

MARCH 2023

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M A G A Z I N E



Boundary- Busting Faith

Pursue
God's Holiness

Choices That
Unlock Your Destiny

Only Jesus

Boundary-Busting Faith!



PAGE 10



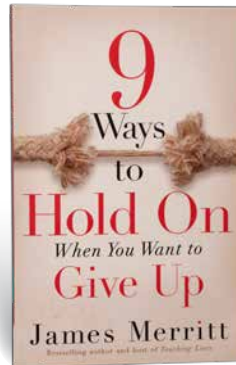
We'd all say we have faith in God, but do we really live like we do on a daily basis? Have we *truly* surrendered every hope and dream into His hands? Check out David's article, "Boundary-Busting Faith," on **page 5** to see how we can grow our faith and trust God fully in these trying times.



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

EDITOR'S CORNER



Roone Acree

Did you know your loving Father wants to do something extraordinary in your life? It's true! If you've been allowing fear, unbelief, or low expectations to limit your trust in God, then today is your day for a turnaround.

In this issue of *INSPIRATION MAGAZINE*, we share how you can remove the limits from your faith and receive the breakthrough you've been waiting for. I would also like for you to take a few minutes to send me a note about how God has grown your faith recently at editor@inspiration.org. Your story can change the hearts of others, so please share!

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Zaine had no need for God—or so he thought. Then he hit rock bottom and found that Jesus was the solid foundation on which he could rebuild his life.



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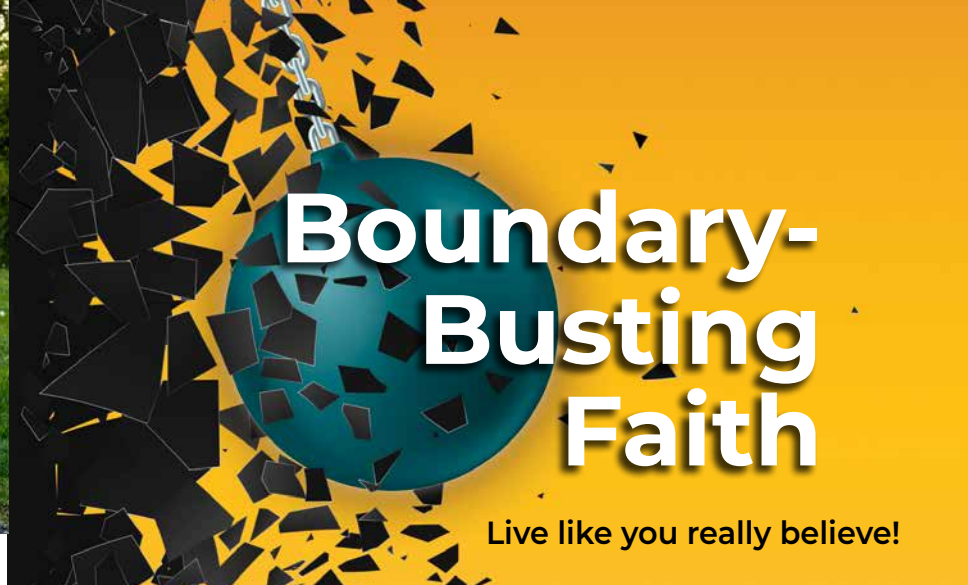
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Strengthen YOUR Walk



Boundary-Busting Faith

Live like you really believe!



February 27–March 10

Do you ever get discouraged? Do you worry about missing the mark? Then get excited for this brand-new, 10-part series from Kim Crabill—*Friend, You've Got This!* You'll discover practical, life-changing steps that will encourage your soul and strengthen you for life's battles.

March 13–April 7

The enemy tries to rob you of your health, finances, relationships, peace of mind, and other important parts of your life.

But David Cerullo shares good news: God has given you powerful spiritual weapons to recover everything the enemy has stolen!



STRENGTHEN your walk with David Cerullo

How much do you trust your heavenly Father today...I mean *really* trust?

If you're like most believers, you may say, "I have a solid faith in God," OR... "I know God loves me, and I am saved and going to Heaven."

But would you also say, "I believe God is a miracle-working God. I believe He's providing for my breakthrough and directing me into a life of greater blessings"?

The truth is, very few of us trust our Heavenly Father so completely that we've surrendered every hope and dream into His hands. Many of us are even doubtful that God wants to do something extraordinary in our lives...or give us the turnaround we've been praying for.

I want to encourage you today...DON'T believe those lies.

God is never limited in our lives, and He doesn't limit us. His greatest desire is to set us free from our fears while removing the restraints from our faith. I know you may think your circumstances are overwhelming today, but the Lord wants to release a new confidence inside of you.

Are you signed up for our daily *Strengthen Your Walk*™ videos?

[StrengthenYourWalk.org](https://www.strengthenyourwalk.org)

Find us on



YouTube

He can help you experience the breakthrough you need, but only when you expand the borders of what you believe.

Let me give you an example...

Have you ever heard of Roger Bannister? He was the British runner who gained fame in 1954 as the first person to break the four-minute mile.

Bannister's story includes some important lessons about having boundary-busting faith.

You see, before Bannister's accomplishment, some people thought it was *impossible* for humans to run a mile in under four minutes. And if you *believe* something is impossible for you, you're going to be proven right!

But Roger Bannister's faith wasn't limited by a four-minute ceiling. He *knew* he could do it faster than that—and he *did*.

The lesson here shouldn't really be a surprise. King Solomon had written long ago, "*As he thinks in his heart, so is he*" (Proverbs 23:7). In other words, whether you think you CAN or think you CAN'T, you will be correct!

SETTING THE BAR HIGHER

Something rather stunning happened shortly after Roger Bannister succeeded in breaking the four-minute mile. Just 46 days later, his record was broken by his Australian rival John Landy. While Bannister's time had been 3 minutes and 59.4 seconds, Landy's time was 3 minutes and 58.0 seconds.

Do you see why this is so significant? In all of recorded history, there had never been evidence of a person running a mile in under four minutes. But after Bannister did it, others realized it was *possible*—and now many runners have continued to meet or surpass his achievement.

Notice the principle illustrated here. After

Bannister took the limits off of his *own* expectations, his success spurred the faith of others as well. *His* breakthrough led to breakthroughs for many *others* in the decades to come.

Like Roger Bannister, I want to be a pacesetter, don't you? I want my life to be an example to others, reflecting God's great power to do the impossible.

RAISING YOUR EXPECTATIONS

My heart is saddened to see so many believers who are settling for a powerless, unfruitful life. I'm convinced the problem is that we've often set our expectations far too low.

Like many of the other runners in Roger Bannister's day, it's as if we've said, "This is all we can expect. It's impossible to go any higher than we've gone before."

However, the apostle Paul had something to say about this. He challenged the Ephesians to set their sights higher, and he has the same message for us today:

Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think (Ephesians 3:20 NLT).

Friend, I want you to apply this verse *personally*. What are your dreams and aspirations today? How are you expecting the Lord to use your life in the days to come? No matter what your expectations may be, God is able to do MORE than you ask or think!

But often we miss the second principle contained in this verse. Not only can God do the impossible in some kind of abstract way, but He also wants to do His miracles "*through his mighty power at work WITHIN US.*"

God is able to do MORE than you ask or think!

(Ephesians 3:20)

Whether you think you CAN or think you CAN'T, you will be correct!

Let that sink in for a moment. The same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead now lives in YOU (Romans 8:11), so it's time to raise your expectations!

Perhaps you've gone to church all your life, but have never experienced the miracle-working power of God. Jesus gave this astounding promise to anyone who would dare to take the limits off their faith:

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father (John 14:12).

Isn't that an incredible statement?

STARTING SMALL

Perhaps you're saying to yourself, "I just don't have faith like that!" If so, I have good news.

Jesus realized that faith often starts small. One example is the man who came to Him and said, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24). The Lord could have just sent the man away, telling him to return when his faith was greater. But no, Jesus recognized the man's honesty and gave him the miracle he sought.

If your faith seems small today, be encouraged by Jesus' words:

If you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, "Move from here to there,"

and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you (Matthew 17:20).

You see, mustard seeds were among the *smallest* of all seeds. Yet Jesus made a promise: If you sow your tiny mustard seed into the ground, it will GROW (Matthew 13:31-32).

In the same way, your faith may seem very small today. But if you act on your faith and trust God with the little you have, your faith is sure to grow and grow. In fact, Jesus said you will end up with mountain-moving faith, and NOTHING will be impossible for you!

