

FEBRUARY 2024

inspiration

M A G A Z I N E

Say *Yes*
to God!

HOLY BIBLE

Trusting God for
the Extraordinary

Make Room for
the Holy One

Mustard
Seed Faith



PAGE 10



PAGE 17

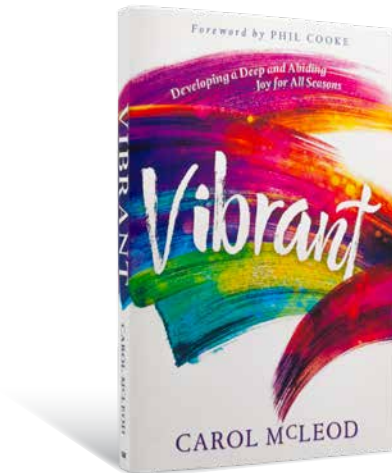


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Say Yes to God!

When you know God's will and walk in His wisdom, Paul says you will please the Lord *"in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work"* (Colossians 1:9-11 NASB). Read David's article on **page 5**, and see what it means to say YES to the King of kings.



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

EDITOR'S CORNER



Roone Acree

We would all like to think we've surrendered everything to God, but do we really live like we do on a daily basis? Are we walking in complete obedience to His Word?

In this issue of *INSPIRATION MAGAZINE*, we share how loving God and saying YES to Him are paramount to obtaining His abundant blessings. Remember, if you truly desire a powerful new start in your life today, you need to surrender everything to Him. Ask the Lord to show you any areas of your life where you have rationalized His truth and disobeyed His commandments. When you discover the true joy of obedience to Him, you'll never be content with anything less!

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Inspiration in Your Inbox!

What gives you a spiritual boost? Hearing stories that strengthen your faith? Enjoying peaceful moments of spiritual contemplation? Learning about the ways Jesus transforms the brokenhearted?


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Today's Articles



Choosing to Trust God in the New Year
When you trust God even MORE than you trust yourself...



Be a Blessing to Someone
For more than thirty years, millions of people have received...



New Strength for New Year
Sandwiched between yesterday and tomorrow, and wouldn't...

Tonight On Inspiration | TV



Shaped BY FAITH

Monday, January 1 at 1:30 p.m. ET | 1:30 UK WATCH LIVE

Join Theresa Rowe for **Shaped by Faith**. In each workout, Theresa increases your faith and fitness as she leads you through a series of exercises designed to increase your energy, strength, flexibility, and endurance ... Continue Reading

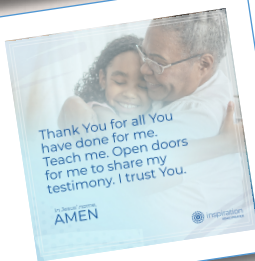
Daily Devotional • January 1

Your Testimony
Priests of the past performed important services, but they had inevitable limitations. First, they were just humans, with limited understanding and abilities. They could provide opinions, but their experiences were only their own, and their knowledge often was theoretical ... Continue Reading

Today's Prayer

"So that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted."


Hebrews 2:17-18



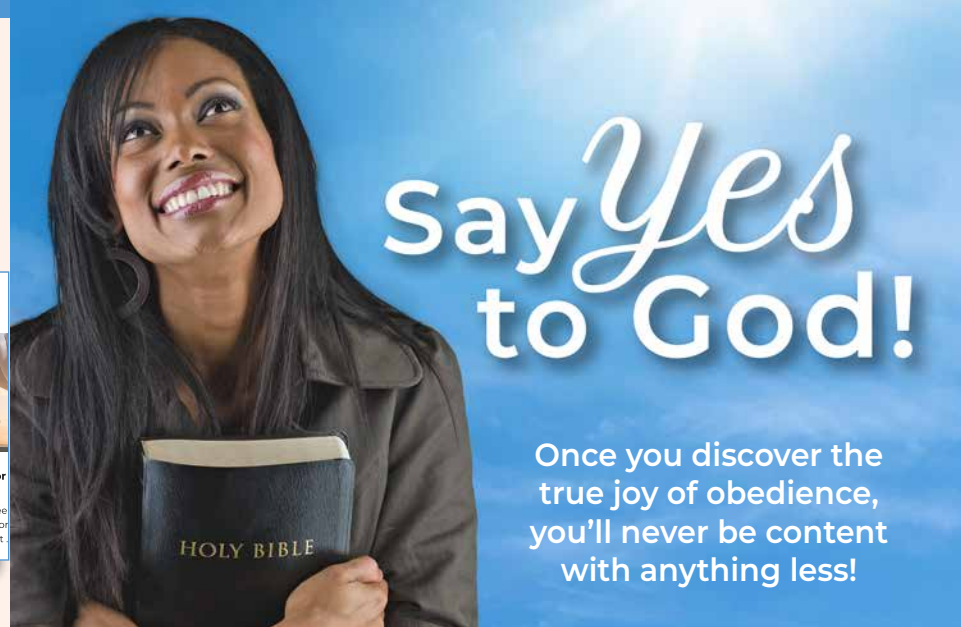
STRENGTHEN your walk

Your New Beginning

Day 1 - Join David Cerullo in a journey to a new and better you! There are lots of ways to make changes in your life, but getting started God's way ... Watch Now



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Say Yes to God!

Once you discover the true joy of obedience, you'll never be content with anything less!

Do you believe that God wants to bless you and help you live life to its fullest? Do you believe He is in control and worthy of your trust today?

If you do...then you must realize that God's abundant life is a gift from Him. He is the One who chooses to bless you and make you prosper. Even though we all strive to do things in our own strength, only God Almighty can give us the favor we seek and the rich rewards that come with our obedience.



STRENGTHEN your walk
with David Cerullo

The one thing we can do, however, is make a decision to receive His blessings. We have the power to choose His life over our own. While it's true we have no choice regarding who we are or where we come from, we can choose the principles that lead to abundant life. We can say yes to our Creator and purposely live to glorify Him.

Oswald Chambers once said, "Faith never knows where it is being led, but it loves and knows the One who is leading." Do you know who is leading you today? Are you fully surrendered to the One who loves you and wants to guide you in Spirit and in truth?

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TRUSTING THE UNSEEN GOD

Of course, it would be much easier to walk through life knowing what's behind every curve in the road rather than walking by faith. But that is seldom how God's plan works. He wants us to trust Him completely even when we can't see what's coming down the road.

I can't help but think of Abraham, known as "*the father of all those who believe*" (Romans 4:11). When God called him to take a step of faith, "*he went out, not knowing where he was going*" (Hebrews 11:8). Step by step, he was willing to trust the Lord and follow His plan even when he didn't know all the details of where that plan would lead.

When we face times of uncertainty, though, it can be tempting to take the wheel back from God. In some ways, Abraham and Sarah did this when they devised a plan to have a child through Sarah's handmaid Hagar (Genesis 16). That idea must have made perfect sense to them at the time, but their decision has had dire consequences even to this day. Where did they go wrong? They were trusting in their own ingenuity and fleshly ability rather than in the plan of God.

If you find that you've gotten off track like Abraham and Sarah did, it's time to go back to the first step in the process of discovering God's will. Surrender your life, desires, hopes, dreams, gifts, and talents to Him once again. Spend time in His presence, asking Him to reveal His plan. But remember, you're unlikely to hear clearly from the Lord until you've fully committed yourself to doing His will—no matter what it is!

As you devote yourself to discovering God's plan, your faith will be stretched at times, challenging you to trust Him for breakthroughs

in your life and the lives of your loved ones. When you know God's will and walk in His wisdom, Paul says you will please the Lord "*in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work*." In addition, God will strengthen you "*according to His glorious might*" (Colossians 1:10–11 NASB). Isn't that the kind of life you want to live?

WHATEVER HE SAYS

There's a powerful statement in John 2 that I believe puts all this into perspective. It's the story about the wedding in Cana where Mary asked Jesus to intervene because of a wine shortage at the celebration. Knowing her Son well, Mary gave specific instructions to the servants, "*Whatever He says to you, do it*" (John 2:5).

And that's the message God is speaking to you today. Whatever He says to you...do it! No matter what circumstances you find yourself in, if you'll listen to what God is telling you... He will bless you because of your obedience. Remember, Jesus took plain, ordinary water and turned it into miracle wine. He took what He saw in the natural and transformed it into something supernatural.

He'll do the same with your life today. He'll take what you see in the natural...your problems, your circumstances...and turn it into a breakthrough...Hallelujah! All it takes is your obedience and your willingness to be led by Him.

In its first 14 verses, Deuteronomy 28 paints a beautiful picture of some of the blessings you can expect when you just do what He says to do. Not only does the Lord say you will receive these blessings if you obey Him, but He also says they will "*overtake you*" (v. 2). In other words, instead of you having to chase God's blessings, they will chase YOU!

If you find that you've gotten off track, surrender again to God's will.

Just do it! God will bless you because of your obedience.

And notice how all-inclusive God's blessings will be when you are walking in His favor. God promises to bless you...

