

MARCH 2024

inspiration

M A G A Z I N E



Come
back to

Life

Beyond
Belief

Open Your Eyes
of Faith

You Are
Set Free!



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Come Back to Life!



As we remember the Lord's death and celebrate His glorious resurrection this month, this can be YOUR time to receive His healing touch on your health, finances, and relationships. See David's article on **page 5**.



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



EDITOR'S CORNER



Roone Acree

Join us this issue as we explore the life-changing truth of Jesus' resurrection power. The Bible declares His death and resurrection both as a documented historic fact and a powerful spiritual reality that can transform our lives today.

The apostle Paul explains: *“As Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life”* (Romans 6:4 NASB). What a wonderful promise! No matter what challenge you may be facing—an illness in your body...a broken relationship...feelings of depression... financial pressures—God offers you *“newness of life”* through the power of Jesus' death and resurrection!

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It's never too late to unleash the power of the resurrection in your life.

Come back to *Life*



STRENGTHEN your walk
with David Cerullo

On Good Friday, we commemorate the suffering and death of Jesus on the cross...the sacrificial Lamb of God who died for our sins and the sins of the whole world (John 1:29). Jesus' death on our behalf wasn't an accident, nor was it a triumph of Satan over the Son of God. It was a demonstration of the Father's love for us and His redemptive plan from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8).

Jesus' resurrection is the story of God coming to earth in the form of flesh and blood and paying the penalty for our sin and disobedience. Through the miracle of the resurrection, God offers us a great exchange:

- Our *sin* for His *righteousness* (2 Corinthians 5:21)
- Our *sickness* for His *health* (1 Peter 2:24)
- Our *poverty* for His *abundance* (John 10:10; 2 Corinthians 8:9)
- Our sentence of *death* for His *eternal life* (Romans 6:23)

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The resurrection not only can impact your eternal destiny, but it also can bring about amazing turnarounds in your life today. Because Jesus has risen from the dead, you too can “walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4). Scripture says:

The Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in YOU (Romans 8:11)!

Can you see what an amazing miracle this is? The apostle Paul describes a time when he and his team were “burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life.” But his turnaround came when he realized that instead of trusting in his own strength, he could rely upon “God who raises the dead” (2 Corinthians 1:8–9). That same resurrection power is available to you today!

STUCK IN THE VALLEY?

Of course, even for many believers, it’s difficult to accept this fact as true. They may be experiencing dead areas in their lives and wondering why God’s resurrection power hasn’t transformed their circumstances.

The truth is, just about everyone has some aspect of their life in need of a resurrection: dead hopes and dreams, dead careers, dead marriages, dead relationships with parents, kids, or siblings, or perhaps physical ailments in need of a touch from the resurrected Christ.

What about you? Is there some area of your life that has become stagnant, dry, or even dead? If so, some powerful lessons can be learned from Ezekiel’s stunning vision of God resurrecting Israel’s “dry bones” (Ezekiel 37).

As the vision began, Ezekiel found himself “in the midst of the valley” (v. 1). Isn’t it interesting that our greatest revelations from God often

come when we’re in a valley of some kind? We all crave mountaintop experiences, of course, but more often, our biggest breakthroughs occur when we’re down in a valley or pit.

In this valley, Ezekiel didn’t just see *one* dead object. The valley was “full of bones,” body parts that once had been alive, but now were dead (v. 1). In the same way, when we find ourselves sitting in a hopeless place, it’s hard to see signs of life anywhere. Death seems to have a cascading effect, spreading almost like cancer. Perhaps it started with a job loss, but then it turned into marital disharmony, depression, or addiction.

IS THERE ANY HOPE?

Surrounded by death and dryness on every side, the prophet is asked a very important question: “Can these bones live?” (v. 3). When an area of your life has seemingly died, this is a question you will have to confront. Is there any hope? Is it still possible for resurrection to come?

The temptation, of course, is to simply say, “It’s over. Once something has died, there’s no hope it will ever return to life.” Despite being a man of faith, even Ezekiel had little confidence this story was going to have a happy ending. Instead of boldly proclaiming that the dry bones would surely live, all he can muster is the uncertain response, “O LORD God, You know” (v. 3).

At this point in the story, God gets Ezekiel involved in the recovery plan, instructing him to “prophesy to these bones” and tell them to “hear the word of the LORD” (v. 4). If you’re ever going to experience the resurrection of a dead area of your life, it’s unlikely God will allow you to remain a passive bystander. No, He will give you an assignment, something you can *do* to spark the turnaround.