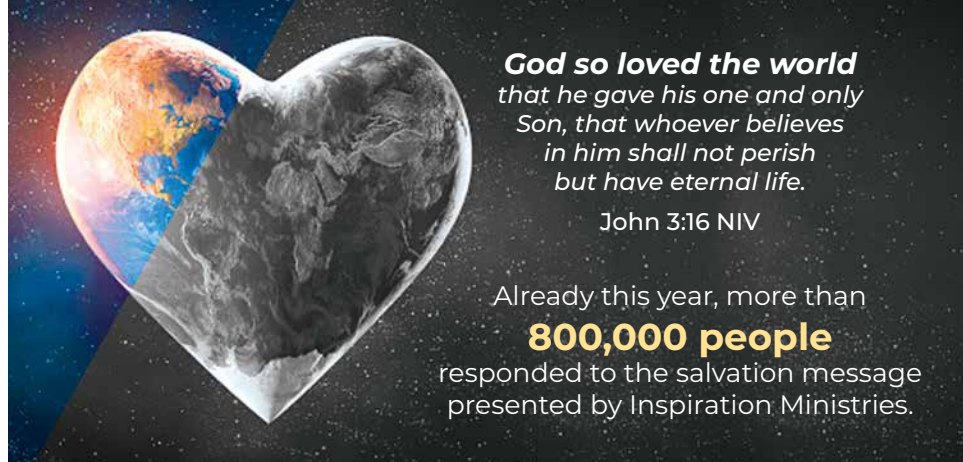
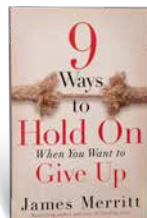
So instead of being despondent about your small amount of faith today, treat it like a mustard seed. Look for ways to *exercise* your faith, then watch it *grow*.

Friend, what step of faith is God calling you to take today? I can't wait to hear about the wonderful things He'll do in your life when you start believing Him for more!

God bless you,

David

P.S. Our THANK YOU GIFT this month was chosen to help you break through the boundaries of your faith even in the midst of difficult circumstances. See **page 28** for details.



God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16 NIV

Already this year, more than **800,000 people** responded to the salvation message presented by Inspiration Ministries.

5.1 MILLION Souls in 2023

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THE KINGDOM
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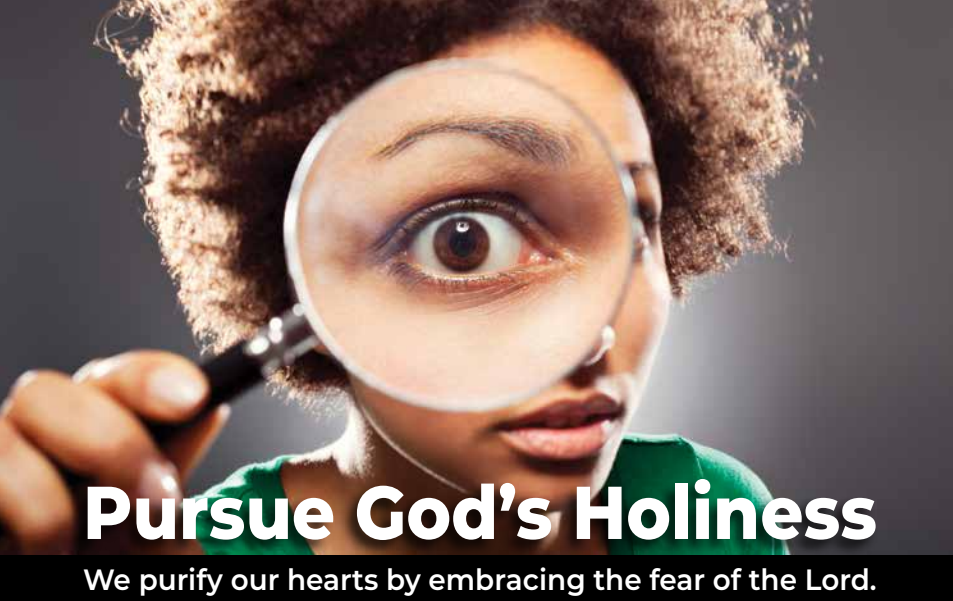
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Pursue God's Holiness

We purify our hearts by embracing the fear of the Lord.

Our purity cannot be like the Pharisees'. Jesus said, "Outwardly you look like righteous people, but inwardly your hearts are filled with hypocrisy and lawlessness" (Matthew 23:28 NLT). Their motives were as impure and filthy as dead corpses. They lacked the fear of the Lord, which in turn caused them to pursue a righteousness that was strictly based on outward behavior, making the focus their projected image. This prevented the inner transformation that brings forth corresponding outward behavior. They believed they knew God, but the reality is they didn't know their Creator who stood before them and consequently were out of step with His wishes. They fooled themselves.

Even so today, the holiness we pursue must originate in our hearts—our thoughts, motives,

and intentions. This will ultimately drive our outward behavior. This is why Jesus says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). Without seeing Him, we lack inner transformation—authentic holiness—and consequently we don't see Him. It's cyclical.

It's not enough to have an outward form of godliness but deny the power of the transformation of our inward desires. We must long for truth in our inward parts (motives and intentions); that must be our pursuit. The apostle James is very strong with believers who take holiness lightly. He writes:

Your motives are all wrong—you want only what will give you pleasure. You adulterers! Don't you realize that friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God? (James 4:3–4 NLT).

James uses the word adulterers, a term used for the violation of a marriage covenant. God often uses marriage imagery to illustrate our covenant with Him; Jesus is called the groom, and we are His bride. Paul states that a marriage between a man and woman is an example of the way Jesus Christ and the church are united (Ephesians 5:31–32).

The world lives for selfish gain or prideful achievements and therefore focuses on their projected and perceived image. When we align ourselves with the world's desires in our neglect of pursuing holiness, we become adulterers. It's such an affront to our Husband that we actually turn ourselves into His enemies. Therefore, James goes on to say: "Purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world" (James 4:8 NLT). We can only purify our hearts by embracing the fear of the Lord, which drives us to pursue authentic holiness!

I've been married to Lisa for more than forty years, and there are strong reasons I've not

committed adultery against her. The first and foremost is that I fear God. I made a covenant with Him to love and nurture her regardless of her response or behavior.

The second reason is because I don't want to lose intimacy with this magnificent woman. I love that she confides in me, sharing her innermost secrets and the longings of her heart. In essence, I love our closeness. It's no different with Jesus. The reason I passionately avoid committing adultery against Him is that I don't want to lose the intimacy we share together. I love the closeness of His presence and the intimate conversations we have together. I love it when He shares secrets with me that I've never known before. Could that be why we are told:

The secret of the LORD is with those who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant (Psalm 25:14)?

We are now just beginning to discover the irresistible aspect of holiness. ❖



John Bevere is an international minister and best-selling author known for his bold and uncompromising approach to God's Word. His resources have been translated into over 110 languages, and over 40 million copies have been given away worldwide.

Excerpt from *The Awe of God: The Astounding Way a Healthy Fear of God Transforms Your Life*. Copyright 2023 by John Bevere. Used by permission of W Publishing, an imprint of Thomas Nelson Publishing. www.harpercollinschristian.com

God Accepts You

When has the spirit of rejection injured your heart? Maybe it was elementary school gym class, or perhaps it was a parent who never wanted a child, or a spouse who found someone new. The piercing pain of rejection is a common experience throughout our lives. But Jesus offers hope and healing in today's promise:

Those the Father has given me will come to me, and I will never reject them (John 6:37 NLT).

What could be better than the acceptance of the King of kings? We don't need anyone else's approval. In God we are loved, chosen, blessed, redeemed, unique, adopted, heirs with Christ, God's

workmanship, a citizen of Heaven, free, and so much more!

Not only are we accepted by God through the work of Jesus on the cross, but God actually *delights* in us. As Zephaniah 3:17 (NLT) tells us, *"He will take delight in you with gladness. With his love, he will calm all your fears. He will rejoice over you with joyful songs."* Take a moment to soak in that precious truth.

He built the desire for acceptance into our identity on purpose. His acceptance opens the way for us to live out our God-given potential and purposes (Ephesians 2:10). Our problem is that we're born with a broken connection to God. We spend decades trying

to prove our worth to ourselves and others—not realizing that *without God, we can do nothing!*

You see, the pain of rejection *can* have a powerful purpose: to move us toward the only One who will never reject us...our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Christ died for you while you were an enemy of God (Romans 5:7–8). That means, Jesus made a way for God's enemies to return to the family and be coheirs with Him. His amazing grace reveals both His character and Christ's confidence in the power of God's love to transform hearts!

NOTHING you have ever thought, said, or done can stand between you and God unless you choose to use those things as a reason to reject Him! God's acceptance is always available, and it is the doorway to freedom. Separated from God, you are captive to sin that keeps you from being all you are designed to be. But restored to the family of God, you can access the authority and power you need to live wholly free!

No matter how far you may wander away from God, no matter how many times you reject Him... all you need to do is turn around to be restored. He's running after you with His arms wide open, crying out, "Come home, child! This is where you belong."

We encourage you to meditate on the following verses this month to truly understand God's complete acceptance of you as His child. ❖

Week One

"All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out."

(John 6:37 ESV)

Week Two

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

(1 John 1:9 ESV)

Week Three

"Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God."

(Romans 15:7 ESV)

Week Four

"He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved."

(Ephesians 1:4-6 ESV)

The CHOSEN



Expect
more from **GOD**



Hamlet & Hutch

Second chances require courage. That's just what a former Broadway star with Alzheimer's and his great-granddaughter will need to put on a play. Stars Burt Reynolds. [TV-G]

Saturday, March 11 at 9:00 p.m. ET
Sunday, March 12 at 5:30 p.m. ET



Finding Grace

A family that's falling apart faces new challenges when daughter Alaska is arrested. Will community service with the elderly be the journey she needs to find her way home? [TV-PG]

Saturday, March 18 at 9:00 p.m. ET
Sunday, March 19 at 5:30 p.m. ET



Champion

Dirt-track racing isn't for wimps. It takes strength to find family and forgiveness when a moment of anger causes lasting damage. Watch this fast-faced sports drama with the whole family. [TV-PG]

Saturday, March 25 at 9:00 p.m. ET
Sunday, March 26 at 5:30 p.m. ET



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Relatable and powerfully human, Dallas Jenkins's *The Chosen* series invites you to follow Jesus as He heals, laughs, and shatters what seems impossible.

