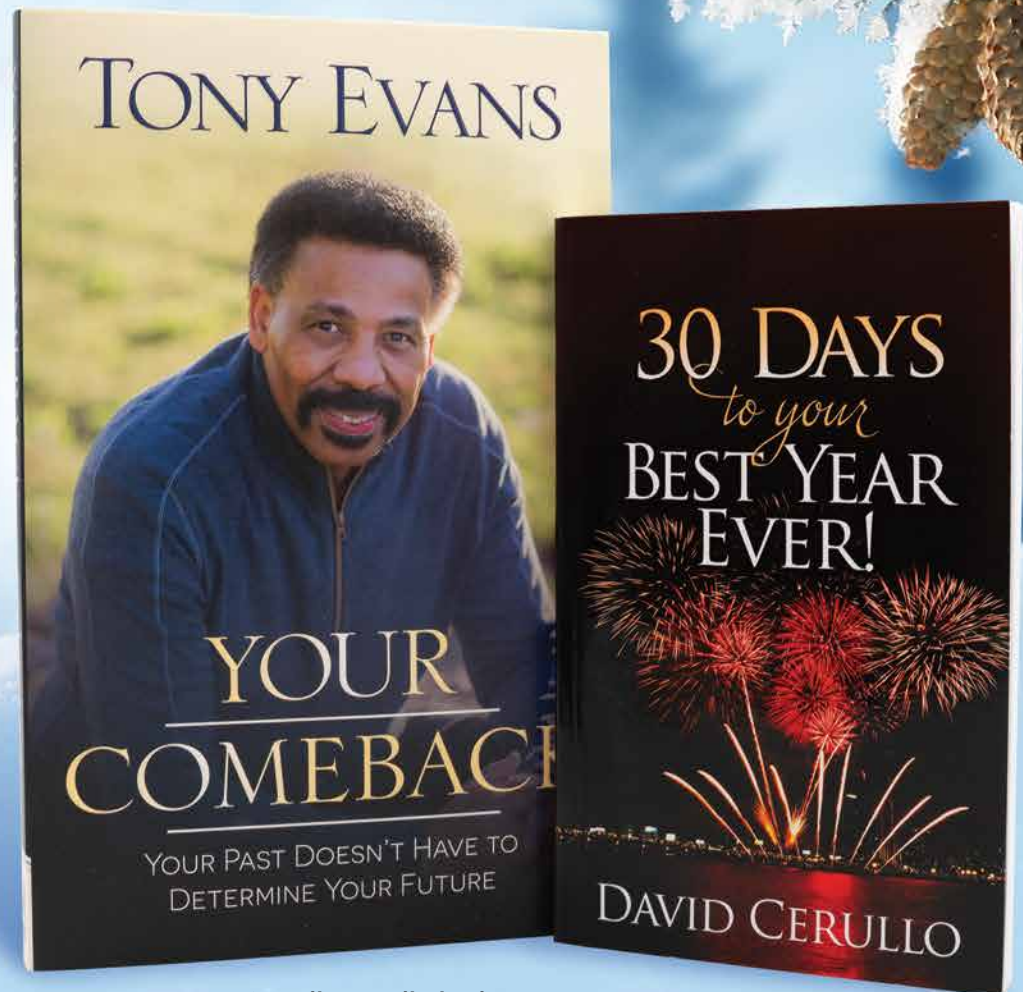
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These things we write to you that your joy may be full.

1 John 1:4

Full of Joy

BIBLE READING: 1 JOHN 1

John realized many believers placed limits on their expectations. He wanted them to realize that God wanted their joy to be complete.

He used a Greek word referring to a vessel that was *overflowing*. He was painting a picture of the *abundance* God has prepared for His people. He has prepared so much joy that the blessings *run over!* Yet many *fail* to receive *all these riches*.

Fullness is a central theme in the Gospel. Paul prayed that believers would “*be filled with all the fullness of God*” (Ephesians 3:19). Jesus said that He had spoken to His disciples “*that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full*” (John 15:11).

As we look at our lives, we can feel limited. But the Bible reminds us that we need to focus on God’s *abundance* and remember that He “*is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think*” (Ephesians 3:20).

Instead of thinking about limitations, we need to start with His overwhelming power and resources. Remember how much He has *promised* and *prepared*. *Believe* He desires to *overflow* our lives with blessings.

Ask God to give you a revelation of the fullness He has prepared for *you!* Remember that He delights to pour out His abundance on His children. Let Him fill you to overflowing with blessings. Let Him bless you, so you can be a blessing to others.

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for completing my joy!
Forgive me for limiting You. Thank You for meeting my needs and blessing me! In Jesus’ name, amen.

How have you experienced God’s joy this week?

God Is Light

BIBLE READING: 1 JOHN 1

John felt compelled to make sure his audience understood God’s nature. He spoke with *absolute certainty*. He didn’t just know about God but had a personal relationship with Him. And he was God’s messenger, telling others what “*we have heard from Him*.”