**“The Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you.”
—Romans 8:11**

**“Hear the word of the LORD!”
—Ezekiel 37:4**

Ezekiel is told to speak to the troublesome circumstances, commanding them to heed God's Word. That's a pretty good starting place for us as well. We must start speaking life-giving words, telling the dead things in our lives to line up with the Word of God.

THE BONES BEGIN TO RATTLE

When Ezekiel obeyed the Lord and prophesied, "there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling" (v. 7). It can be a scary thing when our dead things begin to rattle, shake, and make noises! But this is often what happens when God begins to restore dead things to life. Rather than bring us fear, these should be signs of hope.

Next, "the bones came together, bone to bone" (v. 7). There's power in agreement and relationship (Matthew 18:19–20). God's plan is to bring us together, but if the devil can keep us separated and isolated, our dryness and defeat will continue unabated.

Finally, the Spirit of God breathed on these dead bones, bringing them back to life. The Israelites had said, "Our bones are dry, our hope is lost" (v. 11), but the Lord brought them resurrection and pointed them to a hope-filled future.

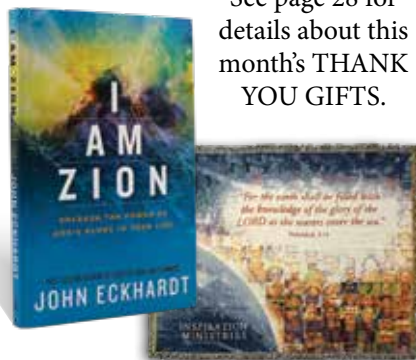
Notice that this is not a self-help story. Dead bones don't come back to life by trying harder.

Something *supernatural* must happen in order to bring dead things back to life.

This great story is about resurrection and hope, but it's also about *purpose*. Although the bones had been lifeless and nonfunctional for a long time before, they "stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army" (v. 10). You see, this passage is not just about God resurrecting your hopes and dreams, so you can feel good about your life. It's about rising up to fulfill your purpose in His mighty army.

Can you hear the Spirit beginning to breathe on you today? It's not too late for a resurrection of joy, happiness, and purpose. Remember, Christ is risen! And because of His resurrection power, you too can walk in the power of the Holy Spirit and experience incredible turnarounds in your life. Your resurrection has come!

David



See page 28 for details about this month's THANK YOU GIFTS.



What is the Greatest Miracle?

Souls Saved from a Godless Eternity!

We're well on our way to our goal of FIVE MILLION salvations in 2024 because of YOU! But the difference you are making is both now and forever.



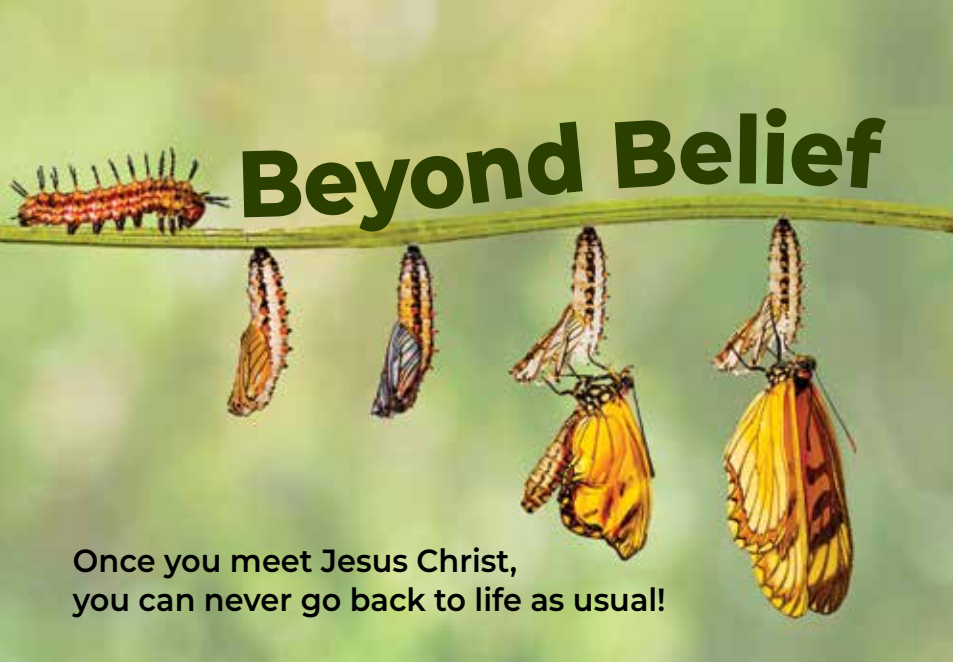
"To say that I was lost would be an understatement. I sowed my seed and contacted Inspiration Ministries with my first prayer request—to give me strength and help me along my walk with God. A year later, God had completely turned my life around! Jesus revealed Himself to my heart, and I now trust Him completely as my Lord and Savior! I thank you, and I praise God and Jesus Christ for giving me new life and new hope and restoring my heart and joy!"—Ekaterina K., VA

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Beyond Belief

Once you meet Jesus Christ, you can never go back to life as usual!