Saturdays, March 11–April 1
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CHOICES That Unlock Your DESTINY



by Ben Cerullo

Like a great masterpiece,
you were magnificently designed.



From cover to cover, the Bible teaches that God has a wonderful plan and destiny for each of His children. However, it's sad that many believers have not yet experienced the Lord's exciting plan for their lives.

So what does it take to unlock your destiny in Christ? First, you must understand that you have an amazing calling as a beloved child of God, a saint, and a fruitful servant of the Lord.

The Lord wants to strategically position you to demonstrate the beauty and power of the Kingdom of Heaven by your life and words. And this isn't His plan just for a few super Christians—it's His will for *each* of us as His sons and daughters.

Yet perhaps you're thinking at this point, *Ben, there are things I don't like about myself. I see my faults and regret some of the things*

I've done. I sometimes even wish I could be more like someone else.

My friend, you are not an accident! God didn't create you by haphazardly throwing together parts and traits without a plan. Nor did He send you through a celestial manufacturing plant so you could be just like everybody else. He gave you a unique spiritual fingerprint, and He predestined you for greatness.

GOD'S WORKMANSHIP

Paul wrote, "*We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them*" (Ephesians 2:10). The original Greek word for workmanship is *poiema*, literally meaning a poem or a work of art.

No matter how you may be feeling about yourself today, the

truth is this: You are God's masterpiece! Like a beautiful poem, He has put great thought into the rhyme and rhythm of your life.

As God's work of art, He put more thought into your creation than Michelangelo put into his paintings on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Your Creator spent more time crafting you than Robert Frost did on all his poems combined. You are His treasured workmanship!

When your Father looks at you,

all He sees is beauty and greatness. He doesn't care what others say about you. He says, "You are My priceless work of art, full of potential. I created you to do things nobody else can do."

SIX CHOICES TO CHANGE YOUR LIFE

These six, indispensable keys will help you experience new freedom in Christ and unlock your destiny as God's child:

1 Recognize your need. Realize that you need the Lord to set you free from anything that is hindering you from fulfilling your calling.

2 Quit relying on your own strength. In every situation, lean on the power of the Holy Spirit.

3 Repent of any known sins. Turn away from Satan's snares and run into the arms of your loving Father, Savior, and Deliverer. Then don't look back!

4 Be accountable. Surround yourself with solid believers who can provide you with prayer and support during any struggles.

5 Passionately pursue God. Make an all-out effort to spend time with Jesus every day. Get to know Him intimately. Press into His Word and His presence until He's your everything.

6 Fight the good fight. There's a fierce spiritual battle for your soul (Ephesians 6:10–18). The devil is a thief and a liar (John 10:10), and he will do everything he can to sabotage your destiny. You must reject his lies and stand in the victory Jesus has already won for you on the cross.

Are you ready to start believing and declaring what God says about your destiny? These six choices can enable you to experience a whole new beginning in your life—with peace, power, and fruitfulness you've never known before! ❖

Just a Servant

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ROMANS 1

The opening sentences of Romans can look like an introduction with no special importance. But these sentences are packed with important principles.

In Greek, Romans opens with two words: *Paulos doulos*. In English, simply, “Paul, a bondservant.” Or, more accurately, “Paul, a slave.” These words defined his calling. He didn’t resist or complain. Rather, he *welcomed* being a slave for Jesus. Without hesitation, he confirmed his dedication to serving Him.

Paul was reminding believers why they should have the attitude of a servant. His message: Being a Christian means serving Jesus. It means denying ourselves, taking up our cross daily, and following Him (Luke 9:23).

Some think they can achieve greatness by attracting attention, being noticed, or occupying prominent positions. But Paul confirmed Jesus’ teaching that the *greatest* was the one who *serves*. Those who exalt themselves may get attention for a time, but eventually they will be humbled. It is those who *humble* themselves who will be exalted (Matthew 23:6–12)—those who *serve*.

Describing himself as an apostle, Paul reminded his readers that God had called him to deliver the Good News. The focal point was making Jesus Christ their Lord.

If you want to be great in God’s eyes, seek to have the attitude of a servant. Focus on being a servant. Humble yourself before Him. Seek to serve Jesus in all you do. Make Him your Lord.

How can you serve others around you today?

Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God... concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord... and declared to be the Son of God with power.

Romans 1:1–4

PRAYER:

Father, I am Your servant. I commit my life to serving You. I declare that Jesus is my Lord. In His name, amen.

This Story Made Me Think of YOU!



A young pastor listened with awe to the elderly widow sharing stories of missionary travels. When he later learned she had never been out of the country, his heart sank. Confused as to whether she was being deliberately dishonest or losing her mind, he asked to meet with her. She delightedly invited him to stop by her home for a visit.

The senior saint greeted him at the door and invited him to a table set with tea and scones. Their conversation convinced the pastor her mind was sound—and that he needed to address her storytelling.

Just as he was about to speak, she stood to her feet and said,

“Pastor, let’s go to Africa.” Puzzled, he followed her to the adjacent room and began to weep. She had led him to her war room where the walls were covered with maps and missionary prayer cards. The humbled pastor joined the elderly missionary who was already on her knees and set out on a journey around the world.

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I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

Romans 1:8

The World

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ROMANS 1

One of Paul's purposes in writing Christians in Rome was to speak about the world at that time and how believers fit into it. Here and throughout this book, he used the Greek word that is the source of the English word *cosmos*.

Underscoring this message, Paul used the word *ethnos* 23 separate times in Romans, often translated as "*nations*" (v. 5). Paul wanted Christians to consider their position in the world, think about the people around them, and look at how they could impact the culture.

Paul was sharing insights learned from his *personal* experience. Having traveled widely throughout the Roman empire, he understood the problems faced by Christians but also their opportunity to impact others. He longed to see these Romans so that he might impart "*some spiritual gift*" (v. 11) that would help them, make them spiritually stronger, and equip them for greater ministry.

Paul was concerned that these Christians would know *what* they believed and could be constant about their faith, realizing they had been *called* (v. 6).

These principles apply to you. Remember, God has called you for this specific time in history. He has given you a specific personality and specific gifts, specific experiences and specific training. He can equip you and help you see the mission field in which you have been placed (John 4:35), the world He wants you to see, and the specific opportunities that are unfolding for you.

How can your specific gifts and experiences be used for God's glory?

Faith

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ROMANS 1

The concept of faith meant nothing to most Romans. As scholar Philip Freeman describes, what a person believed "was irrelevant. There were no creeds." What mattered to them was satisfying their gods.

But Paul knew that faith was a foundation for Christianity, stressing this principle in his letter to the Romans. This letter is filled with references to faith.

In the first chapter alone, Paul wrote about the "*obedience of faith*" (v. 5) and how the faith of the Romans was known throughout the world (v. 8). Faith was central to the Christian life (v. 12), and "*the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith*" (v. 17).

Paul described how we are "*justified by faith apart from works of the Law*" (Romans 3:28). He taught how Abraham lived a life of faith (Romans 4:9) and how "*having been justified by faith, we have peace with God*" (Romans 5:1). "*Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ*" (Romans 10:17). Each of us has been given "*a measure of faith*" (Romans 12:3).

Today, society is filled with people who think only about material things and who encourage us to seek temporary pleasures. But Paul reminded us that *faith* must be the cornerstone of our lives.

Make sure that *you* are a person of faith. Remember that without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). Live by faith. Act in faith. Believe!

How can you tell whether faith is the cornerstone of your life?

For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous one will live by faith."

Romans 1:17 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, help me walk by faith. Acting in faith, I believe in You for miracles. I know nothing is impossible with You. I believe! In Jesus' name, amen.

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.

Romans 1:20

PRAYER:

Father, open my eyes to see the wonders of creation. Thank You for providing my every need. I praise You. In Jesus' name, amen.

How do you usually react to tragedies and difficulties?

Creation

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ROMANS 1

Anne Steele had suffered several tragedies. When she was just three, her mother died. Then when 19, a severe hip injury made her a lifelong invalid. At age 21, her fiancé drowned the day before they were to be married.

It would have been easy for her to become bitter, but she turned her experiences into opportunities to praise God, writing more than 100 hymns. Seeking to give Him glory, she often remained anonymous, writing under a pen name.

One of her most popular hymns, "There Is a God," describes how real He was to her. Echoing Paul's letter to the Romans, she described how He speaks through nature. We see Him through earth and air, sea and skies. We see Him in the sunrises and the sunsets.

If we have discernment, we can recognize His influence all around us. We can be amazed by the diversity of His creation—streams and rivers, oceans and mountains, vegetables and trees, plants and flowers. It is because of His blessings that we receive our daily food and drink.

Rejoice with Anne and be confident that there is a God. Ask Him to open your eyes to the wonders of creation. Be amazed by the diversity, beauty, and splendor. In His power and majesty, He is constantly showing His love for us. Don't give in to bitterness, but fill your life with praise and thanks.