What had John been shown? It was a message told with awe-inspiring *simplicity*: “*God is Light*.” This simple truth reminds us that He is light, and everything that is associated with light: openness and hope, revelation and encouragement, clarity and blessing, certainty of direction, pure goodness, and pure holiness.

We also see, “*In Him there is no darkness at all*.” In Him is *nothing* deceptive, negative, foreboding, or harmful. *Everything* is good—even things we cannot understand or explain.

We remember that Jesus was sent “*to those who sit in darkness*” (Luke 1:79). Sadly, millions of people throughout the world still live in darkness, a darkness that overshadows every part of their lives.

But Jesus came to be the Light of the world, so no one who believes in Him “*will remain in darkness*” (John 12:46). Light reveals truth. It illumines even the darkest night. It penetrates even the most murky mysteries. It brings hope and salvation.

Make sure you are living in the light. Approach God with faith and confidence. Seek a more intimate relationship with Him. Commit yourself to bringing the light of the Gospel to the world.

How can you be a light in the darkness this week?

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

1 John 1:5 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You that You are light. Use me to impact lives with this Good News. I dedicate my life to You. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining.

1 John 2:8 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I want to be a window for Your light to shine through. Use my time, talents, and treasures for Your glory. In Jesus' name, amen.

Do the windows of your life need to be cleaned?

Light Through Windows

BIBLE READING: 1 JOHN 2

As George Herbert approached death, his focus turned away from the temporary things of this world and more toward eternal subjects. The realization that he would spend eternity with God brought him joy. The last words of this English poet and clergyman were, "I shall dwell where these eyes shall see my Master and Savior."

Raised under the strong influence of his mother, Herbert became an important scholar. He taught for many years at Cambridge University where his writing skills were honed and where he authored many poems. As he aged, his poems spoke more about his faith.

One of his most influential poems was called "The Windows," considered to be a masterpiece. Herbert sought to express how the light of the Gospel can shine through human vessels even though we are imperfect.

Herbert knew no one was perfectly pure and that man "is a brittle, crazy glass." Yet the miracle is that God still can make each of us into a window through which God's grace can shine.

The Bible urges us to allow His light to shine through us, through everything we say and do beacons of His love, mercy, and grace. We should use our resources to help reach the nations with the Gospel.

Turn your heart toward Him. Take advantage of the opportunities He gives you. And while you have breath, allow Him to shine His light through you.

Confirmation

BIBLE READING: 1 JOHN 2

What is your attitude toward the coming of the Lord? The Bible is clear: When He comes again, all of us will stand before Him and give an account of our lives. When we face Him, what will we say? What is our report? Are we ready?

God has given us the resources we need, so we can be confident. John wrote that we have received "an anointing," symbolizing the presence of the Holy Spirit (v. 27). We can draw on His presence at any time. He is with us to guide us, warn us, prepare us, and teach us.

We need to declare that Jesus is the Christ and be sure that He is the Lord of our lives. And we need to *abide* in Him. This means being always conscious of His presence with us and focused on obeying His Word.

John also described a practical way we can tell if we are pleasing Him: practice righteousness. While we are not saved by our words and deeds, what we do and say gives evidence of the real condition of our hearts. When others see us, what do they hear? When they hear us, what do they learn about our lives?

Make sure you are ready, and Jesus is your Lord. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit. Seek to live according to His Word, sow seeds into His Kingdom, and bear good fruit in your life.

Are you ready for the coming of the Lord?

Remain in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not draw back from Him in shame at His coming. If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness also is born of Him.

1 John 2:28-29 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, give me sensitivity to Your Spirit. Show me if I am pleasing You. Help me to live for You and share the Gospel. In His name, amen.

We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters.

1 John 3:16 NLT

PRAYER:

Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for loving me and dying for my sins. Help me draw closer to You. In Your name I pray, amen.

Write an expression of your love for Jesus.

My Jesus, I Love Thee

BIBLE READING: 1 JOHN 3

Even while a teenager, William Featherston realized how *important* Jesus was for his life. He was just sixteen when he wrote the words to the hymn “My Jesus, I Love Thee.”

Revealing his priorities, he described his personal relationship with Jesus. “I know Thou art mine; for Thee all the follies of sin I resign.” Jesus is a gracious Redeemer and Savior. Reflecting on his relationship, he wrote, “If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, ’tis now.”

He realized Jesus loved him *first* and had “purchased [his] pardon on Calvary’s tree.” He loved Jesus for suffering for him and “for wearing the thorns on [His] brow.”

Featherston did not know he would die about ten years later when he was only 27. But he knew his love of Jesus was not limited to this life: “I’ll love Thee in life; I will love Thee in death.” He would praise Him as long as he had breath. Even in death, he could declare, “If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, ’tis now.”