- In every place you go, whether in the city or in the country (v. 3).
- In the fruit of your body and your labor (v. 4).
- In both your coming in and going out (v. 6).
- In gaining victory over your enemies (v. 7).
- In EVERYTHING you set your hand to (v. 8).
- In being established as a "holy people" to the Lord (v. 9).
- In experiencing a life of plenty with God opening "His good treasure" to you (vs. 11–12).
- In becoming "the head and not the tail" (v. 13).

But notice that this chapter attaches conditions to this abundant favor from God. All of the blessings listed in Deuteronomy 28 are based on your response to His invitation in verse 1: "Now it shall come to pass, IF you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today."

Too often, when people read God's promises in Scripture, they overlook the conditions

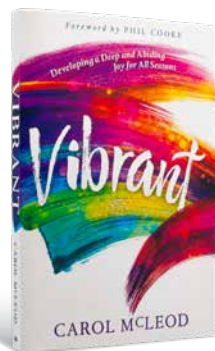
He includes in the context. But if you expect to experience the amazing blessings described in Deuteronomy 28, you must set your heart to hear the Lord's voice and follow His instructions.

Take time today to make a fresh commitment to live a life pleasing to the Lord. Then remind yourself not to settle for anything but God's best. There is no limit to what you can do if God is working on your behalf.

Listen to what God is saying... then do it! His plan is perfect, and His grace and mercy for you will last an eternity!

God bless you!

P.S. I want you to have a copy of Carol McLeod's new book **Vibrant: Developing a Deep and Abiding Joy for All Seasons**. Your life will be transformed as you learn to develop a deeper faith and passion for God.



See page 28 for details.

How Many Souls Can You Win This Month?

Through your monthly partnership, countless thousands will pray to make Jesus Lord of their lives!

The commission Jesus gave us as His disciples is a daunting task indeed. Not only are we to be witnesses to our loved ones, neighbors, and coworkers, but He also told us we would be empowered to share His Gospel to "all the nations" (Matthew 28:19) and "the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

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Trusting God for the Extraordinary

His promises are real...
just believe!

Faith in God is an amazing gift. It starts the moment your heart says: *I believe Jesus is God's Son and that He came to rescue me.* But I wonder how many Christians decide that's where their faith ends, when the truth is, there's so much more to believe for in this life!

One of the reasons I think this happens is because many Christians feel they don't measure up. They get stuck focusing on their weaknesses and mistakes rather than focusing on who God is and what He's doing in and around them.

John 3:17 (AMPC) tells us, "*For God did not send the Son into the world in order to judge (to reject, to condemn, to pass sentence on) the world, but that the world might find salvation and be made safe and sound through Him.*"

Jesus is not only your Savior, He's also your Advocate. And He wants you to start believing God for much more than a trip to Heaven. The Bible says the just shall live by faith (Hebrews

10:38). In other words, faith is an attitude that can become your way of life.

I encourage you to put your faith into action in a practical way. Make a habit of getting up in the morning and thanking God for what He's done in your life. Praise Him for what He's going to do. Release your faith for what you know you need from Him that day. And ask Him to prepare you for whatever challenges may come your way.

Something I've learned over the years is that you cannot change yourself. It's spending time with God that transforms you. One of the things the apostle Paul prayed for the Ephesian church was that the Holy Spirit would reveal Himself in their inner being and personality—that they would see who God had created them to be through Christ (Ephesians 3:16–17).

God wants us to be firmly rooted in the love of Christ, so we can take authority over our enemy. And He wants us to be so stirred up in His love that we can't help but share it with others. I believe if every Christian were doing this

today, it wouldn't take a lot of time for the entire world to hear and believe the Good News.

Ultimately, it's not the things we *do* but our *faith* that pleases God. He wants us to have faith for incredible things. And when we look to the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11, we see how God was able to work in their lives because they believed.

Noah prepared an ark to save his family. The Bible says that by faith, Noah "*became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith*" (Hebrews 11:7 NIV). By faith, Abraham prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac with the hope that God might raise him from the dead (vs. 17–19). Rahab was a prostitute, but she chose to believe that God could use her in a mighty way. And because of her faith, she and her family were saved (v. 31).

What will be *your* story of faith? Decide today that, with God, the impossible *is* possible. Amazing things can happen when you choose to believe. Be bold in asking God to reveal what His promises mean for you, and never stop believing for them to be fulfilled. ❖



Joyce Meyer is a New York Times bestselling author and founder of Joyce Meyer Ministries, Inc. She has authored more than 140 books, including *Battlefield of the Mind* and *Overcoming Every Problem*. She hosts the *Enjoying Everyday Life* radio and TV programs, which air worldwide.

Syndicated column for Inspiration Ministries.



KING'S FAITH

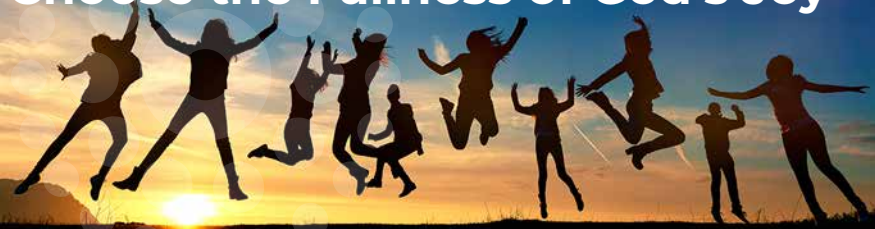
"You want to make this a fight against flesh and blood—but it's not."

Can Brendan King find the faith he needs to conquer a past that won't let go and step into the future God has for him?

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

Tuesday, February 20 at 9:00 p.m. ET

Choose the Fullness of God's Joy



Thursdays at 10:00 a.m. ET

Walking in the Word

Do you want to walk in the Word? Brandy Shiloh reminds you of who you are, what you have, and all you can do in Christ.



Tuesday, February 6 at 9:00 p.m. ET

First Lady

Nancy Stafford stars in this classic rom-com about a White House widow and a king ready to follow his heart.



Saturdays, February 3, 10, & 17 at 2:30 p.m. ET

Lost Legacy Reclaimed

Who were the Scillitan Martyrs and Perpetua? In the Roman Empire, African Christ followers risked it all for the joy He offered!



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My Harvest Just Keeps Coming!

Pauline's seed did what her own efforts couldn't do—it brought her a supernatural breakthrough.

Pauline was no stranger to hard work and sacrifice. She was employed at a top executive search firm and enjoyed a comfortable life and the respect of her peers. She was also a strong Christian who believed in tithing.

Although a faithful employee, Pauline was considered too expensive to keep. Her bosses pressured her into retiring by offering her an enticing severance package. She refused to step down, but a year later, she was forced to do just that...and it nearly devastated her.

Pauline wanted to keep working, but she knew finding a job wouldn't be easy. Although she was tempted to do things in her own strength, she decided to be patient and wait on the Lord. About eight months later, an Inspiration Ministries' Campmeeting program caught her attention. "I had never learned about

the seed principle—and never been challenged to give \$1,000."

Pauline couldn't get the message out of her mind and called her husband into the room to watch. Together, they agreed—despite their reduced income—they would commit to sowing their seed. "We were against giving to get but this was a glimpse of something much greater. We were needing guidance but more important was the greater harvest of souls."

That seed held a harvest for Pauline too. In less than three months, Pauline found herself back in her industry at a larger firm than the one she was with before. "God did it. He took me back to the same level in a competitor's firm!"

But God wasn't done—three months later, she was hired by another firm that offered greater opportunity, which included profit sharing. "My harvest just keeps coming. I have blessed more people now in retirement than I ever

did in my work years," rejoices Pauline.

And the blessings kept coming. Sometime later, Pauline's brother-in-law faced a medical crisis and was given only a 1% chance of living. The family held weekly prayer calls to ask God for His healing. During this crisis, the family made a trip to Inspiration Ministries.

"Marilyn and another prayer minister prayed over us. We knew something happened that day! My mother felt the power of God flow through her. God also touched my brother-in-law, answering his prayer for a couple more years to see his son graduate from college."

Pauline wants others to know that sowing a seed is about focusing on the greater harvest of souls. "You must sow into good ground. We love Inspiration Ministries because it focuses on souls—it's not a celebrity ministry. We sow to send the Good News to others, and we are blessed in the process." ❖

What God did for Pauline, He can do for you.

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"God has touched the lives of all my family members, friends, and myself tremendously. What a mighty God we serve. I am grateful He has restored us in all areas. Thank you, Jesus, for your miracles."—Natasha, NY

Help us reach our goal of 5 MILLION new souls who respond to the Gospel by the end of 2024!
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by Ben Cerullo

Make Room for the Holy One

He dwells in the heart of the humble.

Have you ever experienced a faith encounter so real and powerful you can never forget what took place? It may have been your salvation experience where you first put your faith in Jesus. It may have been when you were baptized with the Holy Spirit, or when you surrendered to the Lordship of Christ, presenting yourself as a living sacrifice to God. In that moment, you knew the Holy One was with you.