Riches

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ROMANS 2

God has prepared "riches" for you! Here, Paul specifically spoke of the riches of kindness, restraint, and patience. But these are just *some* of the riches He promises.

Elsewhere, Paul reminded us that "God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). He prayed that we would know "what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (Ephesians 1:18). What glorious promises!

Yet many people fail to receive these riches. In their own way, they don't believe but are determined to go their own way. They believe the lifestyle encouraged by the media, and their lives are shaped by the habits, customs, and patterns in the world around them.

Locked into this attitude, many reject the idea of salvation, while others reject the promises in the Bible. They think the idea of God's "riches" sounds unrealistic.

But everything should change when we are born again and have a personal relationship with God. It can change when we know His Word, believe, and are saved!

Allow God to search your heart and mind. Do you *really* believe He has prepared riches for you? Are your thoughts shaped by your faith in Him or the world around you? Don't be stubborn! Humble yourself before Him. Repent of pride. Have faith. Believe His Word. Receive the riches God has prepared for you.

Write a prayer asking God to give you more faith to receive His riches.

Do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and restraint and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself.

Romans 2:4–5 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I humble myself before You. I confess my sins and repent. Thank You for Your forgiveness. By faith I receive Your riches. In Jesus' name, amen.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Romans 3:23 NASB

PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, You know everything about me. I confess how much I need You. Forgive my pride. Thank You for forgiving my sins. In Your name, amen.

Compose a prayer asking God to forgive you for specific sins.

Falling Short

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ROMANS 3

A well-known quote declares, “History is written by victors.” The meaning? What we know about the past is influenced by those who win the battles. We remember their accounts while ignoring the losers.

The Bible teaches a distinct perspective. We are reminded that failure can play a vital role in our journey of faith. This can be a spiritual *necessity*. The Bible is filled with examples of people who could be considered failures. But we see how God used their failures and flaws to teach them important lessons and allow them to grow spiritually.

Peter was one of these failures. Jesus warned that he would deny knowing Him three times. Confident in himself, Peter didn't think this was possible. But he later denied Jesus as He had warned (Luke 22:31). Peter was devastated, but Jesus didn't reject him. Peter learned from this failure and became a dynamic leader.

In Romans, Paul stated the principle that each of us has sinned. The Greek word means to *miss the mark*. In many ways, we all fall short and fail to hit the target. This truth is not meant to make us feel defeated but aware of our *limits*. Realizing that no one is perfect, we can turn to Jesus.

Have you ever fallen short? Made a mistake? Missed the mark? Commit these failures to Jesus. Let Him teach you. Learn to depend on the Spirit working through you.

Even Greater than Sin

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ROMANS 5

How often do believers feel defeated and discouraged? Even the best of us falls short. Like Paul, we can find it hard to do what we want but easy to practice what we don't want (Romans 7:19). We can be like Peter, making bold promises but then saying or doing things we regret (Matthew 26:35).

Sin can seem to weigh us down like an obstacle we never can overcome. But the Bible reminds us that God is ready to *forgive* and *cleanse* us. We just need to *confess* those sins and *trust* Him (1 John 1:9).

The Bible *promises* that God's grace is greater than any sin we might commit. This insight inspired Julia Johnston to write a poem, “Grace Greater Than Our Sin.” This became a powerful hymn with music written by Daniel Towner.

Julia described the “marvelous grace of our loving Lord,” and how it “exceeds our sin and our guilt!” We can feel defeated by “sin and despair.” Our weaknesses can be a stain we cannot hide. It can seem that nothing can help.

But the cross of Christ provides a “refuge.” We are saved by trusting God, realizing the glories of His “marvelous, infinite, matchless grace” given freely to all who believe. Julia's cry was that they would *receive* that grace. A grace “that will pardon and cleanse within.” A grace “that is greater than all our sin.”

Reflect on exactly how God's grace has benefited your life.

Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, so also grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 5:20–21 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, reveal the presence of sin in my life. I confess it to You. Thank You for Your grace and forgiveness. In Jesus' name, amen.

Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Romans 6:4

PRAYER:

Father, I am not content with a status-quo faith. Help me walk in the newness of life. I declare that Your promises are true. In Jesus' name, amen.

Are you walking and talking like a child of the King?

Newness of Life

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ROMANS 6

Many Christians fail to experience the fullness God offers. They may go to church, pray, and read their Bibles but still feel discouraged and frustrated. They haven't received the fulfillment of the promises they read and feel like they are missing something.

Some feel trapped by their heritage and habits or the influences they experience in the world. Many become content with a status quo attitude, going along with the stereotypes encouraged in the media. They can't seem to believe that God's promises *really* are true for them.

They fail to realize that the resurrection of Jesus means that we can walk in the *newness* of life. We can start over again. We do not need to live with the old habits and problems that have plagued us. With God's help, we can change. Thanks to Jesus, no problem is too difficult to solve.

Ask yourself if you are walking in the newness of life. Or do you feel stuck? In a rut? Unable to escape your past? Are you content to be conformed to the world and accept less than your full inheritance?

God has spiritual *riches* available for you. The Bible teaches that He wants to give you power, free you from fear, bless you abundantly, and give you health. Make this declaration: "By faith I will walk in newness of life." Believe His Word! By faith, receive all that God has prepared for you.

Everyday Language

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ROMANS 6

As Paul knew, we all have unique vocabularies. Our words can be influenced by many things—social context, song lyrics and news stories, social media and conversations, and interactions with others. Our unique experiences and relationships help shape the words we use and what has meaning to us.

As this background reminds us, it can be easy to be influenced by the biases of others. We can accept what might sound believable or go along with what seems popular.

As a result, Paul chose his words carefully. Sensitive to his audience, he used words with a clear meaning that communicated the Gospel with maximum *clarity*.

To this end, Paul described using "*everyday language*" (GNT). He used a Greek word that is the root of the English word *anthropology*, which is the study of human beings. As this suggests, he tried to use words people could understand and that related to their experiences.

Remember how easy it can be to be swayed by the prejudices of people around you and simply accept popular views. Be sure you understand the Gospel. Read and study the Word. Pray and ask God for discernment.

As you interact with others, learn from Paul's insights. Be sensitive to the audience to whom you are speaking or writing. What are their needs and interests? What words best communicate the Gospel in terms they will understand?

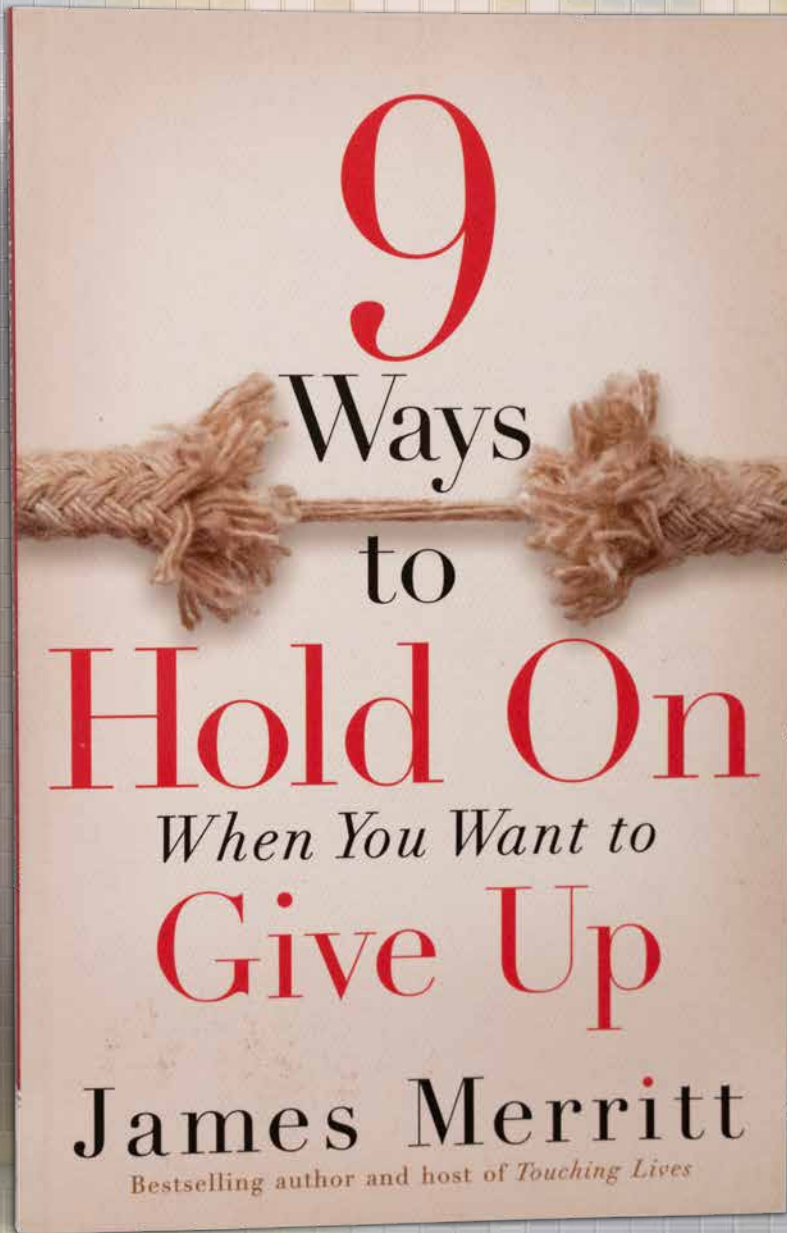
Practice writing out a brief version of your testimony to share.