He could picture himself spending eternity with Jesus: “In mansions of glory and endless delight, I’ll ever adore Thee in Heaven so bright; I’ll sing with the glittering crown on my brow.”

Today, think about what Jesus means to you. He died so that *you* might have eternal life. And He loves you with everlasting love. Right now, let your heart be stirred with love for your Savior.

Testing the Spirits

BIBLE READING: 1 JOHN 4

Millions of people today live in spiritual confusion. Fostered by an intense media barrage, society is overwhelmed with messages about the occult. More than two-thirds of Americans believe in the paranormal.

According to a recent study, interest in the paranormal is particularly high among those people “with more liberal views of the Bible” and those who don’t regularly attend church. These people are particularly vulnerable because they are not solidly grounded. In contrast, there is a major difference between people who regularly attend church and believe in the Bible.

The Bible warns that deceptive spirits are at work in the world. This is why we need discernment to know the truth. We are warned not to “*believe every spirit, but test the spirits.*” Realize that only the spirit that “*confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh*” is from God. We also are warned about a “*spirit of antichrist,*” a spirit that denies that Jesus is Lord (vs. 2–3).

Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would “*testify about Me*” (John 15:26). This is why we need to be led by and filled with the Spirit. Commit to Jesus as your Lord.

Be alert for deception. Pray about any questionable issues. Fill your mind with the Bible, and make it the basis of your beliefs. Test the spirits. Be sure God’s Spirit is leading you.

How can you cultivate a spirit of discernment?

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

1 John 4:1 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I pray for a spirit of discernment. Help me recognize deception. Free me from distractions. Help me know Your will. In Jesus’ name, amen.

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.

1 John 4:18 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for loving me and delivering me from fear. I trust You. Thank You for blessing me and providing for every need. In Jesus' name, amen.

Write a prayer giving all your fears and worries to the Lord.

Casting Out Fear

BIBLE READING: 1 JOHN 4

God placed Adam and Eve in a perfect world: a garden overflowing with abundance. There, He met *every* need! But Satan deceived them into believing God was *withholding* blessings. When they believed Satan's lies, fear entered the world (Genesis 3:10).

Suddenly conscious of their sin, they no longer could enjoy God's abundance or even His presence. They no longer trusted Him or fellowshiped with Him. Their hearts became full of fear.

This is the impact of fear. It paralyzes us. It shapes our attitudes and expectations and blocks the flow of God's blessings. Like Adam and Eve, we can become afraid of facing God, afraid to believe His Word, or reluctant even to talk with Him.

This fear is expressed in many ways. We can be afraid of failure, what others might say about us, our jobs, world conditions, violence, or storms.

Everything changes when our relationship with the Father is restored, and we live in fellowship with Him. We learn to trust Him and be confident that He will meet our every need and give us an abundant life.

Remember, "*there is no fear in love*," and God loves *you* perfectly. Enter that love relationship with your Father. Let His love cast out every fear. And seek to live in expectation and faith, believing He will meet every need and give you His abundance. You can trust Him.

How I Love Jesus!

BIBLE READING: 1 JOHN 4

Frederick Whitfield spent many years as a pastor but is best remembered for a poem he wrote while still a student at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland. The title summarized what he felt was important: "Oh, How I Love Jesus!"

In this poem, he wrote about a name he loved to hear and sing about. This name "sounds like music in my ear, the sweetest name on earth." This was the name of Jesus.

His name reminded Whitfield how much Jesus loved him and died to set him free. Thinking of Jesus reminded him of the smile of a Father "beaming upon His child" and all that God has in store for us.

Jesus feels our "deepest woe" and takes away our burdens. He urges us to rejoice even when our hearts might be "trembling." He dries our tears and tells us "to trust and never fear."

Whitfield's poem became a hymn sung throughout the world. Some people so identified with his message that they *personalized* this hymn with their own testimonies. One addition became the hymn's refrain, simply repeating the phrase, "Oh, how I love Jesus." Why? "Because He first loved me!"

Stop and consider how much Jesus loves you! He died for your sins. He rose again, so you could have eternal life. Don't let burdens rob you of His peace and love. Rejoice in the name of Jesus! Celebrate His love for you.

Draft a poem expressing your love for Jesus and what He's done for you.

We love, because He first loved us.

1 John 4:19 NASB

PRAYER:

Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for all You have done for me. Thank You for dying for my sins and giving me life. In Your name, amen.

For whoever has been born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world: our faith.

1 John 5:4 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for victory. I turn over every burden to You. I trust You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Reflect on the most recent time faith secured your victory.

Faith Is the Victory

BIBLE READING: 1 JOHN 5

The tombstone of John Henry Yates, located in Batavia, New York, features these words: “Faith is the victory! Oh, glorious victory that overcomes the world.” The tombstone was a tribute friends paid to this poet-preacher who died in 1900. He discovered a key to the overcoming Christian life that he summarized in a hymn called “Faith Is the Victory.”