Here's the good news God has for us. *"For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones"* (Isaiah 57:15). God's holiness always expresses itself to us in overwhelming love, and it never changes. The Holy One looks to dwell in the heart of the man

or woman who is of humble and contrite heart—the one who makes Jesus Lord.

God loves a humble spirit, and for good reason. If self is on the throne of your life, there is no room for God. He cannot dwell within you. It is when you are conscious of your sin and weakness that the Holy One comes in and gives you Himself. By faith, Jesus is revealed to the contrite soul, and He comes to take possession and revive the heart.

When you know your weakness, God will give you power. When you know your emptiness, He will fill you with His Spirit. If you feel the deep humiliation of the conviction of sin, the only source of healing is in the wonderful indwelling of the Holy One. Surrender everything in your heart today, and let God fill you with the power of His presence. ❖



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Revelation to Servants

BIBLE READING: REVELATION 1

The opening sentence of the book of Revelation declares that God was giving Jesus a revelation into things that “*must soon take place.*” These revelations were to be given to one group of people: His *servants*. These were not casual Christians but people who had made a serious commitment to *serve* Him.

They were not concerned about the opinions of others but had surrendered their lives to God. They were committed to His will.

This same pattern is still true. God still understands the past and present. He knows everything that will happen in the future. He possesses insights into business and finance, technology and relationships, and every area of life. God still is ready to reveal insights into “*things which must soon take place.*” But there still is that qualification: These deeper truths are revealed only to His *servants*.

How can you apply these principles? Start by committing your life anew to *serv*ing God. Dedicate time to seeking Him. Fill your mind with His Word. Seek to be sensitive to His Spirit. Declare that Jesus is your Lord. Seek to please Him through the choices you make, and obey Him in your thoughts, actions, and time.

As you demonstrate you are His servant, you put yourself in a position to receive more of His revelations, more understanding about the past, present, and future, more insights, and more understanding about the revelations in His Word.

What actions can you take to serve God this week?

THURSDAY

February

1

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place.

Revelation 1:1 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I commit my life to serving You. Open Your Word to me. Show me how I should use my time, talents, and treasures. In Jesus' name, amen.

Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

Revelation 1:5 NASB

PRAYER:

Dear Lord Jesus, I declare that You are my King. I know You rule over all the earth. Thank You for victory! In Your name, amen.

Reflect on what it means to have Jesus as the King of your life.

The Ruler

BIBLE READING: REVELATION 1

Looking at the first-century world, believers appeared to be powerless, dominated by foreign armies and alien political forces. Yet in the revelation John received, Jesus was declared to be the “*ruler of the kings of the earth.*” We can imagine John asking, “If Jesus is the ruler, why don’t we see more evidence of His reign?”

This would have been a logical response if they just thought in natural terms. Yet through a *spiritual* revelation, believers were being taught to think in *new ways*. They needed a revelation that required the work of the Holy Spirit. John himself was able to receive this revelation because he was “*in the Spirit on the Lord’s day*” (v. 10).

With spiritual eyes, John could look at the world from God’s perspective. Realizing that Jesus was the ruler put *everything* in context. Some may have felt powerless, but Jesus is the King of kings (Revelation 19:16) and the “*ruler of the kings of the earth.*” His people are citizens of this victorious Kingdom.

In our time, generals and kings may think they have the power, but Jesus still is the Alpha and the Omega. He is before time and beyond time. He is and was and is to come (v. 8). He *still* is the ruler of the kings of the earth. Worship and praise Him, our risen Savior and Lord.

Spirit Perspectives

BIBLE READING: REVELATION 1

The revelation given to John was full of mysteries. Such images and descriptions could be hard to grasp. As a witness to these revelations, John himself had many questions. Like other believers, John had been persevering in the face of difficulties “*because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus*” (v. 9).

One thing was different about John: He was in the Spirit. His whole being was *consumed* by the Spirit. In this moment of spiritual sensitivity, John heard a loud voice that told him to write what he would see and send this message to seven churches.

The dominant theme is God’s *sovereignty*. Instead of being afraid, John realized Jesus is “*the Alpha and the Omega,*” the beginning and the end (v. 8). John was so overwhelmed he could not function. He “*fell at His feet like a dead man*” (v. 17).

Jesus continued to reassure him. Placing His hand on John, Jesus told him not to be afraid. He was the living One who was dead but now was alive forevermore. John had nothing to fear, for even death itself was in His hands.

We can easily be worried and afraid. But we can learn much from John. We should seek to be in, filled with, guided by, and trusting the Spirit. Let Him take away every fear and give us His peace.

Compose a prayer asking the Holy Spirit to be your Guide today.

I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet.

Revelation 1:10 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I trust in You. I depend on the Spirit. Give me deeper insights into Your Word. In Jesus’ name, amen.

To the angel of the church in Ephesus write... I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance [...] But I have this against you, that you have left your first love.

Revelation 2:1-4 NASB

PRAYER:

Dear Lord Jesus, I desire to grow in my relationship with You. Change my heart to be more pleasing in Your sight. In Your name, amen.

How can you refocus your heart on giving Jesus first place today?

A Love Relationship

BIBLE READING: REVELATION 2

Many believers in Ephesus were diligent about their faith. But in the vision God gave John, Jesus revealed He was not pleased with them; He was *disappointed*. Why? They were focused on *activity*. While their actions were important, the condition of their heart was more important.

The Bible is full of reminders about what is important to God. He was concerned that these Ephesians had the wrong priorities. He was concerned they had left their first love. To Him, that was *more important* than all their “*toil and perseverance*.”

What were His priorities? We are to seek *first* His Kingdom (Matthew 6:33). Remember that the *greatest* commandment is to *love* Him with our heart, soul, and mind (Matthew 22:37). Remember that the essence of the Gospel is “*God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son*” (John 3:16).

What happened to these Ephesians can happen to any of us. The initial love that drew us to Jesus can fade over time. We can become busy. Our schedules can be filled with activities, even church work and Bible study. We can find ourselves working *for* the Lord but failing to develop our relationship *with* Him.

Today, focus on your *personal* relationship with Jesus. That relationship is *more important* than any activity. Spend time with Him. Listen to Him. Give Him first place in your heart.

Listening

BIBLE READING: REVELATION 2

Jesus gave John unique messages for seven specific churches. One common message was given to all these churches, specifically, “*The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*”

This message stressed a theme that was consistent throughout Jesus’ earthly ministry, the importance of *listening*. As Jesus often emphasized, “*The one who has ears, let him hear*” (Matthew 13:9).

The consistent message is that it is possible to read or even hear the Word but not really *listen*. We often allow the words of the Bible to come in one ear and go out the other.

Jesus emphasized this point often in His ministry because it is foundational to everything about our faith. It means *paying attention* to what He says and to the truths in the Bible. We should not draw our own conclusions, presume that we understand, or go along with some false interpretations. Instead, we are to *listen to*, think about, and study His words, and make this a priority.

By repeating this message to each of the seven churches, Jesus was underscoring its importance. It is a message of critical significance to believers today. Remember how easily we can fail to pay attention or stop concentrating. This is a reminder to seek to be good listeners and to spend time *listening* to the Word of God. Listen carefully to messages delivered by His servants. Be sensitive to His Spirit.

Journal about what God is saying to you through your Bible reading today.

The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Revelation 2:7 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, help me be a better listener. Speak to me. Give me greater sensitivity to the truths in Your Word. In Jesus’ name, amen.

“Be faithful until death,
and I will give you the
crown of life.”

Revelation 2:10 NASB

Consistent and Faithful

BIBLE READING: REVELATION 2

Located in Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming, Old Faithful is the most famous geyser in the world. Like other geysers, it erupts when the base of a column of water resting in the earth is vaporized by hot volcanic rock.

What distinguishes this geyser is its *consistency* with actions that can be *predicted*. It erupts on average every 75 minutes for up to 5 minutes, shooting a column of steam and hot water as high as 170 feet.

This *consistency* is a picture of the faithfulness God desires in our lives. He wants us to be consistent witnesses for the Gospel with words and actions consistent with what we say we believe and with the truths in the Bible. We can be sure that people are watching us to see if there are any inconsistencies in our lives.

The Bible says we need to be faithful because we will be tested and face problems. At times like these, some people yield to fear and worry. Others allow doubt to fill their lives and start giving in to compromise. But God promises great rewards for those who remain faithful. They will receive “*the crown of life*.”

Ask God to help you to be faithful in every circumstance. Trust in the Spirit to give you the strength, wisdom, and favor you need and to help you be a consistent witness for the Gospel.

PRAYER:

Father, help me to be faithful with the time, talents, and treasures You have given me. Use me to touch others with the Gospel. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Reflect on your faithfulness to God in the past few weeks.

Waiting and Available

BIBLE READING: REVELATION 3

What was wrong with the Christians in Laodicea? Jesus used one word: “*lukewarm*” (v. 16). Their commitment was weak. They were passive. Their testimony was shallow. They believed, but without zeal or enthusiasm.