I am using an example from everyday life because of your human limitations.

Romans 6:19 NIV

PRAYER:

Father, help me share my testimony with words that clearly impact others. Give me a deeper understanding of the truths of the Gospel. In Jesus' name, amen.



Ever Feel Like Giving Up?

Everybody faces tough times. No one gets a free pass from hardship, tragedy, and pain.

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We know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

Romans 8:28 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, You have a great plan for me. I commit my life to You. Thank You for directing my path. In Jesus' name, amen.

Reflect on a hardship you've endured and the good that came out of it.

Working Out for Good

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ROMANS 8

The man was excited when he landed a job with a major public relations (PR) firm. But that excitement faded when, after a few months, his position was eliminated. Devastated, he felt worthless and embarrassed.

When he got home, he shared the news with his wife. He expected her to react with fear or anxiety. Instead, she conveyed a sense of confidence, responding, "Well, something will turn up."

Her confidence gave him courage and freedom. Instead of wallowing in defeat, he began knocking on doors. Soon he found a job at a major advertising agency where his confidence continued to increase. After a time, he and a colleague formed their own agency, which became a great success, winning many honors.

He realized his successes were possible because of his attitude toward failure. As a reflection of what he learned, he had a sign displayed that read, "Fail Harder." His point? He encouraged others not to be afraid to fail but to embrace challenges despite the risks.

Life presents many challenges. But what could seem like failure can lead to victory and teach important lessons. Through these experiences, we can mature, learn to trust God, and gain confidence that He will work everything "together for good."

Make sure you trust God in every situation and always be confident in Him. Have faith that He will direct your path.

Who Is Against You?

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ROMANS 8

We face many kinds of adversaries, rivals, and opposition. We face emotional and physical confrontations, stress and pressure, and competition for jobs, awards, or prizes. The political world is full of rivalries battling through elections and campaign ads. Communities and nations often find themselves in adversarial relationships. Armies square off for dominance. Businesses struggle for market share.

But the most important opposition we have is *spiritual*. As the Bible confirms, Satan and his demonic forces oppose us in any way they can. They spread lies and seek to stir up anger and fear and fill us with doubt and anxiety. They encourage divisions and conflict. They can tempt us with thoughts and ideas and then provoke us to surrender to these temptations.

Facing life's challenges, we can think about all the people, influences, and forces that might oppose us or be against us. We can feel overwhelmed and defeated if we focus on these forces. But our attitude changes when we focus on God and realize that He is greater than any adversary we face. If we trust Him, we should realize that He is for us! He is on our side! And He dominates any challenge we face.

Remember that God is for you. You can trust Him and be confident in Him. Stand on His Word. Let Him take away your fears and worries and give you His peace.

Compose a prayer thanking God for already defeating your enemies.

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

Romans 8:31

PRAYER:

Father, You are on my side. Thank You that You are greater than any opposition I face. I trust You. In Jesus' name, amen.

The word of faith which we are preaching, that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Romans 10:8–9 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I have faith in You. I trust You for these needs: _____. Thank You for giving me the word I need! In Jesus' name, amen.

What special word has God been whispering in your heart recently?

The Word of Faith

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ROMANS 10

Even mature Christians can find themselves depending on their reputations and experiences, relationships and abilities, and position or status. But Paul taught that before God, none of these things matter. He made it clear: We are not saved because of anything we do or justified because of our works. The key is *faith* alone.

We must act on *faith*. We must *confess* with our mouths and *declare* that Jesus is Lord. We must *believe* in our hearts that “*God raised Him from the dead.*”

When Paul talked about the “*word of faith,*” he used the Greek word *rhema*, indicating a *specific* word God gives at specific times. Paul was saying that God has a particular word for each situation we face. It is a word He has prepared before the foundation of the world. It is the *exact* word we need.

We will need to speak the *word* of faith at some point and, for the first time then, declare that Jesus is Lord! We will also need wisdom or guidance, deliverance or healing, discernment or salvation at other moments. God has a word of faith in each situation.

As the Bible promises, the word of faith is *near* you. Declare that Jesus is your Lord. Trust Him. Declare His Word to be true. Let Him give you the word of faith. Be ready to speak His Word and act in faith.

God's Riches

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ROMANS 10

Paul wanted the Romans to understand that God abounds in riches! This means He does not lack *anything*! He has an *abundance* of *everything*!

What kinds of riches? These are *spiritual* riches—salvation, peace, eternal life, forgiveness, power and authority, healing, access to His presence, and all the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23). But there is more! He is ready to meet *all* our needs—financial and emotional, mental and practical, even for ideas and wisdom. And He is not stingy with these riches.

But how do we get them? He gives them to “*all who call upon Him.*” In other words, we access His riches by *calling* on Him, asking and believing, applying His principles, living by faith, and believing His Word.

We also are rewarded by sowing with the things He gives us. He promises that we will reap what we sow (Galatians 6:7). We need to *expect* that He will meet our needs and reward us with His riches as we call on Him.

Remember that all of God's riches are available to you. The Bible promises that He wants you to have them. Call on Him. Seek Him. Make sure you are a good steward, sowing seeds with your time, talents, and treasures. Be *faithful* with what God gives you. Don't limit Him! He can do beyond all you can expect or think (Ephesians 3:20).

Reflect on all the riches God has given you throughout your life.

For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him.

Romans 10:12 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for Your riches. Forgive me for limiting You. I will sow into Your Kingdom with my time, treasures, and talents. In Jesus' name, amen.

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! [...] For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things.

Romans 11:33, 36

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for all You have done for me. I commit my life to serving You. I worship and praise You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Write your own psalm of praise for all God has done for you.

Overwhelmed

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ROMANS 11

Deep into his letter to the Romans, Paul seemed to pause. Having detailed so many insights about the Gospel, he seemed to have reached the end of his vocabulary. Amazed by what he had learned about God, he expressed being overwhelmed with the process of trying to explain these insights.

He realized God's wisdom and knowledge are *profound*. His riches are beyond our ability to comprehend. His judgments are "*unsearchable*." We cannot know these judgments or decisions. We cannot even search them out.

We cannot track the paths He has traveled. We might seek a roadmap, but we have a limited understanding of where He is going or what He will do. We cannot grasp what He is thinking about; this is beyond our capabilities. No one has counseled Him. He has no advisors. He does not ask us for our opinions before He acts.

God does not owe anyone anything. He already has *everything*. He can create more of anything at any time. We cannot teach Him; He knows *everything*. He is the focal point for all of creation. Everything is of Him, from Him, and to Him.

How would you describe what you know about God? Think about His creation, His power, and His promises. Think about all He has done for you! It is amazing that He loves us and that His mercy is new every morning! Worship Him and give Him glory.

Take My Life

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ROMANS 12

Frances Havergal was a precocious child. Born in England in 1836, she started reading when she was three. The daughter of a hymn writer, she memorized much of the Bible. She also developed a passion to spread the Gospel.

This passion was stirred when she visited a home where some were unconverted. Others were "converted but did not have joy." How she wanted them all to *know* God as she did!

She prayed, "Lord, give me all in this house!" God answered that prayer, and all 10 household members committed their lives to Him. Moved by this experience, she wrote "Take My Life, and Let It Be," a hymn that described the dedication she felt toward God.

She wrote, "Take my life, and let it be consecrated" to Him. She prayed He would take her life and let it "flow in ceaseless praise," that her hands would "move at the impulse of Thy love," and that her feet would "be swift and beautiful for Thee."

Her prayer was that she only would sing "for my King" and her words would "be filled with messages" from Him. She committed all her resources to Him, vowing, "not a mite would I withhold."

God looks for those with this kind of total commitment. Remember, you owe everything to Him. He has given you opportunities to serve Him. Commit your life to Him. Believe Him to do *remarkable things through you!*

Compose a prayer of consecration to the Lord.

I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.

Romans 12:1 NLT

PRAYER:

Father, let my life be consecrated to You. Use my hands, my feet, my words, and the resources You have given me. In Jesus' name, amen.

God has given each of us the ability to do certain things well.

Romans 12:6 TLB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for the abilities You have given me. Show me how I can use these abilities for Your Kingdom and glory. In Jesus' name, amen.

Make a list of your gifts and how you can use them for God's glory.

God-Given Abilities

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ROMANS 12

Each person is special in God's sight. Each of us has been given *"the ability to do certain things well."* Not everything, just some specific things. This doesn't make anyone superior or inferior. We simply are all different. In fact, *"each of us will give a personal account to God"* of our choices (Romans 14:12).

In the fulfillment of our God-given calling, He provides us with unique gifts and talents. We have unique personalities, experiences, and training. But we all serve the same Master and have the same overall goal.

Paul compared this to the functions of a body. All believers together are Christ's body. But each of us has different assignments, not competing with other believers but complementing each other.

Some may prophesy, while others serve. Some may teach or lead, while others encourage or give. Whatever our role, we should do it as unto the Lord, with excellence. As Paul wrote, *"Never be lazy in your work, but serve the Lord enthusiastically"* (Romans 12:11).