Yates said that we are Christian soldiers with no reason to be timid. Armed with faith, we can be aggressive and bold. We know we can be victorious as we live by faith, trusting Jesus.

Confident that “His banner over us is love,” we can take up our sword, which is God’s Word. We can learn from saints from the past that faith “is still our shining shield.”

We face a strong enemy and “on every hand,” we find them “drawn up in dread array.” Yates warned that we must be serious and not at ease. But wearing the helmet of salvation and girded with truth, we can know “the earth shall tremble ’neath our tread, and echo with our shout.”

Yates reminds us of God’s promise that we will “vanquish” all our adversaries in Jesus’ name.

No matter what you face, don’t be discouraged. Don’t give up in the face of opposition or uncertainty. And don’t be robbed of the victory God has prepared for you! Move forward in faith. Believe Him for victory.

Deceivers

BIBLE READING: 2 JOHN 1

Born in 1469, Niccolò Machiavelli entered government service in Florence, Italy, when young. He gained valuable experience and insights into human nature.

In 1512, he was removed from his position after the Medici family gained power. Attempting to win favor, he wrote books filled with insights he had gained. His goal was to help rulers know how best to govern. He failed to win back his position, but his writings helped him gain prominence and influence with ideas that often worked.

Machiavelli advocated a calculating, manipulative attitude that has been adopted throughout history by politicians, generals, and others. Even today, his influence can be seen in military and political campaigns and strategies.

He observed that most people are satisfied with appearances and can be fooled by clever slogans that seem to be true even when they are not. He encouraged leaders to placate people with promises that would satisfy their desires, even resorting to deception and misleading ideas.

Every Christian needs to realize that the world is filled with many deceivers—people who seek to convince us to believe their messages that may sound good but are not true.

The Bible urges us to realize that people may try to deceive you. Remember that Satan himself can disguise himself as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14). Stay alert. Ask God for discernment. Fill your life with His Word. Be on guard, always ready.

What can you do to ensure you are not easily deceived?

For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for.

2 John 1:7–8 NKJV

PRAYER:

Father, help me be on guard against deception. Give me discernment and wisdom. Keep me from being manipulated and deceived. In Jesus' name, amen.

Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward.

2 John 1:8 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, help me to be faithful with the resources You have given me. I seek first Your Kingdom. In Jesus' name, amen.

Are you living so that you can receive your full reward from God?

Your Full Reward

BIBLE READING: 2 JOHN 1

The Bible is clear: We are saved by grace through faith as a gift of God. Not because of *anything* we do (Ephesians 2:8). But the Bible also describes *rewards* that are given to believers.

As Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount, each of us will be rewarded based on what we do with the resources we have been given (Matthew 6). Jesus also taught that we will be *rewarded* for what we have done in our lives (Matthew 25). John expanded on this teaching, using words related to *wages paid* when a job is performed with excellence.

We have a *choice* regarding the type of reward we will receive. Will we receive the *full* reward? Or just *some*? John suggests that both are possibilities.

What do we need to do if we want to receive our “*full reward*”? First, as Jesus taught, we need to be good stewards of our talents and the resources we have been given. We need to be willing to step out in faith, seek first God’s Kingdom, be obedient servants, faithfully serve God, and fulfill the assignments we have been given.

John also describes how our reward is related to *how* we live. We need to follow Jesus and obey God’s Word.

Think about your life. Seek to be faithful with the resources you have been given. Live so that you might receive your *full reward*!

Face to Face

BIBLE READING: 2 JOHN 1

Modern technologies have eroded the need for interpersonal interaction. As a result, society has become increasingly depersonalized. Today, we listen to music on our phones. We watch television in the privacy of our homes. Millions work remotely, rarely if ever actually going into an office.

In New Testament times, letters were the primary supplement to personal interaction. But John recognized that there was a limit to what he could communicate “*with paper and ink.*” The believers’ joy could not “*be made full*” unless he spoke with them “*face to face.*”

When we interact with people on a personal level, our relationship enters a deeper dimension. In person, we can engage a person’s entire being. We can experience their gestures, expressions, appearance, and emotions. We can communicate from our personal lives and experiences and share more deeply in their real concerns.

These same principles are true as we consider our spiritual relationships. God can use our letters, phone calls, text messages, and other communications, but remember the power and importance of ministering to people face to face.

Today, are there people with whom you need to speak? People who need a touch from God that only you can provide? Don’t be content just with a phone call or text message. Make your joy—and their joy—complete by ministering to them face to face. Allow God to use you in their lives.

List the names of some people to whom you can directly minister this week.

Though I have many things to write to you, I do not want to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, so that your joy may be made full.

2 John 1:12 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, use me in the lives of people all around me. Help me be Your vessel. Thank You for making my joy complete. In Jesus' name, amen.