Sadly, these people felt *satisfied*. They did not hunger to grow spiritually or learn more about God’s Word. Their prayer life was halfhearted. And they were confident in themselves.

Even though He was not happy with these people, God sent a message of hope: They needed to change. Instead of seeking the superficial things of this world, they needed to buy “*gold refined by fire*” (v. 18). Instead of being lukewarm, they needed to develop an intense desire to serve Him.

They were warned that He disciplines those He loves. His goal? For them to mature and serve God more effectively and to grow up. They did not need to feel discouraged or rejected but realize that He was ready to welcome them and fellowship with them. They just needed to respond to His knock on their heart’s door.

Today, listen to the message to the Laodicean church. Search your heart and repent of any pride. Humble yourself before God. If you have made mistakes, don’t give up, but ask for His forgiveness. Dedicate your life to Him. Serve Him with *intensity*. Hunger for His *presence*. Pray with *passion*. He is by your side, waiting for you. Answer His knock on the door of your heart.

What steps can you take to be more intentional in your pursuit of God today?

“Behold, I stand at
the door and knock; if
anyone hears My voice
and opens the door, I
will come in to him and
will dine with him, and
he with Me.”

Revelation 3:20 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, forgive my sins and pride. Forgive me for being lukewarm. I hunger to know You better and serve You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things."

Revelation 4:1 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for all You have done for me. Thank You for forgiving my sins. Thank You for giving me life. I worship You! In Jesus' name, amen.

Compose a prayer of thanksgiving to God for all He's done in 2024 so far.

The Open Door

BIBLE READING: REVELATION 4

A door was open, and John was invited to enter. To his wonder, he witnessed a glimpse of Heaven. John was overwhelmed! The images were stunning—colors, shapes, people. He was in awe of the presence of God Himself, sitting on a throne, surrounded by a rainbow. And before the throne, there was “*something like a sea of glass, like crystal*” (v. 6).

He saw elders clothed in white sitting on thrones, with golden crowns on their heads. John was dazzled by lightning that flashed from the throne and amazed by peals of thunder.

The most enduring impression was the *constant* praise and worship that filled Heaven. John saw four living creatures who surrounded God's throne and never stopped giving Him “*glory, honor, and thanks*” (v. 9). They knew God created all things and that by His will everything was created. They could not help but praise Him!

As we share John's vision, we can join him in looking beyond the open door. Now we have insights into our eternal home. His vision also helps us realize how we can experience Heaven right now. How? By spending time praising and worshiping God. By thanking Him for all He has done.

That experience is available to you right now! Thank Him for all He has done for you. Then praise Him! Remember, you owe *everything* to Him. Let Him fill your life with a taste of Heaven!

A Song of Praise

BIBLE READING: REVELATION 5

The news was devastating. The daughter of composer-conductor Gustav Mahler contracted scarlet fever and died. Later that year, Mahler himself was diagnosed with a fatal heart condition. Grappling with grief and uncertainty, he turned to music, arranging a series of Chinese poems in a work known as *The Song of the Earth*.

These poems describe how he approached these challenges. One song celebrated *escape* through alcohol. Another dealt with a spirit of *resignation*. In many ways, these are common attitudes. Some people face challenges through short-term escapes. Some give up and yield to the spirit of hopelessness.

How does God want us to respond? The Bible reminds us that we can trust Him and commit our problems to Him. We also are reminded that He gives us eternal hope. We have been redeemed! We can sing about Jesus and His *finished* work.

In the account from the Bible, in Heaven we see songs sung by angels and people from every era. These are songs of praise and worship as they declare that Jesus is worthy to receive power and riches, wisdom and might, honor, glory, and blessing. They sing because He sits on the throne and will reign forever.

Don't be discouraged by your challenges or feelings of hopelessness. Rather, commit each situation to God. Confess His promises. Thank Him for all He has done for you! Sing His praises! Trust Him.

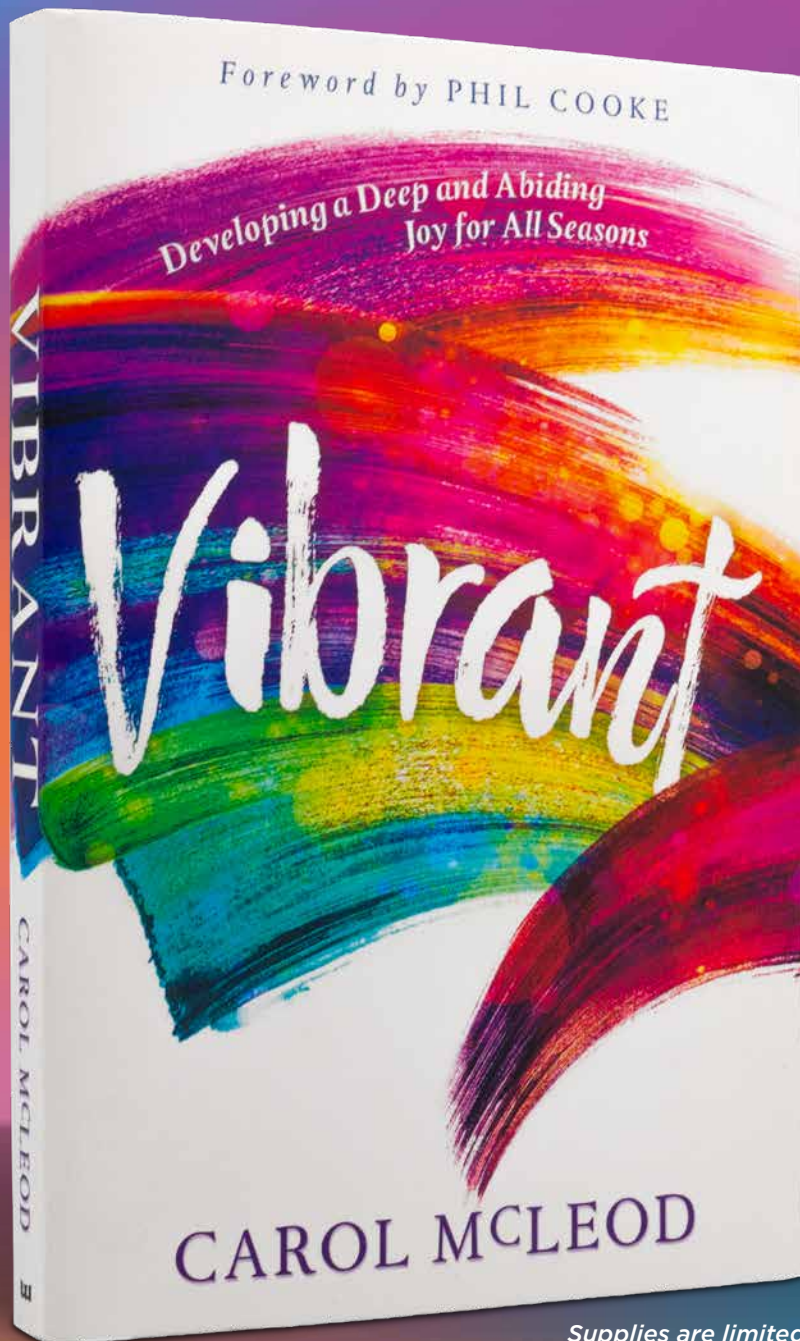
How do you respond to life's challenges and setbacks?

Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals... You have made them into a kingdom and priests to our God, and they will reign upon the earth.

Revelation 5:9–10 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, help me have Your perspective on my life. You are worthy of praise. Thank You that I will reign with You in eternity. In Jesus' name, amen.



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I heard the voices of many angels...the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands...saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power, wealth, wisdom, might, honor, glory, and blessing!"

Revelation 5:11–12

PRAYER:

Father, I celebrate the eternal life You have prepared for me. What a happy day! I look forward to an eternity with You. In Jesus' name, amen.

If you wrote a hymn about Heaven, what would its title be and why?

A Happy Day!

BIBLE READING: REVELATION 5

Wilhelm Wexels became a leader in the Norwegian church, but his views weren't always popular. At times, he seemed to alienate both sides of theological issues. Some felt he too readily encouraged the spirit of revival. Others thought he too strongly supported the organized church with its formal disciplines. However many felt his ministry provided a turning point for the church and people of Norway.

After the death of his wife, his ministry increasingly stressed resurrection and the eternal life that awaits believers. All seemed to agree about the importance of the hymns he wrote, which exerted great influence. We see his insights in "O Happy Day," a hymn he wrote in 1841.

This song celebrated the day "when we shall stand amid the heavenly throng and sing with hosts from every land the new celestial song." What a wonderful day as believers gather from far and near to meet the Lord. "O what a mighty, rushing flood of love without surcease shall surge about the throne of God in joy and endless peace!"

Here he prayed that God would "inspire our hearts to watch and pray that we may join the heavenly choir upon that glorious day."

The hymns of Wexels encouraged people to sing and bring the spirit of Heaven into their hearts and homes. What a happy day awaits all believers as we join the eternal throng and spend eternity with our Savior!