If you were a high-powered Washington attorney, the right-hand man to the President of the United States, sentenced to prison for committing a felony crime—and then had a genuine salvation experience in the midst of the chaos surrounding your personal life—what would you do after the dust had settled?

That was the question Charles Colson faced after spending seven months in prison in the wake of the Watergate incident. Released in January 1975, Colson was at a crossroads. Though he had lost his license to practice law in Washington, there would have no doubt been many opportunities for someone with his training and background in government. He had experienced God's forgiveness

for his sins and paid his debt to society. It would have been understandable if he had lived a quiet life from that point forward, except for one thing...

During his seven months of incarceration, Colson became burdened about the condition of prisoners in the penal system in America. He saw injustices and saw few efforts at rehabilitation and little exposure to the Christian Gospel that had changed his own life. In going through some of his late father's papers, he discovered that his father had an interest in prison reform. Colson knew that God was calling him to make a difference.

Many Christians know the rest of Charles Colson's story. He founded Prison Fellowship,

an organization that reaches into prisons to provide teaching, encouragement, and rehabilitation to prisoners in the name of Jesus Christ. Thousands of churches participate in the ministry's Angel Tree program each year through which Christmas gifts are provided for prisoners' families. Colson went on to change the landscape of evangelical Christianity through his books, his speaking, and making the Christian worldview a topic to be reckoned with in America's civic, academic, and political venues through another of his organizations.

Did Charles Colson have to begin a second career in ministry for Christ once he was saved and forgiven? No—none of us does. On the other hand, I wonder if Charles Colson (and many others like him) is not a modern-day equivalent of the apostle Paul. Do you remember what Paul said about his own life after coming to know Christ? He never boasted about all he accomplished for the Lord for this reason: *“For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me*

if I do not preach the gospel!” (1 Corinthians 9:16).

What did Paul mean by “necessity”? I think he meant what every serious Christian I have ever met feels about their relationship with Christ: Salvation is just the beginning! Salvation is a door we walk through by faith by which we enter the Kingdom of God—a whole new world. We are citizens of a new domain with new values, new priorities, new activities, new purposes, new convictions—and new responsibilities. It was never intended that we should meet Jesus Christ and then go back to life as usual.

Your mission may not include the call to evangelize the entire Mediterranean region like Paul or to start organizations and write books like Charles Colson. But every Christian ought to feel the same necessity that those men felt. When we come to realize what Jesus Christ has done for us and grasp the true condition of our fallen world, we will say with Paul, “Woe is me if I don't do that thing for which God has called and equipped me for Christ's sake!” ❖



David Jeremiah is the senior pastor of Shadow Mountain Community Church in El Cajon, California, and the founder and host of **Turning Point**. View **Turning Point** on Inspiration TV, Sundays at 10:00 a.m. ET.

Article provided by Turning Point Ministries, © 2023.

Dakota's Courage

In the midst of a family's darkness,
the light of Jesus broke through.



Return visit in 2023
giving praise to God
for His healing.

Where do you go when your world crashes in? Who lifts you up when you feel you have nothing left?

John, a longtime ministry partner, knows exactly where he would turn. In 2022, he received a call from his son that completely devastated his life: “Dad, go to the hospital. Dakota has been hurt. They don’t think she’s going to make it.”

In desperation, John called Catherine at Inspiration Ministries. They had prayed together often—and had seen the windows of Heaven open. On this day, John desperately needed to see Jesus rescue his baby girl.

For the next five months, John spent most nights in his daughter’s hospital room. He prayed regularly with Inspiration Ministries, begged his praying Facebook friends to storm Heaven—and celebrated both God’s work and his daughter’s courageous spirit every day.



In the midst of those dark days, the light of Christ broke through to Dakota’s heart. “I don’t remember much about the accident. I just remember coming out of the coma. Everything was kind of fuzzy, and I kept asking ‘what happened?’ Someone handed me a picture of the accident scene, and the cross formed by two burned trees next to the ATV leaped out at me. I knew God was

with me,” explained Dakota.