To the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth...I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

3 John 1:1–4

PRAYER:

Father, help me be committed to truth. Use me to speak the truth to others and be a trustworthy witness. In Jesus' name, amen.

What happens when you bend the truth—even a little?

Committed to Truth

BIBLE READING: 3 JOHN 1

Five of the verses in this short letter deal with truth. (The writer was continuing a theme from 2 John, which also focused on truth.) He stated that the letter was written to Gaius, a man John loved in truth. Thus, truth was the basis of their relationship. John found great joy in knowing that people like his colleagues and disciples walked in truth.

John was concerned with truth as it applied to all the people he loved. He wanted them to know the truth and to live in it.

He made it clear that a commitment to truth is fundamental to a life of health and prosperity and essential for believers. Truth should be the standard by which we judge others. All of us should seek to “become fellow workers for the truth” (v. 8).

Truth should be our motivation. We should be careful not to focus on flattery or manipulation but on things that are true (Philippians 4:8). Being truthful should be a characteristic of our lives and part of our testimony. As people think about us, they should be able to trust us, knowing our commitment to the truth.

As you read these words, may your heart burn with the same kind of passion that fueled John. Learn to treasure truth, so others know you are speaking words of truth. Seek to be an example for others to imitate.

Worthy of Imitation

BIBLE READING: 3 JOHN 1

John did not have good things to say about Diotrophes (vs. 9–10). He loved to be first. He was quick to condemn others and willing to use inappropriate words. Perhaps thinking of Diotrophes, John wrote that we are not to “imitate what is evil, but what is good.”

But was there anyone they *should* imitate? Yes! Demetrius. What was different about him? He had “received a good testimony” from everyone. The Greek word is the root of our word martyr. Demetrius was so committed to his faith that he had a testimony that was like a martyr.

He was a consistent witness and committed to being an example for everyone to see. He also had received a good testimony “from the truth itself.” He was so committed to the truth that he would not compromise. Because Demetrius was of God, his life was filled with good things.

Today, remember that others are looking at you, paying attention to what you say and do, and what you do with your resources. Make sure you trust God and show His love to others. Seek to be filled with compassion. Be faithful and live according to the principles of God’s Word.

Be a living testimony, demonstrating the truth of God’s Word. Be an example and witness of your Christian faith. Be like Demetrius, a person worthy to be imitated, who points people to Jesus.

What does your life say about you?

Do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God. Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself.

3 John 1:11–12 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, help me to be a witness for You. Purge me of sin. Give me love for others. Fill me with compassion. In Jesus' name, amen.

While I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.

Jude 1:3 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, help me stay true to Your Word. I declare that Jesus is my Lord and Master. In His name, amen.

When was the last time you had to contend for your faith?

Contend for the Faith

BIBLE READING: JUDE 1

Jude wrote his letter initially to focus on “our common salvation.” But he changed direction. Something seemed more important. The new issue? Believers needed to *contend* for the faith.

It was not enough to enjoy the benefits of the Christian life. Believers had a *responsibility* to engage in spiritual warfare. They also had to be aware that the body of Christ had been infiltrated by people with the wrong motives and those who were indulging in the lusts of the flesh.

These people may have said they were Christians, but they focused on themselves. They refused to recognize that Jesus was their Master and Lord. They had their ideas and justified their own beliefs. They were quick to complain and grumble, mockers who followed “*after their own lusts*” and people who flattered “*for the sake of gaining an advantage*” (v. 16).

These kinds of people are still around. Be confident of what you believe. Be ready for subtle attacks, for deceptive ideas. Be sure that Jesus is your Lord and be a person of prayer. Pray about the people to whom you listen and the things you hear. Be sure to stay rooted in the truths in God’s Word and sensitive to the guidance and leading of the Holy Spirit.

As Jude warned, remember that there may be people all around trying to deceive you into believing their message. Seek to stay prepared and committed to the truth.

Invaders

BIBLE READING: JUDE 1

Jude was concerned for the body of Christ. He wrote “*to those who are the called*” (v. 1), with a focus on “*our common salvation*” (v. 3). All believers also needed to realize they were part of the body and concerned about the health of the entire body.

Because of this context, Jude felt it necessary to appeal for them to “*contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints*” (v. 3). Why was it so important for them to be alert? Because the body had been invaded by people who had their own ideas and who denied the true Gospel message.

These were “*ungodly*” people who “*deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.*” They also abused the grace of God by practicing a lifestyle filled with lust and ungodliness.

These people had become part of the body, having “*crept in unnoticed.*” They knew the right words and how to sound sincere. They participated in church life as if they were full members. Yet these people were a divisive influence and spread a kind of poison.

The body of Christ is experiencing a similar invasion today. We must be alert to people who are diluting our faith or spreading disunity. We need to stay focused on serving God, being Christ-like examples, motivated by love, and dedicated to the Gospel. We must seek to save the lost.