Humble Before God

BIBLE READING: REVELATION 6

How does someone become great in the eyes of the world? This title often is given to people who do special things, achieve prominence, become popular, or win awards.

But the Bible tells us God has different standards that will be clear when we stand before Him. Some may think their achievements will earn special treatment. But the Bible tells us that none of these things mean anything to Him. On that day, no one will be "able to stand" before Him based on individual merit, fame, or accomplishments (v. 16).

Before Him, all our righteousness is nothing but filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). None of us can boast because "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). In fact, "all of us, like sheep, have gone astray," and all of us need a Savior (Isaiah 53:6).

God looks for people who recognize their need for salvation and humble themselves before Him. Realize we need to depend on His grace. None of us deserves special treatment. No one is good enough. We are saved because we accept the finished work of Jesus.

Today, make sure you trust Jesus and are not depending on your own resources, your accomplishments, or your reputation. Humble yourself before Him. Remember that Jesus died for you, so you can be cleansed and free. Praise and worship Him. And give Him the glory.

Write about grace versus works as they relate to salvation.

The kings of the earth and the eminent people, and the commanders and the wealthy and the strong, and every slave and free person hid themselves in the caves [...] for the great day of Their wrath has come.

Revelation 6:15–17 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for forgiving me. I humble myself before You. Help me serve You with my time, talents, and treasures. I trust You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Then the angel whom I saw...raised his right hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things in it, and the earth and the things in it...that there will no longer be a delay.

Revelation 10:5-6 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, deliver me from concern with worldly things. Help me live so that I am ready for eternity. I dedicate my life to serving You. In Jesus' name, amen.

What are your thoughts concerning the end of time?

The End of Time

BIBLE READING: REVELATION 10

While serving in the French army during World War II, composer Olivier Messiaen was captured and taken to a prison camp. In this environment, many gave in to despair. But Messiaen turned to God with a faith that amazed other prisoners.

Surrounded by conditions that seemed hopeless, he composed the *Quartet for the End of Time*. His study of the Bible inspired this music, particularly the book of Revelation and how he imagined the end of time.

In one movement, called "Praise to the Eternity of Jesus," Messiaen wrote a melody reflecting the truth that "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (from John 1:1). Another movement, called, "In Praise of the Immortality of Jesus," celebrated his faith and the pure love he found in Jesus.

The piece debuted in January 1941, performed before 5,000 French prisoners (and even German soldiers). All were reminded to think not about the world but eternal things. Many prisoners admitted the impact this music made on their lives. It even caused some skeptics to believe.

One day, time will be no more. You will be in God's presence. Today, in the midst of everything you face, allow God to fill you with His perspective. Don't focus on problems or the temporary things around you. Think about the "things which are not seen" but are eternal (2 Corinthians 4:18). That Kingdom will last forever!

Thanksgiving Spirit

BIBLE READING: REVELATION 11

The picture John provided of Heaven was a place filled with praise, worship, and thanksgiving. The elders were so in awe of God that they fell on their faces and worshiped Him. They could see how great God is. They recognized that on earth, people and nations might defy Him and seek to exalt themselves, but God will make everything right. And He rewards those who serve Him and revere His name.

This vision of Heaven helps us understand the attitudes that should shape our lives. Have an attitude of awe toward God. Worship Him. Be grateful.

It can be hard to have this perspective. As we look at the world, we can become overwhelmed with the presence of problems. We see sin and sickness, wars and violence. We can feel paralyzed by our needs and the needs of others. We can be discouraged and feel hopeless.

But the attitude of these elders should give us perspective. Remember that God reigns and rules in Heaven and on earth. Instead of worrying about our problems or being afraid, we are encouraged to spend time being *thankful* and worshiping God. Remember that He is sovereign. He will judge everyone and reward those who revere His name.

Today, join the twenty-four elders. Worship God and give thanks to Him for all that He has done for you. He is worthy of all praise!

How will you worship God today for His power and majesty?

The twenty-four elders...worshiped God, saying: "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty...You have taken your great power and have begun to reign...The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants...who revere your name.

Revelation 11:16-18 NIV

PRAYER:

Father, I give You praise. Thank You that You rule over Heaven and earth. Thank You for all You have done for me. In Jesus' name, amen.

I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps.

Revelation 14:2 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I long to spend eternity with You. Take away my burdens. I trust You. I worship and praise You. In Jesus' name, amen.

What insurmountable circumstances are you currently facing?

The Golden Bells

BIBLE READING: REVELATION 14

Daniel de Marbelle lived a colorful life. After working on a whaling ship in his native France, he joined the American Navy. He served in two American wars—as a drummer during the Mexican War and a musician in the Civil War. After touring with an opera company as an actor and musician, he formed his own theatrical troupe and managed his own circus. He even was a circus clown.

His diverse life was marked with problems. He lost everything in a fire while touring Canada. Later the royalties from his songs were stolen. At the time of his death in 1903, he was mired in desperate poverty.

In 1887 de Marbelle wrote a song titled “When They Ring the Golden Bells,” born out of his difficulties. With the ear of a trained musician, he imagined the sounds of Heaven: “Don’t you hear the bells now ringing? Don’t you hear the angels singing? ’Tis the glory hallelujah jubilee.”

He pictured this land “we call the sweet forever.” He knew it was only “by faith’s decree” that we could “reach that shore.” Drawing on his experiences, he wrote of sailing “beyond the silver sea” where “we shall know no sin or sorrow, in that haven of tomorrow.”

You may face problems that seem overwhelming. But do not be discouraged or give up. Trust God and fill your life with praise. Stay faithful. Remember, God has prepared a glorious, eternal home for you.

Great and Marvelous

BIBLE READING: REVELATION 15

John Quincy Adams described his mother, Abigail, in a letter to his father, John, the day after she died as a “minister of blessing.” Affectionately, he remembered her firm mind, gentle temper, and kindness.

Both John and John Quincy had remarkable careers. Both served as a president of the United States. Both openly acknowledged the debt they owed to Abigail. She influenced many other lives as well.

Throughout her life, she provided perpetual reminders about priorities. She knew that the world urgently needed people of principle.

She urged her husband to get involved in politics even though this meant personal sacrifice for her. She reminded him that he could *not* be “an inactive spectator.” But she recognized the sinful condition of the human heart, warning her husband that “man is a dangerous creature.”

An avid reader, she frequently quoted the Bible, particularly Proverbs. Her lifelong creed was “*A merry heart doeth good like a medicine*” (Proverbs 17:22 KJV).

When John and Abigail sailed to England in 1784, Abigail spent many hours watching the sea, often alone, awed by the beauty of God’s creation. One day her thoughts turned to the Bible, and she wrote, “Great and marvelous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty.” She placed her trust firmly in Him!

Ask God to help *you* be a minister of blessing. Fill your life with His Word, and seek to live so you can bless many others.

How can you be a minister of blessing to others today?

They sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, “Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty; righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations!”

Revelation 15:3 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, great and marvelous are Your works. Righteous and true are Your ways. I worship You. May my life bring You praise and glory! In Jesus' name, amen.

God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God will be fulfilled.

Revelation 17:17 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You that Your Word is true. Help me to be in Your will. I commit my life to You. I depend on You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Compose a prayer for God's protection over His people in war zones.

God's Purposes

BIBLE READING: REVELATION 17

In his vision, John saw spiritual forces that waged war against the Lamb. The people of God were involved in this war. Some were wounded or even martyred. But in reality, it was a spiritual battle between the forces of God and Satan.

John saw that the Lamb, the symbol of Jesus, will overcome His adversaries "because He is Lord of lords and King of kings" (v. 14).

An angel described a scene filled with "peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues" (v. 15). He was describing all who have not compromised. They will share in the victory, for they have been "called and chosen and faithful" (v. 14).

The Bible makes clear that God knows battles are taking place in the world. As long as we are alive, we will be involved in conflicts. But through the vision God gave to John, we have a glimpse into His eternal purposes.

We see how God has a purpose for the nations and even the forces of darkness. He "put it their hearts to execute His purpose." How long would this take place? "Until the words of God will be fulfilled" (v. 17).

God still is fulfilling His purpose for the nations and fulfilling His Word. The Lamb will be victorious! Make sure you trust Him. Do not give in to temptation or fear. No matter what happens, stay faithful. And be ready. The victory is yours!

Earthly Empires

BIBLE READING: REVELATION 18

Thomas Cole became one of America's most important artists. Born in England, he immigrated to the US in 1818. After becoming interested in painting, he first specialized in portraits before turning to landscapes, particularly after visiting the Hudson River Valley in New York.

Eventually, wanting to be more than just a painter of idyllic scenes, Cole developed what he called a "higher style of landscape," dealing with important biblical and literary subjects. This culminated in his most ambitious series *Course of Empire*, five paintings that dramatize the rise and fall of an ancient classical state.

The first paintings in this series, *The Savage State* and *The Arcadian or Pastoral State*, show a culture's humble beginnings, culminating in the third painting, *The Consummation of Empire*, depicting a city that is confident and powerful.