Do you want to feel fulfilled and experience all that God has prepared for you? Ask Him to help you employ the abilities, gifts, and talents He has given you. Follow His leading and put those gifts to work in service to His Kingdom. Don't look at other believers as rivals but as brothers and sisters working together—all parts of the body of Christ.

Changed by Light

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ROMANS 13

The Bible describes a powerful weapon that can change our lives. It is light.

It was no accident that on the first day of creation, God said, *"Let there be light"* (Genesis 1:3). Light was fundamental for creation. And it was no accident that Jesus said He is *"the Light of the world"* (John 8:12).

Light is an agent of *revelation*. Darkness hides, but light *reveals*. The brighter the light, the more we see. Light can expose details and even deep secrets.

Paul said we are to be *proactive* in our attitude toward darkness. Illumined by the presence of light, we can recognize sin and anything influenced by Satan and the forces of darkness. We are to *"put on the armor of light,"* for light acts as a shield, protecting us and helping us avoid inappropriate things.

Walking in the light also is a powerful way to increase the unity of the body of Christ (1 John 1:7). As we seek the light, we can be more transparent. Believers can be honest with others and not concerned with hiding our flaws. The light within becomes more powerful and bright, and we can become *"the light of the world"* (Matthew 5:14).

Let's ask God to help us *"rid ourselves of the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light."* Seek to walk in the light that you might shine brightly to those around you.

How can you be a light to those in the darkness around you today?

The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let's rid ourselves of the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

Romans 13:12 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, search my heart and mind. Reveal anything displeasing to You. Help me walk in the light and be pure in Your sight. In Jesus' name, amen.

I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me...From Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ.

Romans 15:18–19 NIV

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for changing my life. Open doors for me to share biblical truths with others. Help me to impact others. In Jesus' name, amen.

What experiences could you share with others as spiritual lessons?

Personal Experience

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ROMANS 15

As a seminary student, Carl Bowman studied his assigned text carefully: Jesus' feeding of the 5,000 (Matthew 14:14–21). After suitable preparation, he felt ready and delivered a message to his peers and his professor, David Nyvall.

Bowman was satisfied with the results but could tell Nyvall was not pleased. Remaining silent, Nyvall continued looking at his Greek Testament and finally spoke: "That was like being invited to dinner without getting any food."

For Bowman this was "a crushing moment." He thought he had given a solid sermon but later realized Nyvall was right. His message had many ideas but not much real *nourishment*.

He learned a valuable lesson. Preaching, teaching, or sharing was not just providing points from a study but always seeking to "serve spiritual food." It was to be real, life-to-life ministry, *first-hand* experiences he could speak about with *conviction*, that others could *apply*.

Individual experiences are essential to strengthen our testimony and impact others. We can share how Jesus has changed our lives, convey truths from the Bible, and tell what we've learned about being led by the Spirit.

As you interact with others, remember the importance of sharing what you *know* to be true from your own life. Study the Bible and ask God to give you life-changing insights. Seek to apply the principles He reveals. Really believe the Word and put its truths into practice. As you share, give others spiritual meat.

Struggling Together

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ROMANS 15

Writing to believers in Rome, Paul stressed the importance of prayer. He described a kind of prayer that was not vague but *specific*. He urged them to join him in praying for particular problems he faced and specific needs in the body of Christ.

He taught them that to be effective, their prayers needed to be motivated by love. They were to have pure hearts, never competing with others or praying with a spirit of rivalry or jealousy.

In this spirit of love, they were to strive together with him in their prayers. Here Paul used a Greek word found nowhere else in the Bible. This word described the *struggle* Christians face in their prayer lives.

Paul *knew* he was involved in a battle. Spiritual warfare is central to the Christian life, and prayer is essential for victory in life and in that warfare. As believers, we are to be people of prayer—praying constantly, praying specifically, praying as the Spirit leads us, and praying with perseverance and faith.

Paul also knew that the power of prayer is increased as believers are *united*. This was the context of urging Romans to "*strive together with me in your prayers*."

Be definitive in your prayers, remembering that prayer is central to spiritual warfare and essential for victory. The impact of our prayers is intensified through corporate prayer. As believers, pray *together* and join in the *struggle*.

Write a prayer to combat the spiritual warfare in your life right now.

Strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, that I may be rescued from those who are disobedient...so that I may come to you in joy by the will of God and relax in your company.

Romans 15:30–32 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I commit these needs to You: _____. I believe You for answers. Thank You for the victory! In Jesus' name, amen.

Greet Apelles, approved in Christ.

Romans 16:10

PRAYER:

Father, help me to resist temptations. Keep me from being counterfeit. I want to be a person of integrity, approved by You. In Jesus' name, amen.

How can you be genuine in a world of fakes?

Approval

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ROMANS 16

Who was Apelles? This verse is the only reference to him in the Bible. Therefore, the only thing we know is that Paul thought highly of him, and he was *“approved in Christ.”*

Theologian Donald Barnhouse explained that the word translated approved is related to banking. In the ancient world, “all money was made from metal, heated until liquid, poured into molds, and allowed to cool.” After the coins were cooled, the uneven edges were smoothed off.

Because the material was so pliable, disreputable people could shave coins and produce counterfeits. This was a widespread practice. But, Barnhouse noted, “some money changers were men of integrity” who would not accept counterfeits. These men only put “full weighted money into circulation.” Such people were approved.

Paul thought Apelles was *trustworthy* and a man of *integrity*, pleasing to God and accepted by Him. He was a man who passed life's tests. Paul used this same word in his exhortation to Timothy: *“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God”* (2 Timothy 2:15).

The world around you may encourage you to deceive others and manipulate circumstances for your own advantage. But the Bible urges believers to be people of honor and integrity, who can be trusted. Seek to be a person who keeps your promises and practices biblical principles. Seek to be genuine and not counterfeit. Make it your ambition to please God and gain His approval.

Working Hard

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ROMANS 16

Tryphaena and Tryphosa were so important to Paul that he greeted them by name in his letter to the Romans. Some scholars think they were sisters and possibly twins. They might have been church leaders. But what particularly distinguished them was that they *“worked hard in the Lord.”* They weren't alone. Like these two women, Paul's friend Persis also worked *very hard*.

The dedicated effort of these people made a dramatic impact. Other believers noticed their work ethic, and their attitude set a good example.

Believers face many challenges. We can find ourselves developing excuses and doing only what seems easy. But in every situation, we demonstrate our commitment through the words we speak and the things we do, even through challenging tasks, through seeking *first* the Kingdom of God and having the right priorities. We show commitment by being *faithful* with the tasks He has called us to do, being willing to do *practical* things, not complaining but serving God in whatever we do, and by doing everything *“from the heart, as something done for the Lord”* (Colossians 3:23).

You may face challenging situations. Don't give up or become discouraged. Stay faithful. Show your commitment by being willing to tackle every project as unto the Lord. Don't *“grow weary while doing good”* (Galatians 6:9 NKJV). Remember, God is watching. He will reward you for your hard work for His Kingdom.

How can you practically show commitment to God during tough times?

Greet Tryphaena and Tryphosa, who have worked hard in the Lord. Greet my dear friend Persis, who has worked very hard in the Lord.

Romans 16:12 CSB

PRAYER:

Father, I want to serve You with the time, talents, and treasures You have given me. Help me accomplish much for Your Kingdom. In Jesus' name, amen.

Such people are not serving Christ our Lord; they are serving their own personal interests. By smooth talk and glowing words they deceive innocent people.

Romans 16:18 NLT

PRAYER:

Father, help me to be alert to deceivers. Help me be genuine. Convict me of sin. Help me be a witness for You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Reflect on a time when you were fake. What happened?

Fake or Real?

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ROMANS 16

Stradivarius violins, made in the eighteenth century in Cremona, Italy, are among today's most valuable musical instruments. The sound they produce has *improved* with age. Only about 650 exist. They are so rare that one recently sold at auction for nearly \$16 million!

Perhaps because they are so valuable, the market is flooded with imitations. Some owners innocently conclude that they have found a violin that might be a Stradivarius. One such person planned to get rid of a violin until she found a label saying it was a Stradivarius. Unfortunately, appraisers revealed it was a fake.

A Canadian violinist reports that around ten people a week contact her claiming to have found a real Stradivarius. But none have been genuine. The Smithsonian Institution received so many inquiries they had to publish information about how to *recognize* fakes.

The Bible tells us this principle applies to our Christian lives. Some people have a real relationship with Jesus, a serious calling, and an authentic understanding of the Scriptures.

But there also are fakes. Some people masquerade as believers, *thinking* they are Christians, but, in reality, they are following their own desires. Many of these people are "*serving their own personal interests.*" Sounding sincere, they learn to manipulate others and "*deceive innocent people.*"

Make sure you are on guard against deception. Make sure your faith is *real* and that you have a personal relationship with Jesus.

Compromise

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: GALATIANS 2

Peter was a special disciple. Also known as Cephas, he had a unique relationship with Jesus. He was trained for leadership and became a powerful minister of the Gospel. Yet Paul recognized that even Peter had made a mistake. In fact, he "*stood condemned.*"

What had Peter done that was so wrong? He was guilty of "*hypocrisy.*" While in Antioch, Peter had eaten with Gentiles, consistent with the guidelines God had revealed to him (Acts 10). But, bowing to pressures, he wavered and acted differently when "*some men from James*" arrived. Suddenly, "*he began to withdraw and separate himself*" (v. 12).