How can you ensure that you know how to spot false doctrine?

For certain people have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into indecent behavior and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Jude 1:4 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, give me sensitivity to anyone who is spreading doubt. Help me stay true to You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

In the last times there would be scoffers whose purpose in life is to satisfy their ungodly desires. These people are the ones who are creating divisions among you...they do not have God's Spirit in them.

Jude 1:18-19 NLT

PRAYER:

Father, help me be on guard against scoffers. Give me discernment. Help me stay faithful to Your Word. In Jesus' name, amen.

How do you face those who scoff at your beliefs?

Dealing with Scoffers

BIBLE READING: JUDE 1

The Bible warns that the last times would be marked by scoffers whose purpose is to “satisfy their ungodly desires.” They are not focused on God or concerned about truth but are willing to mock, deceive, and divide. They focus on indulging themselves and are willing to violate God’s standards without regard for consequences. As Jude warned, “they do not have God’s Spirit in them.”

With such people all around us, Jude urged us to be sure our lives are built on a solid foundation and grounded in God’s Word. We need to be sensitive to the Spirit.

We must not allow others’ words and actions to divide or distract us. We must maintain our genuine faith, proven through our deeds and words. Live in such a way that God’s love can bless others.

We need to remember that the world around us is filled with people who are willing to spread doubt and make fun of believers. Their goal is to indulge in pleasure. They might ridicule our faith and try to disrupt us. But we must not allow them to discourage us or distract us from serving God.

Make sure you have a firm foundation. Live according to biblical standards. Fill your mind and heart with God’s Word. Trust Him to shield you and give you victory. Be ready to receive His abundant blessings.

Listening

BIBLE READING: JEREMIAH 2

How do you feel when other people ignore you when you talk with them? Or when you have advice and information you know they need, but they don’t pay attention or respond?

Remember that the same thing happens to God when people do not listen to Him. They even turn their backs on Him, ignore His warnings, and don’t heed the truths He is trying to communicate with them.

Like those Israelites, it can be easy to turn to God when we face troubles but then not listen by ignoring His warnings and instructions.

The Bible assures us that God wants to speak to us, help us live victorious lives, reveal deeper truths through His Word, teach us through His Holy Spirit, and protect us from danger.

But we need to *listen* to Him. This means humbling ourselves before Him, concentrating on Him, spending time with Him away from the distractions of life, and knowing His Word.

Spend quality time with God. Don’t talk *at* Him, but really listen *to Him*. Pray, focus your attention on Him. Seek to hear His voice.

Let Him refresh you and give you His peace. Let Him open your spiritual eyes and give you greater discernment. Let Him give you His wisdom and insight into current events and how you should live your life. Let Him change you and make you more like Jesus.

Do you need to work on your listening skills?

They have turned their backs to Me, and not their faces; but in the time of their trouble they will say, “Arise and save us.”

Jeremiah 2:27 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, forgive me for the times I have not listened to You. Help me listen better. I desire to hear from You. Speak to me. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him, and He will do it. He will bring out your righteousness as the light and your judgment as the noonday. Rest in the LORD and wait patiently for Him.

Psalm 37:5–7 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, be in my life today. Be in my decisions, feelings, thoughts, words, and deeds. I seek to serve you in everything. In Jesus' name, amen.

What do you need to surrender to God today?

God, Be in My Head

BIBLE READING: PSALM 37

Eager to seek God, Christians in Salisbury, England, more than eight hundred years ago developed a prayer and worship resource called the *Sarum Primer*. (*Sarum* comes from the Latin name for Salisbury.) These simple expressions of faith and commitment still speak to us today.

One of the powerful prayers from this primer was a cry for God to be present in every part of life. They prayed that He would be in their minds, thoughts, and what they looked at. They prayed for God to shape their vocabulary and direct the words they spoke. They wanted God to be in their hearts and souls—their feelings and emotions. This was a realization that they needed to surrender their lives to God. They needed His help in *everything* they did.

The same applies to you. What challenges will you face today? What problems will you encounter? What conflicts will arise? This simple prayer is a reminder to commit your life to God! Not just some things, but *everything*! Seek Him in everything. Trust in Him. Be confident that He is with you in every situation you face.

Right now, commit this day and everything you do and say to God. Surrender every thought. Dedicate your time and resources to Him. Ask for His wisdom. Believe in Him to provide all you need. Then be conscious of His presence every moment.

Confess the Word

BIBLE READING: PSALM 18

David faced many problems and adversaries. He tried many solutions. But through these experiences, he learned that God's ways were not just acceptable; they were *perfect*. This meant learning to *trust* God and realizing He had a plan for his life. God was guiding him. As long as he looked to Him, God would provide a shield.

David also realized that His promises were true. Not just some of them, but *all of them*.

This is a life-changing truth. Many people have *read* and heard God's Word without realizing that there is a *deeper dimension*. In this dimension, we are willing to put aside everything else and base our lives on His Word. We don't just know His promises, but we *believe* and *act* on them.