By the fourth painting, *The Destruction of Empire*, the confidence has been shattered. The empire is under siege. The city is burning. Destruction is everywhere. This led to the fifth painting called *Desolation*. Here all the strength of the city has disappeared. There are no people. Only a landscape remains.

Making his purposes clear, Cole commented, in Latin, "Thus passes the glory of the world."

The Bible reminds us that all things in this world are passing away. *Nothing* here remains forever. This is why Jesus taught us to seek first God's Kingdom, to have the right priorities, and to invest in things that will last.

Does the way you spend your money and time reflect a Kingdom attitude?

In a single moment God's judgment came on you [...] A mighty angel picked up a boulder... threw it into the ocean and shouted, "Just like this, the great city Babylon will be thrown down with violence and will never be found again."

Revelation 18:10, 21 NLT

PRAYER:

Father, help me have Your priorities. I commit my time, talents, and treasures to You. I will seek first Your Kingdom. In Jesus' name, amen.

I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns."

Revelation 19:6 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for reigning over all the earth. Deliver me from concerns about earthly things. Help me seek Your Kingdom. I worship You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Reflect on what you think Heaven will be like.

Visions in Revelation

BIBLE READING: REVELATION 19

In 1966 Olivier Messiaen, the French mystic, composer, and musician, grappled to express what the Bible taught about the world to come. The result was a work called *And I Await the Resurrection of the Dead*.

Messiaen, who called himself a theological musician, sought to transport listeners into an environment where they could try to escape the limits of their normal experience and catch a glimpse of eternity. He designed this powerful, harmonically expansive work to be performed in large spaces: churches, cathedrals, and even among mountains.

Although purely instrumental music, each of the five movements was given a scriptural reference. In the last movement, based on Revelation 19:6, Messiaen used gongs, cymbals, and wind instruments in a chorale in which he sought to provide an enormous impact.

In Revelation, John, too, tried to express in words the vision he was given about the world to come. This vision was *overwhelming*. In the end, neither words nor music can adequately express the grandeur and glory of Heaven.

Do not just think about the normal activities of your daily life with your temporary concerns. Ask God to give you a vision of *eternal* things. Remember, He has prepared a home for you. You will live forever with Him! May that thought give you peace. Allow your heart to be filled with praise. Cry out with the angels, "*Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns!*"

Your Life

BIBLE READING: REVELATION 20

A pioneering program in American television called *This Is Your Life* began airing in 1952. It allowed friends and family to honor a person whom they felt deserved recognition.

The Bible makes clear that all of us will face an event like this when we will be judged according to what we have said and done. It is the moment when God will open the book and evaluate our lives. *This Is Your Life* may have focused only on positive things, but God's inspection will reveal *everything*.

What He sees in our lives might be pleasing to Him or focus on mistakes we have made. The thought of facing this judgment can fill us with dread and uncertainty. What will God say? What will be His verdict?

The Bible shows us how we can be ready right now. First, get our lives right with God by asking Him to convict us of sins, confessing our sins, and accepting His forgiveness. Next, repent, *changing directions* as He leads. Eliminate thoughts, words, and actions that displease Him.

Make this a day to get right with God. Spend time in prayer, letting Him search your heart. Fill your mind with His Word and compare your thoughts, words, and actions with His standard. Become sensitive to the convicting work of the Holy Spirit. Listen to His warnings. Let Him guide you and prepare you to face God.

Ask God to search your heart, and then confess your sins to Him.

I saw the dead, both great and small, standing before God's throne. And the books were opened, including the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to what they had done, as recorded in the books.

Revelation 20:12 NLT

PRAYER:

Father, I desire to please You. Convict me of what displeases You. I want to hear You say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." In Jesus' name, amen.

I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.

1 Corinthians 3:6-7

PRAYER:

Father, show me clearly my place in the body of Christ. Help me to be faithful with the resources You have given me. In Jesus' name, amen.

How are you using your talents to help the body of Christ?

Parts of the Same Body

BIBLE READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 3

The concerts in London featuring the compositions of Franz Joseph Haydn were some of the monumental events in music history. Haydn had attracted international fame through his years living in Germany where he was employed by Prince Pál Antal Esterházy, who was eventually succeeded by his brother, Prince Miklós. This obligation placed travel restrictions on him. But after the prince's death, Haydn became free to travel.

Johann Peter Salomon, a famed musician and manager, seized upon the opportunity and arranged for Haydn to visit London. Over three years, Haydn conducted many works. Crowds flocked to these events, and Haydn was treated like the rock star of that era, mobbed by adoring fans who packed these concerts.

Haydn's breakthroughs would not have been possible without the contribution of Salomon, who was born in 1745. He recognized Haydn's potential and arranged for the concerts and performances. Summarizing his life, Salomon's gravestone simply says, "Musician. He brought Haydn to England in 1791 and 1794."

The roles of Haydn and Salomon remind us of the body of Christ. As the Bible makes clear, each person has a unique role. Each person is important and contributes uniquely to the success of the body.

This principle applies to you. Remember, God has given you unique gifts and talents. Make sure you are doing your part. Take advantage of every opportunity that God gives you, and be a faithful steward.

Making All Things New

BIBLE READING: REVELATION 21

Many people today are discouraged. In fact, a recent poll discovered that men and women are more discouraged than in the past. Many expect their lives to get worse. Discouragement spreads with the observation that the world is filled with problems. Many are confused, worried, and afraid. There don't seem to be answers, no matter who is in power or what governments do.

It can be easy to become discouraged and feel pessimistic. But those who know God and are guided by His Word can have hope and be encouraged in any situation.

In the vision God gave John, he saw a new Heaven and earth where God reigned, and His presence was everywhere. The first earth and all its problems passed away.

John also saw how much God cares about each of us. He knows our struggles and heartaches. He dwells with us, and we are His people. He understands our pains and the turmoil we endure. He even knows the tears we cry. And He promises to "wipe away every tear" from our eyes (v. 4).

In the new world that awaits us, He promises that there will no longer be any death or mourning. No crying or pain (v. 4). Everything will become new.

No matter what you face, don't be dominated by troubles in the world. Don't be discouraged or pessimistic. Have faith in God. Renew your trust in Him. He is making all things new!

Ask God to make all things in your life new.

He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new."

Revelation 21:5 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for caring about me. Thank You for knowing what I am going through and that You will wipe away every tear. In Jesus' name, amen.

He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. Come, Lord Jesus.

Revelation 22:20 NASB

Beyond the Smiling

BIBLE READING: REVELATION 22

Horatius Bonar loved to study the Bible, particularly prophecy. Born in Scotland in 1808, Bonar pastored important churches and demonstrated his compassion for the lost as editor of several tracts. His goal was to write clearly and simply so that even children could understand the Gospel.

Bonar wrote more than 500 hymns. They had such an impact that many called him the prince of Scottish hymn writers. He was inspired by whatever situations he encountered.

Inspired by his love of prophecy, Bonar wrote a poem called "Beyond the Smiling and the Weeping." It later became a hymn. It focused on the day when believers will stand in the presence of Jesus.

Bonar reflected on the non-stop rhythm of daily life. He saw lives dominated by contrasts: smiling and weeping, waking and sleeping, calming and worrying, remembering and forgetting, coming and going.

All these things are *temporary*. He thought about the promise of Jesus to come quickly. He also thought about John's response: All believers were to pray that Jesus would come soon.

Bonar encouraged believers to remember that we, too, shall soon be in His presence. We will be home!

The challenges of life can consume our thoughts and emotions. But in reality, they are temporary. Today, think about *your* eternal home. Make this your prayer, "*Come, Lord Jesus!*"

What do you think of when you think about Heaven?

Rebuild the Walls

BIBLE READING: NEHEMIAH 1

The man we know as Hadrian became Roman Emperor in 117 AD and reigned until 138 AD. He was an amateur architect who undertook many building projects.

Among his projects, the best known is Hadrian's Wall, which he built beginning around 122 AD. This continuous defensive barrier extended for 73 miles from coast to coast across northern Britain. Its purpose was to protect Britain from invaders. This wall was in continuous use until the end of Roman rule in Britain in 410 AD. It still can be seen today.

Like many leaders throughout history, Hadrian knew the importance of strong walls. When walls are destroyed or allowed to deteriorate, cities, nations, and even homes are vulnerable. This is one reason Nehemiah wept when he heard Jerusalem's walls were broken down; his people were at risk. Although just a cupbearer, God used Nehemiah to rebuild these walls to defend His people.

How strong are the walls in your life? How strong is your foundation? Jesus taught that if we want to withstand storms, we need a firm foundation (Luke 6:48–49). We need strong walls.

God looks for people who will show the same determination and concern that inspired Nehemiah—people committed to biblical values, prayer, and faith, and strong in Spirit. Believe and trust in God. Commit yourself to keeping the walls strong for your nation, your community, and your family.

How are you protecting your walls today?

"The remnant...who survived the captivity are in great distress...the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are burned with fire." Now when I heard these words...I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

Nehemiah 1:3–4 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I pray that You would protect my family and keep us spiritually strong. In Jesus' name, amen.