Paul knew that Peter was wrong. Others might have stood by silently, unwilling to do anything. But Paul felt compelled to act. Peter had been guilty of *compromise*. As a leader of the church, he could not set such a negative example. He had to be corrected.

Any of us can be tempted to compromise and go along with the crowd or say or do what might seem to be politically correct. At that moment, we can be less concerned about obeying God and more concerned about the reactions of others. If a man like Peter could be guilty of compromise, so can you.

Ask God to help you stay focused on doing what is *right* in every situation. Always be concerned with pleasing God and obeying His Word. Resist the pressure to compromise.

When have you been tempted to compromise your beliefs?

But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.

Galatians 2:11 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, help me to deepen my relationship with You. Help me to stay free from compromise. Help me impact others with my life. In Jesus' name, amen.

He who sits in the heavens laughs, the LORD scoffs at them. Then He will speak to them in His anger and terrify them in His fury.

Psalms 2:4-5 NASB

God's Perspective

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PSALM 2

Christians often seem outnumbered and on the losing side of battles. It can look like the world is controlled by massive corporations and governments hostile to the things of God or by rich and powerful people who oppose the Gospel.

The psalmist described how the nations were "restless" and "the peoples plott[ed] in vain." Their leaders thought nothing of defying God and ignoring His Word (v. 1).

Pondering the superficial might of these earthly powers, we can react with fear and worry, feeling defeated. But the Bible reminds us of God's perspective. Sitting in the heavens, He is not impressed by earthly rulers and their armies and threats. They don't terrify Him.

He sees *everything* in context. In His sight, they are *insignificant*. In fact, He "laughs" and "scoffs at them." Eventually, He will judge them in keeping with His plan for the world (v. 6). He will right every wrong.

Be sure you have the right perspective on the world. Don't live in fear and worry. Realize that you are a child of Almighty God. You can call on Him and tell Him your concerns. Be confident in Him. Don't be intimidated by any person or organization, no matter how powerful they might seem.

Look to Him for everything you need. Trust God to provide for you, protect and guide you, and give you His peace.

Do you need to shift your perspective of godly vs. earthly powers?

Mysterious Ways

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 13

William Cowper came from a family of influence. Yet Cowper, the son of the chaplain to England's King George II, was shy and frequently bullied in school. He went on to study law, helping to fight against slavery. Throughout his life, he remained serious about his commitment to Christ. But despite this commitment, he often struggled with depression.

In 1773, he became so depressed that he tried to take his own life three times. Each attempt failed. After recovering from these near tragedies, Cowper realized that God had been with him, overruling his own misguided efforts. He wrote a hymn about what he learned, called "God Moves in a Mysterious Way."

He realized that God's actions may be "unfathomable" to us, but through every circumstance, He is accomplishing His sovereign will.

Cowper knew other believers struggled with depression and fear. In his hymn, he encouraged us to bravely *trust God completely*. Cowper had learned that we can have faith even when things seem unclear, being confident He eventually will make His purposes plain.

As you face life's challenges, remember that you only can "see in a mirror dimly" and "know in part." You may not grasp how God is shaping your life or answering your prayers. But have faith that He is working in ways you may not understand yet. His plans may seem mysterious, but you can trust Him. He promises to be with you and direct *your* steps.

Have you or a loved one suffered from depression? How can you help?

Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.

1 Corinthians 13:12 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, keep me from becoming discouraged. You have a plan for my life. I trust You to direct my steps. In Jesus' name, amen.

But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided to you.

Matthew 6:33 NASB

Fading Treasures

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: MATTHEW 6

For centuries, the legend of Timbuktu captured the imagination of people throughout Europe. The legend was sparked around 1324 when the ruler of this city arrived in Cairo with a caravan including 60,000 men and 80 camels, each carrying 300 pounds of gold.

The outside world was *astonished!* They knew Timbuktu was in Africa, but no one knew where or how it accumulated this wealth.

Over time, the legend grew. In 1510, a Spanish Moor who had visited Timbuktu dazzled outsiders with descriptions of gold coins and educated people who lived there. Later, a trader told of a caravan from Timbuktu arriving in Marrakesh loaded with gold that today would be valued at \$5.2 billion!

Various adventurers failed in their quests to find this city. Finally in 1828, Alexander Laing walked into Timbuktu, the first modern European to set foot in this place. What Laing found *shocked* him. Instead of opulence, there was just a “poor collection of mud shanties with no wealth.” All the wealth had *disappeared*.

Today, people still seek riches and fame, believing these will bring *lasting* satisfaction. But like those who pursued Timbuktu, ultimately no earthly treasures last. God promises lasting blessings for His people. The key is seeking first His Kingdom, being good stewards of the resources He gives, and trusting Him.

Commit your life to God. Serve Him with your whole heart. Trust Him to bless and provide for you.

What treasures and talents can you give for God's glory this week?

Never Satisfied

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PROVERBS 27

Our natural tendency is to desire things we see. The truth is that there never is enough to satisfy our cravings. The Bible tells us that the lust of our eyes is “*never satisfied*.” The more we look, the more we want. The world is full of “*the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*,” things not from God (1 John 2:16).

At the same time, the Bible reminds us that we can influence what we see. David realized that what we see impacts what we desire and how we spend our time and resources. Realizing his control, he wrote, “*I will set no base or wicked thing before my eyes*” (Psalm 101:3 AMPC).

Realize that you have *choices*. You can decide what you will look at. You have the option to turn your head, close your eyes, and walk away. You can focus on things that may point you in the wrong direction or toward what is right.

You can determine what you watch, who you listen to, and what you allow into your mind. The Bible encourages us to be *proactive* with our choices and think about things that are true and noble, just and pure, lovely and of good report (Philippians 4:8). We are to fill our minds with God's Word.

Ask God to give you discernment and help you make the right choices.

What choices are you currently facing?

Hell and Destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied.

Proverbs 27:20

PRAYER:

Father, give me discernment about what I allow into my mind. Help me turn away from temptation. Help me be satisfied by serving You. In Jesus' name, amen.

I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses...and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

2 Corinthians 12:9–10 NLT

PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, I trust You to provide what I need. Thank You for giving me Your strength. I depend on You. In Your name, amen.

What weaknesses do you need to allow Jesus to turn into strengths?

Strength in Weakness

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 2 CORINTHIANS 12

We can picture an energetic conductor leading an orchestra, waving a baton, making dramatic gestures, and inspiring audiences with balletic motions. We are not surprised if such conductors produce dynamic performances. But what can be surprising are cases where the conductor is weak or sickly.

Gunther Wand conducted until he was ninety. Hobbled to the podium, he still generated stunning sounds while physically frail.

After surgery to remove a brain tumor, Otto Klemperer was left partially paralyzed. Looking weak and uncomfortable, he was forced to conduct while seated in a chair. Yet he led performances and made recordings that even today are considered among the best made.

Conductors like these are inspirational because of their connection with the music. They have something *deeper* than a charismatic appearance—the ability to inspire others with their insights and love of the music.

In our spiritual lives, some think we need to be like those charismatic conductors, being energetic, having a magnetic personality, or appearing physically attractive. But Paul reminded us that he perhaps had the most impact when he was *weak*. Then he had to *depend* on “*the power of Christ*” working through him. He learned, “*when I am weak, then I am strong.*”

Remember to trust in Jesus, not your personality or experience. Draw on the presence of the Spirit. Let Him work *through* you.

The Cross

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 1

George Bennard found much about the cross puzzling. Seeking to grasp its meaning and significance, he spent hours praying for a full understanding. As God gave him insights, Bennard wrote a hymn with words that he felt God had put into his heart, reflecting his search. The hymn was “The Old Rugged Cross.”

This hymn tells of the power of the cross and how that cross was “the emblem of suffering and shame” symbolizing the death of Jesus and all He did for us. Bennard described how he would “cherish the old rugged cross, till my trophies at last I lay down.” Someday he would exchange that cross for a crown.

Paul told us that “*the message of the cross is foolishness*” to those who are not saved. It makes no sense. But if we are saved, “*it is the power of God.*” With His help, we can understand.

How easily we can think about what makes sense to our minds. We can go along with popular beliefs. But the cross reminds us of the *mystery* of the Gospel. What may seem foolish to people around us may be the key to unlocking God's power.

Let God know how grateful you are that Jesus died for you. Ask Him for a deeper revelation of the cross. Remember that the cross symbolizes the victory that Jesus won for you. It is the power of God.

Reflect on what the cross means to you personally today.

Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom...but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

1 Corinthians 1:17–18 ESV

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for sending Jesus. I will cling to the old rugged cross and exchange it some day for a crown. In Jesus' name, amen.

Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called... Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

1 Corinthians 1:22–24 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, open my mind to more of Your wisdom. Teach me. Help me stand for Your Word and witness to others. In Jesus' name, amen.

Write a prayer asking God to reveal His wisdom to you in a particular area.

The Wisdom of God

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 1

Michael Faraday came from a relatively poor family. Showing personal initiative, he educated himself by reading. Continuing to advance, he developed numerous breakthroughs, gradually gaining credibility. His big break came in 1812 when chemist Humphry Davy appointed him as his assistant at London's Royal Institution.