How do we do this? First, we must *know* the Word. We must read and study the Word. Even more important than just knowing His promises, we also need to confess them. Declare the Word to be true. Think of *His* thoughts.

Today, commit to declare God's promises for you. Pray for prosperity and health. He wants to give you His wisdom (James 1:5). He wants you to experience "*the riches of his glorious inheritance*" and His "*incomparably great power*" (Ephesians 1:18–19). He will supply *all* your needs (Philippians 4:19).

Stand on His Word. Stand on His promises.

What is your plan to increase your knowledge of Scripture?

As for God, His way is blameless; the word of the LORD is refined; He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him.

Psalm 18:30 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I believe Your Word is true. Thank You for health and favor, blessing and wisdom. In Jesus' name, amen.

Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

Revelation 1:3 KJV

PRAYER:

Father, give me a greater love for the Bible. Teach me. Open my mind for greater understanding. In Jesus' name, amen.

Evaluate your 2024 Bible reading plan so far.

Love for the Word

BIBLE READING: REVELATION 1

By the time he was only five years old, John Bois already had read the entire Bible. By the age of six, he was writing in Hebrew. In 1575 when he entered St. John's College in England, he was only 14 but knew more Greek than any scholar at the college. Bois continued to develop these extraordinary gifts and eventually became a professor at the school.

Bois became a natural selection to help translate the King James Bible, a project that consumed him for four years. He was named to the group that reviewed the entire translation, keeping the notes for this critical committee.

Whenever this committee met, one person would read the translation aloud while others compared the words in French, Spanish, Italian, Greek, or Hebrew. They listened intently, interrupting for discussion when necessary. What emerged from this process was the degree to which the King James Bible was a blessing when read aloud.

Bois and these translators knew the importance of reading the Bible. We, too, need to remember the power of God's Word—reading both silently and aloud. Study the Word and listen to others read it. The Bible promises a blessing to those who read the Word and obey what it says

Today, commit to knowing the Word. Speak the Word. Read it from cover to cover. Read it aloud. Study it. Know that these words will give you life.

Trustworthy

BIBLE READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 4

Advertising: a constant factor in our lives. We see ads on television and streaming services. We hear them on the radio. We receive advertising messages through email and text messages. To understand how to do effective advertising, researchers spend millions of dollars, examining results and learning what works best.

According to a recent study, the *key* to successful advertising is "earning consumer trust." This is why word-of-mouth recommendations from friends and family are so influential. Why? Because they tend to be trusted.

These results confirm biblical principles: We tend to trust people who are trustworthy, those who don't just say things but keep their promises.

Jesus taught that we should only speak words that we mean. We are to let our statement be, "Yes, yes' or 'No, no'; anything beyond these is of evil origin" (Matthew 5:37).

We demonstrate that we are *ready* for greater blessings by being trustworthy. As Jesus said, "If you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true wealth to you?" (Luke 16:10-11).

Ask God to help *you* be trustworthy. Remember, other people are listening to you. They are watching. They know when you make promises and if you keep them.

You can trust God, for He *always* is faithful. You can trust *everything* He says and does (Psalm 33:4). Remember, you are His witness, giving testimony to the truth of the Gospel.

How are you demonstrating your trustworthiness?

This is the way any person is to regard us: as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.

1 Corinthians 4:1-2 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, help me to be trustworthy. Help me keep my promises and be a good witness for You. In Jesus' name, amen.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

New Year, New Harvest

Reaching More Than
5 Million Souls in 2024

You did it! Because of your generous giving, over 5 million souls responded to the Gospel last year. You can help us continue the momentum. In 2024, our goal is to bust through that 5 million mark and touch even more souls with the Good News!

We’re so excited that you’re partnering with us as we join God in doing a “*new thing*” this year—He’s using our outreaches to bring new life to millions around the world in more than 200 nations and territories.

*Behold, I will do a new thing,
Now it shall spring forth;
Shall you not know it?
I will even make a road in the wilderness
And rivers in the desert (Isaiah 43:19).*

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God is my Savior.
I am a sinner
and have a lot to
do, but without
God, I can’t...so I
decided to come
back to God,
being sure He will
accept me and
start something
new in my life.

—Joyce, Kenya



by Ben Cerullo

Delight in HIS LOVE

Intertwined with your faith in Christ is the greatest joy you could ever experience.

How is it possible that so many believers turn the life of extraordinary faith in Jesus into something ordinary and even humdrum? Never opening the door of their heart to real love and delight in the Lord, they miss out on the amazing work of the Holy Spirit moving through them to build God’s Kingdom on earth.

Those who truly know Jesus understand that delight and faith are inseparably united. Those who love God with all their hearts find that their “*heart is glad in Him because [they] trust in His holy name* (Psalm 33:21). His sons and daughters discover such joy and confidence that, rather than serving Him out of obligation or fear, they gladly follow Him though all the world despise them.