When I heard these words...I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven.

Nehemiah 1:4 KJV

PRAYER:

Father, I humble myself before You. Show me anything that might be displeasing to You. Purify me. Help me be Your willing servant. In Jesus' name, amen.

What big project in your life needs a God-sized intervention?

Answered Prayer

BIBLE READING: NEHEMIAH 1

Nehemiah was devastated. He heard that the walls of Jerusalem were broken down and its gates were burned. Struggling for a response, he turned to God. It would have been easy to give up and assume the problem was too big. It was impractical to think there was anything he could do.

But Nehemiah was moved by faith and a willingness to believe. He humbled himself and spent days weeping and seeking God. He confessed the sins of his people. And he prayed without ceasing. The results were dramatic and miraculous as the king allowed him to return to Jerusalem and even covered all expenses necessary to rebuild the wall.

Nehemiah's prayer is the kind of prayer that moves mountains. Filled with faith, it is humble and yet resolved, dedicated and yet submissive. It is prayer willing to believe that nothing is impossible (Luke 1:37).

Many people approach God with superficial concerns and shallow prayers. They may be sincere but do not demonstrate determination. Praying with limited faith, they may be willing to stop praying and give up if they do not receive immediate answers. These kinds of people should not be surprised if their prayers are not answered.

If you want answers to your prayers, follow Nehemiah's example. Humble yourself before God. Commit your needs to Him. Seek Him relentlessly. Never give up. Always be sensitive to His leadership. Stand on His Word.

God's Favor

BIBLE READING: NEHEMIAH 1

Nehemiah heard that the walls of Jerusalem were broken down and that the exiles living there were "in great trouble and disgrace" (vs. 3-4). Overwhelmed by this news, he sat down and wept. This was a major crisis. He knew something needed to be done but did not know what.

He had few options. He was not a powerful politician and had limited resources. He was just a cupbearer with a huge burden.

At this moment, he turned to God, mourning, fasting, and praying for days. He humbled himself before God and cried out for His help. He did not know what God would do. He just knew he needed His help and direction. Because he cried out, God granted him favor and success.

Nehemiah's approach provides a model for each of us. As we go through life, we may face serious challenges in our jobs, at church, in our relationships, health, or finances. But no matter what our situation, we need to realize that our lives are in God's hands. If we have problems or challenges, we can call on Him for guidance, wisdom, resources, and help.

Like Nehemiah, when you face problems, turn to God, and be confident that He is available to help you and provide what you need. Like Nehemiah, humble yourself before Him and cry out to Him. Believe Him for success, favor, wisdom, guidance, and protection.

What problem do you need to commit to God in prayer today?

O LORD, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man.

Nehemiah 1:11 NIV

PRAYER:

Father, I commit this problem to You: _____. Please help me. I depend on You for the answers I need. In Jesus' name, amen.

Faithful Service

BIBLE READING: NEHEMIAH 2

Nehemiah was devastated to learn that the walls of Jerusalem were broken down. He felt a burden to do *something*. But as an exile in far-off Persia, he wasn't sure he could do *anything*.

Amazingly, God did use Nehemiah to rebuild the walls. One reason for this success was the *respect* he had earned.

Nehemiah had established a strong, personal bond with Persia's king and queen. We see this when the king asked why Nehemiah was sad. Sharing his burden, Nehemiah was not sure *how* the king would react. But after seeking God's direction, he asked the king to send him to rebuild the walls.

The king quickly agreed to the request. He seemed unconcerned about the journey or the task. He wanted to know *when* Nehemiah would return and resume his role in his court.

Nehemiah had laid the foundation to accomplish this sensitive task because he had developed a *relationship* of trust with the king (and queen).

The Bible reminds us that we never know what might develop from our relationships. If we follow the example of Nehemiah, we will seek to be faithful servants at our jobs, and in our churches, homes, communities, and families. We should want others to *trust* us.

Seek to serve God in every task. Ask Him to help you to have the attitude of a servant, to work with excellence, and to be trustworthy and faithful.

The king said to me, with the queen sitting beside him, "How long will your journey be, and when will you return?" So it pleased the king to send me, and I gave him a definite time.

Nehemiah 2:6 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, help me to be a good servant in every situation. Give me favor with the people I meet. Use me for Your glory. In Jesus' name, amen.

Compose a prayer asking God to give you direction for the tasks ahead.

Focus on the Task

BIBLE READING: NEHEMIAH 4

Powerful people fought to prevent the wall in Jerusalem from being rebuilt. But despite this opposition, work on the wall had begun. Yet these enemies renewed their efforts by causing "*confusion*." The Hebrew word suggests they wanted the Jews to engage in immoral behavior, become troubled and confused, and wander from the tasks God had given them.

Nehemiah responded by turning to prayer. This was a *serious* prayer! He and the people also engaged in defensive warfare, setting up a guard stationed day and night. They would not allow their enemies to disrupt their efforts.

Nehemiah would not allow a spirit of defeat and discouragement to spread. He reminded them that God is "*great and awesome*" (v. 14). He would fight for them. Armed with renewed faith and confidence, everyone returned to work, and the wall was rebuilt.

Don't be surprised if you face opposition, attacks, and efforts to spread fear and discouragement. People may try to force you to abandon the assignment God has given you.

Don't be distracted by opposition. Be a person of prayer, seeking God's help. Surrender your life to Him. Fill your mind with His Word and seek the power of His Spirit. Don't let your adversaries have even the *smallest* victory. And focus on the tasks God has given you. Trust in Him, and say to yourself, "I will not stop until the task is completed. I will build the wall!"

Where in your life do you need boldness and determination?

All of them conspired together to come to fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it [...] Our enemies said, "They will not know or see until we come among them, kill them, and put a stop to the work."

Nehemiah 4:8, 11 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, help me focus on Your call. Help me complete the work You have given me to do. Give me boldness and determination. In Jesus' name, amen.

Since the day that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah...for twelve years, neither I nor my kinsmen have eaten the governor's food allowance [...] because the forced labor was heavy on this people.

Nehemiah 5:14, 18 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, open my eyes to see needs. May I be an example of Your love. I dedicate my time, talents, and treasures to meeting needs. In Jesus' name, amen.

What needs do you see around you that you can meet this week?

Setting an Example

BIBLE READING: NEHEMIAH 5

Before Nehemiah arrived as the governor of Judah, some Jewish leaders had taken advantage of their fellow people. They did not care about God's laws or standards but were willing to manipulate circumstances for their profit.

Nehemiah forced these men to change their ways. But he felt compelled to do more. Recognizing the impact of his own actions on people throughout the country, he felt a responsibility to set higher standards. For example, as governor he had a special food allowance but declined to accept it for 12 years. He didn't want any special benefits.

Instead of taking advantage of his position, Nehemiah was filled with the "fear of God" (v. 15). He also realized the huge task that was before him and applied himself to that work. He did not make personal profits and did not buy any land. He cared about the needs of the people around him and felt that it was more important to set a good example than to enjoy the short-term privileges and pleasures of power.

Today, realize the influence you have on others. Instead of focusing on short-term, personal benefits, think about how you can bless the people around you. Focus on the assignments God has given you and what you do with your resources. Seek to set an example. Ask Him to help you to become a model others will want to emulate. Remember, you are Christ's ambassador.

Beyond Time

BIBLE READING: PSALM 90

For centuries, most of the world followed the calendar developed by Julius Caesar in the first century BC. But there was a problem. In Caesar's calendar, years lasted longer than the solar year. As a result, dates never could be fixed. No one was able to provide a workable solution.

Then in the sixteenth century, Pope Gregory XIII developed the concept of *leap* years by adding a day to the calendar every fourth year and removing three leap years every 400 years. Although flawed in minor ways, this approach represented an improvement and soon became adapted as the world standard.

This leap day and its history remind us of the limitations of our human minds. The Bible tells us He has been "our dwelling place throughout all generations." He is *beyond* time and has been God "from everlasting to everlasting." He is beyond our understanding and a thousand years is just "like yesterday when it passes by" (v. 4).

Remember that God sees *everything* from the perspective of eternity. He is not worried and already has declared the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:9-11). We can trust Him. When we seek Him, we should remember that He will answer our prayers based on what is best for us and His grasp of eternity.

Place *your* life in His hands. Let Him take away all doubt, fear, and worry. God has everything under control—today, tomorrow, and throughout eternity.

Reflect on our human perception of time in light of eternity.

LORD, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were born or You gave birth to the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.

Psalm 90:1-2 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for seeing my life from the perspective of eternity. I commit these needs to You: _____. I trust You. In Jesus' name, amen.



Mustard Seed Faith

Even a small amount of faith can lead to extraordinary results.

Throughout God’s Word, faith and God’s blessings go hand in hand like the dynamic duo. The Bible says it’s impossible to please God and fully live in His favor without trusting Him and exercising your faith (Hebrews 11:6). We can’t go from a place of lack and need to His provision and blessings without believing the Word of God.