He was ahead of his time, becoming an outstanding lecturer on scientific issues. Among other things, he discovered breakthroughs in electricity and magnetism, including the principle behind the electric transformer.

Faraday also was a strong Christian. He once wrote about being freed from fear because God gives us "victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57).

He knew his discoveries were possible only because of his faith in God and belief in His Word. He once said, "The Christian who is taught by God (by His Word and Holy Spirit) finds his guide in the Word of God." He believed faith gave him a foundation that led to breakthroughs, and God gave him insights because he trusted in Him and built his life around biblical principles.

God still rewards those who base their lives on biblical principles, have faith in Him, and look to Him for wisdom. He can unlock the secrets to success in science, business, academics, and any other field. Make sure you base your life on God's Word. Seek Him. Ask Him to reveal His wisdom to you.

Taken for Granted

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOB 19

Job had been popular and successful, considered "the greatest man" in his part of the world. Then, everything changed. His family was attacked. His flocks were burned. A mighty wind swept in, and his house collapsed (Job 1:1–19). Job himself experienced sickness and sores.

The impact was dramatic. Three friends came initially to comfort him. Facing this crisis, Job needed support and encouragement. Instead, he felt criticized and wounded. His friends proved to be "undependable" and of "no help." Job felt "forgotten" (Job 6:13–21).

Job's story reminds us how easy it can be to criticize and focus on what we think are the mistakes people have made. We can forget their contributions and needs.

Many people feel taken for granted and overlooked. Who are they? The sick. The elderly. The poor. The pioneers who blazed new trails but find themselves neglected and ignored, their contributions forgotten.

The Bible reminds us how easily we can take others for granted. We must be careful not to neglect other believers and the needy (Hebrews 13:16). We're to remember those who have been leaders (Hebrews 13:7) and those who have ministered to us and been our mentors (Deuteronomy 12:19).

Ask God to search your heart and see if there are people you are taking for granted or who are in need. Honor and remember them today. Be grateful and minister out of a heart filled with God's love.

Who can you show thankfulness and honor to this week?

My relatives have gone away; my closest friends have forgotten me.

Job 19:14 NIV

PRAYER:

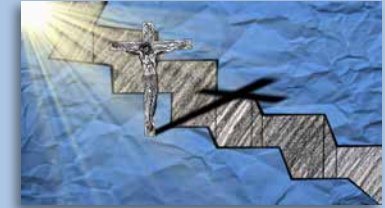
Father, show me if there are people I am taking for granted. Help me to show gratitude and honor to others. In Jesus' name, amen.

Only Jesus

Inspiration Ministries' *Love of God* video changed Zaine's life.



Share the salvation message with your friends and family.
inspiration.org/IPrayedThePrayer



When religion hardens a heart, even the things of God can seem stale and useless.

Take Zaine for instance. He had no need for God or the Christian life. Both of his parents took him to church, but neither God nor church meant anything to him. Eventually Zaine stopped attending church and spent all of his time hanging out with friends.

Making money, chasing women, and getting high held much more appeal than the Almighty. The wild life sent him to prison in 2011 where he connected with other prisoners from a Muslim background. While he prayed to Allah, he still had no interest in serving any god.

After his release in 2017, Zaine chose a cleaner lifestyle for a short time but soon fell back into the wrong crowd—using and dealing drugs. Two years later, as Zaine's

life continued to spiral downwards, his father died.

“My life really hit bottom then. I lived on the streets and in crack houses. One morning I decided to go home, but no one wanted me around. Thank God for my sister's husband who gave me a place to stay. He took me to church, and I had my first encounter with the Holy Ghost. It was phenomenal. I cried tears of joy. Things started coming right for me.”

Zaine found work and entered a training program to become a qualified safety officer. He excelled in his work, and God blessed his efforts. Soon he became a trainer for large corporations. But even his satisfaction with work was not enough to help him cope with the challenges of life. It wasn't long before circumstances piled up, and Zaine's emotions overwhelmed him. He turned back to drugs for relief and comfort.

But Jesus continued to pursue His lost sheep and pointed Zaine in the right direction. He had him go to the Inspiration Ministries' website, where he came across our video *Love of God*. Responding to God's offer of forgiveness and mercy, Zaine rediscovered the right path.

When someone responds to our outreach, we send a welcome message and later check in to see how they are doing. When Zaine received a recent email from us, he jumped at the opportunity to share his testimony!

“It's been three months now that I've been sober, not using any drugs. Things are coming right for me again. I enjoy serving the Lord, and I don't want to fall back again. I want to give all my thanks and praise to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He's brought me through a lot.

“I have been involved in crime, drugs, and gangs, but I grew up

in a good family where no one did those things. I want people to know that money will not give you joy and peace. Only Jesus can do that. I thank God for raising me out of the life I chose. I am alive only because of Jesus. I hope this testimony will bless others and be used the way the Lord wants it to: winning many souls to Himself.”

Our mission is to share the love of God!

Last year over 5 MILLION people responded to our *Love of God* video! But those who come to know Jesus need additional help. In addition to providing prayer support, we offer daily encouragement, web-based learning resources, and our Christian television programs. None of it could happen without you! Please pray for Zaine and others who are walking with Jesus because of Inspiration Ministries' worldwide outreaches. ❖

God Spoke to Lillian in a Dream

Her impact continues to expand after her passing!



For decades, Lillian partnered with Inspiration Ministries to touch lives around the world. Then, God began speaking to her about reaching the lost through her financial plan and her estate.

“The Lord made it very clear that I was to invest part of my proceeds of the sale of my house into a Charitable Gift Annuity with Inspiration Ministries,” she explained. “Ever since I did that, I’ve been extraordinarily blessed!”

Then one night, God asked Lillian to give even more—*everything* in fact!

“I had a vivid dream where the Lord said to me, ‘Give your estate to Inspiration Ministries,’” she

recalled. “This happened not just once, but three nights in a row!”

In obedience to God, Lillian joyfully gifted 100% of her estate to Inspiration Ministries—to support evangelism and discipleship around the world.

“Both God and Inspiration Ministries have been so good to me!” Lillian gratefully said. “David and the Inspiration Ministries staff are just like family.”

Through Lillian’s gift, thousands have responded to our Gospel outreaches—even after her homegoing.

Do you want to win souls after you’re in Heaven? Contact us for free information today.

US / CAN / CAR:
+1 (855) 702-7042

UK / INTL:
+44 (0) 33 0822 0380

inspirationPG.org



A Merry Heart...

does good, like medicine. – Proverbs 17:22

I just burned 2,000 calories. That’s the last time I leave brownies in the oven while I nap.

A recent study has found that women who carry a little extra weight live longer than the men who mention it.

I put my grandma on speed dial the other day. I call it Insta-Gram.

Want to know why nurses like red crayons? Sometimes they have to draw blood.

What do you call a toothless bear? A gummy bear!



Got some clean, Christian humor you'd like to share?
Email it to: MerryHeart@inspiration.org



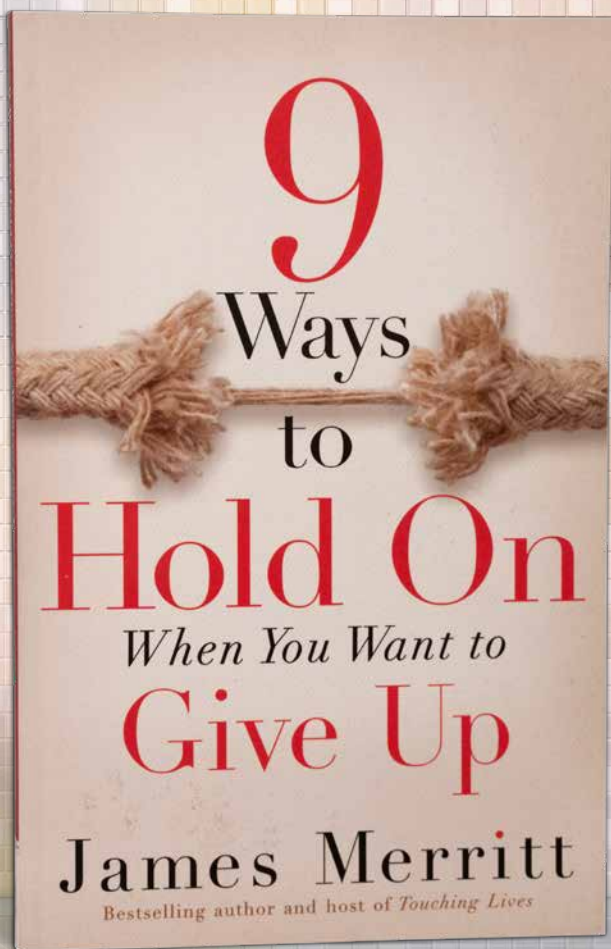
I lost my job at the bank on my first day. A woman asked me to check her balance, so I pushed her over.

If the early bird gets the worm, I'll sleep in until there's pancakes.

Your Victory is Near!

Jesus already overcame every obstacle of life—and so can you.

This month's THANK YOU GIFT, *9 Ways to Hold On When You Want To Give Up* by James Merritt, will help you remember that it's always too soon to quit.



**VICTORY
is ahead!**

Turn to page 28 for details.
Act quickly! Supplies are limited.