As a believer, you shouldn’t follow Jesus because you think He will send you to hell if you don’t. Your faith should not be a chain around

your neck; your confession of faith should not be considered bondage; you should never consider serving your brothers and sisters in Christ to be a miserable, religious burden.

If you feel this way, ask the Lord to search your heart and renew a right spirit within you. Regularly exercise spiritual disciplines like prayer and Bible reading to supercharge your spirit and discover a new love and gratitude for who He is. The whole purpose of your relationship with Jesus is to experience His pleasure as His son or daughter. He wants your hope in Him to be your joy, your Christian service to be a response driven by your love of your living Savior.

If you surrender everything to Jesus, your faith will rise like an eagle to new heights. Delight in Him today, and let the joy of His matchless love overwhelm your heart. ❖



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Husband now sober...

“After you prayed with me about my husband’s alcoholism, he has stopped drinking.”—LINDA

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“I’ve got my family back! The Lord gave me a great job, my wife was willing to take me back, and I’ve been clean from drugs and alcohol for almost a year. God is so good to us!”—LAWRENCE

Canceled debt...

“After you prayed with me, I received the cancelation of a \$23,000 medical bill. The hospital called it an act of charity, but I say it was God.”—MELVIN

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A Merry Heart...

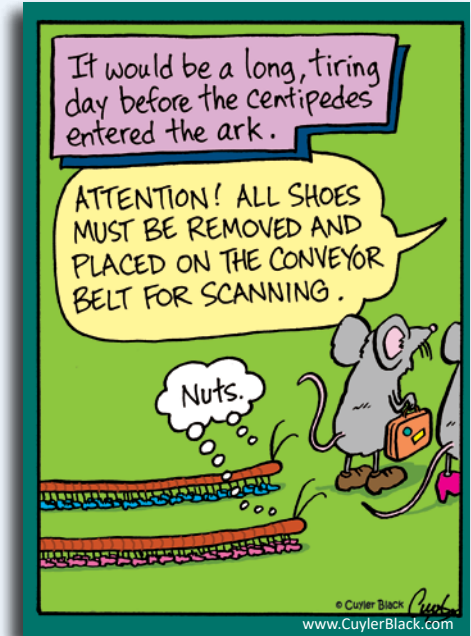
does good, like medicine. – Proverbs 17:22

A positive attitude may not solve all your problems, but it will annoy enough people to make it worth the effort.

I used to be indecisive.
Now I'm not sure.

Isn't it odd the way everyone automatically assumes that the goo in soap dispensers is always soap? I like to fill mine with mustard, just to teach people a lesson in trust.

It's never a good idea to keep both feet firmly on the ground. You'll have trouble putting on your pants.



Got some clean, Christian humor you'd like to share?

Email it to:
MerryHeart@inspiration.org

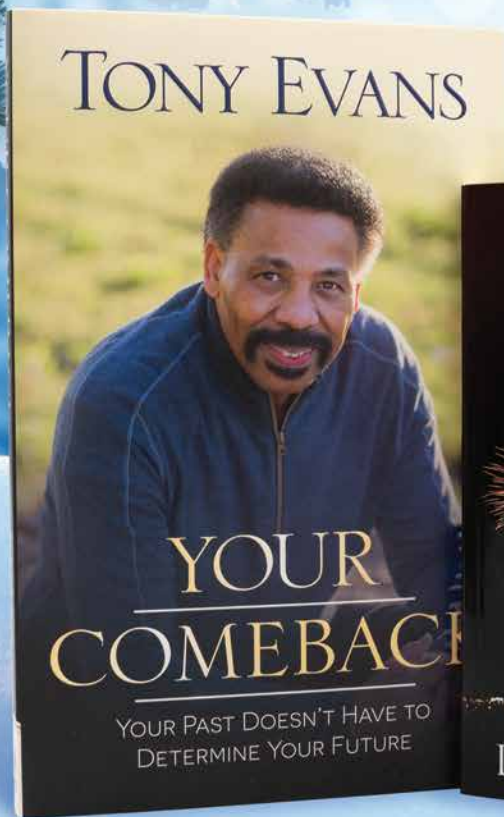
Always borrow money from a pessimist. He won't expect it back.

Going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than standing in a garage makes you a car.

Why does someone believe you when you say there are four billion stars, but checks when you say the paint is wet?



Ever Feel Like an **UNDERDOG?**



Get inspired by stories of men and women who overcame with seemingly no shot at victory, and explore the epic comebacks of biblical heroes with scandalous pasts. In his best-selling book ***Your Comeback: Your Past Doesn't Have to Determine Your Future***, Tony Evans throws open the windows to show you the glorious truth reflected all through Scripture and history: God can turn things around for anyone, including you.



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See page 28 for details, and act quickly—supplies are limited!