The Bible says, *“Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”* (Hebrews 11:1). Faith has “substance” and provides a confident assurance of God’s unseen reality.

Even when faith doesn’t seem to be working, we can rest assured that it is. It may not be on our timetable or according to our wishes, but God is ALWAYS faithful, and He wants us to trust Him with all our hearts (Proverbs 3:5–6) even when we don’t understand His purposes.

In Matthew 17:20, Jesus gave us a vital key to igniting our faith and releasing God’s power in our lives:

If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, “Move from here to there,” and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.

Isn’t that an amazing message of hope and encouragement? It’s saying if we apply the life-changing principles in this verse, Jesus promises...

“NOTHING will be impossible for you!”

It doesn’t matter what gloom and doom you might see on today’s news headlines or TV broadcasts... Jesus says “NOTHING” can stand in your way when you believe in Him!

But it’s also intriguing that Jesus compares faith to a “seed.” Remember, a seed is something you sow in faith, trusting that there will be a future harvest. The seed may be your money, your prayers, your time, or some other investment, but it’s a key to moving your mountain.

Psalms 97:5 tells us that our mountains can melt away when we trust in our living God. When we rely on Him, we can confidently expect Him to act on our behalf—to heal our sicknesses, lift our depression, overcome our addictions, defeat our poverty, and restore our broken relationships.

Whether we realize it or not, every one of us has the ability to believe God for a breakthrough... and to trust Him completely with our lives. But unless we exercise our faith, we won’t see God’s intended results. We have to take action and sow our seeds before we’ll see our harvest! ❖



Week One

For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.”

Romans 1:17



Week Two

Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.

Mark 11:24



Week Three

But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Hebrews 11:6



Week Four

Jesus said to him, “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

John 20:29

“Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.”

—Matthew 5:5

Only the **STRONG** Are Truly **GENTLE**

One of the greatest Kingdom virtues is gentleness. However, many people have a wrong definition of what *gentleness* means.

Gentleness does not mean to make yourself a pushover. Neither does it mean to become a wallflower. Instead, gentleness involves strength. It involves the wisdom of how to use your strength strategically. Gentleness is actually strength that is directed for a good use while under control. For example, when you are watering your plants in your backyard, it's the difference in power between spraying a water hose with the spout wide open or directing the water into a single funnel.

When Jesus urged His followers to live a meek and gentle life, saying that doing so would bring about blessings (Matthew 5:5), He said this at a time when the Jews were under Roman domination. He said this to a group of people who wanted to rise up in full force to topple those who oppressed them. The Jews were being oppressed and wanted nothing more than to get the Romans off their backs. They wanted

freedom from the stranglehold of Roman rule, and because of it, they were looking for a leader who would set them free. Thus, Jesus offered them an effective strategy contrary to what they could think up on their own.

The Greek word for meek or gentle is *praos*. It describes the necessary balance between using power and avoiding harshness. If you've been to a circus, you know what this looks like with some of the strongest animals around, such as tigers and bears, or even elephants. When a professional trains one of these animals, they do not strip the animal of its power. Rather, they instruct the animal on how to contain its power in certain scenarios.

The concept of gentleness never refers to the loss of strength. Gentleness refers to taming power so that it can be surrendered to the overall goals at hand.

You no longer have to try to force things to go as you hoped. You can yield the outcomes to God, who is far stronger and more capable than you, and allow Him

the freedom to work things out for you. Far too many of us actually get in the way of God showing up and working things out in our lives because we lack this virtue of self-control. We feel like we have to figure things out. We have to solve things. We have to muscle our way through. We have to let our voices be heard. Whatever the issues are that we are facing, we often get in the way of God intervening on our behalf because we are seeking our own way rather than His way. But living with the value of gentleness opens the door for God's power to work for us and through us for His glory.

One of the most exciting things in life is to watch God work stuff out for you when you didn't have any idea how it could possibly work out at all. But that is not an experience everyone gets to have. That experience belongs to the meek. It belongs to the gentle. It belongs to those who humble themselves under God and align their lives under His rule. It is reserved for those who are committed to Christ and the will of God. ❖



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Does Your Family Need a Breakthrough?

No matter what turnaround you need, our prayer ministers want to agree with you in prayer.



Reunited with a son...

"I had not heard from my son for five years, but I miraculously found him just two weeks after your prayer minister called!"—Zack, Missouri

Financial windfall...

"Within seven months after I began sowing my financial seeds into your ministry, over \$200,000 of liens were released, and now our house is free and clear!"—Judy, Florida

Restored health, peace, & relationship...

"After I began sowing monthly seeds, the Lord blessed me with nearly \$33,000 of checks I wasn't expecting. Then He healed my body and restored my peace and joy. In addition, my daughter who was so distant from me is now the loving daughter I once knew."—Eleanor, West Indies

Healed of breast cancer...

"God has miraculously healed my body from breast cancer! He is so awesome."
—Ruth, California

We give God all the glory when our prayers are answered. What God did for these Inspiration partners when they contacted our International Prayer Center, He can do for you!

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A Merry Heart...

does good, like medicine. — Proverbs 17:22

Quiet in church...

A Sunday school teacher asked the children just before dismissing them to the church service, "Kids, why is it necessary for you to be quiet in church?"

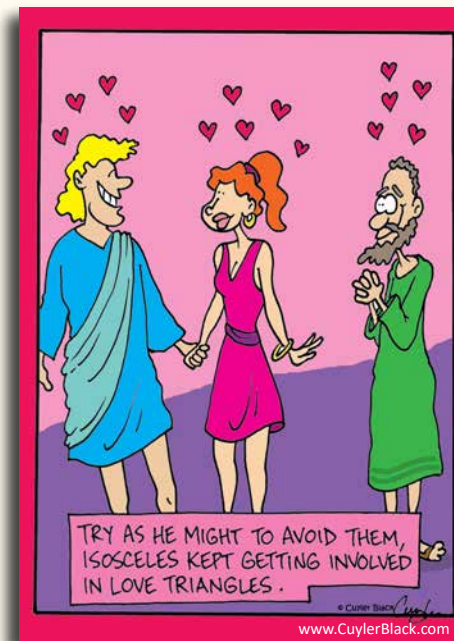
Little Sally replied, "Because people may be sleeping!"

A better pastor...

An elderly woman was weeping as she said farewell to the man who had been pastor of her church for several years.

"Don't be so upset," consoled the departing pastor. "The bishop surely will send a much better pastor to replace me here."

The woman wailed, "That's what they told us last time!"



Sign on a convent wall...



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

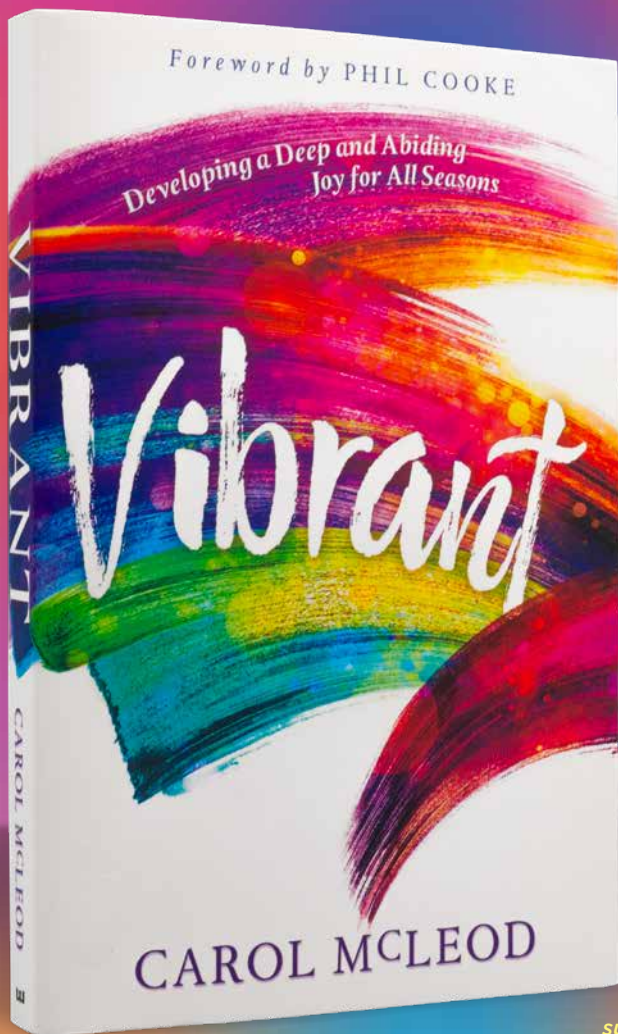
Email it to:
MerryHeart@inspiration.org



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In *Vibrant: Developing a Deep and Abiding Joy for All Seasons*, best-selling author Carol McLeod masterfully uncovers time-tested keys in God's Word that will help you become a vibrant reflection of His joy, freedom, and purpose for your life.

Join Carol as she unpacks the promises of Scripture and helps guide you to a place of spiritual fulfillment. Learn to walk closer to Jesus like never before, and discover the lessons you need to become a vibrant follower of the King of kings.



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