Her father still marvels at the changes the accident brought to his daughter. “My wild child became someone who truly loves God,” said John. “Dakota’s courage and tenacity awe all who know her. They said she wouldn’t live, then she wouldn’t walk. Everyone else gave up, but Dakota didn’t. She proves *you can do all things through God.*”

It is that awareness of God that strengthens Dakota for the tough road of recovery she now walks. Dakota has endured 18 surgeries, is relearning the basics of life, and dealing with the loss of friends who aren’t interested in a pal who prefers God to drugs and alcohol. But her journey has given her great treasures too: sobriety, peace with God, and deeper connections to others, including her five-year-old son. With quiet determination she said, “God put me on this earth to have a purpose. I don’t know it yet, but if I keep a good mindset, God will show me.”

While God’s work in Dakota’s life is just beginning to become obvious to her, she’s reaping the harvest sown into her heart by her father’s faith. Delivered from his

own addiction over 30 years ago, John knows God is trustworthy and credits Inspiration Ministries with helping him learn this life-changing truth years ago:

Payroll was due the next day. I had a full crew depending on me to pay them, and I knew I couldn’t do it. I turned on the TV and heard the preacher say, “If the money in your pocket won’t pay the bills, it must be a seed. Sow it in God’s Kingdom, and He’ll provide the harvest you need.” That made sense to me, and I sowed my seed. The very next day, a client whose account had been written off as delinquent called. “John, come pick up this check before I change my mind,” he said. I did, and payroll was covered!

Through his amazing testimony, John looks to encourage others who are also crushed and heart-broken: “We’re called to witness God’s glory, and that’s why we want to share our story. Inspiration Ministries has been there for us through the years—helping us see God in the hard times. We want others to see Him too.” ❖

What is YOUR testimony of God’s faithfulness?

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SABINA K.

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Open Your Eyes of Faith!



by Ben Cerullo

Are your natural circumstances blinding you today? Do you feel like you're constantly surrounded by difficulties and disappointment? Maybe the enemy's armies seem to have an overwhelming advantage over you. Have you asked God to help you see the victory?

As we celebrate the resurrection victory of Jesus this month, I think it's a good time to also read the story of Gehazi, a servant of Elisha in the book of 2 Kings 6:11–19 (NASB). The king of Aram was intent on capturing Elisha, so he sent *"horses and chariots and a substantial army"* to surround the city where the prophet Elisha dwelt (v. 14).

Elisha's servant was terrified by the spectacle of this mighty force. *"This is hopeless, my master!"* he said in alarm. *"What are we to do?"* (v. 15).

Based on human understanding, it was a perfectly logical question. They were clearly outnumbered. Yet Elisha saw an entirely different picture—made possible by his faith-filled perspective. *"Do not be afraid,"* he told his servant, *"for those who are with us are greater than those who are with them"* (v. 16). Then Elisha looked to God and prayed:

"LORD, please, open his eyes that he may see."—2 Kings 6:17

"LORD, please, open his eyes that he may see." And the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha (v. 17).

Can you imagine this moment? God opened the servant's eyes so that he could see the true reality of His protection and blessings... so he could be encouraged in that overwhelming situation. God knew that unless Gehazi had a new perspective of victory and faith, he would allow fear and hopelessness to take root in his heart.

God wants to give you that same perspective as well. Remember, only the Spirit of God and the Word of God can open the eyes of faith. God wants you to see the all-surpassing greatness of His power available on your behalf. He wants to open your spiritual eyes, so you can trust Him in every situation.

When you look through the eyes of faith, God is always bigger than your problems. While the world says, "Seeing is believing," the Bible says just the opposite. We must make a choice to believe God's Word and reject the lies of the enemy. Then—and only then—will our eyes of faith see what is going on in the spiritual realm.

That's why Jesus pointed out

to those standing at Lazarus' gravesite: *"Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?"* (John 11:40 NASB). Yes, in God's Kingdom, BELIEVING always precedes SEEING.

Paul prayed a powerful prayer for the Ephesian Christians—a prayer I encourage you to pray for yourself and your loved ones:

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling...and what is the boundless greatness of His power toward us who believe (Ephesians 1:18–19 NASB).

There's an important principle here, for in order for faith to arise in your life, you need to have the eyes of your heart enlightened to God's calling and *"the boundless greatness of His power."*

When your spiritual eyes are opened, you will recognize that you're not alone. God is with you, and He has a massive spiritual arsenal at your disposal. You are His child, and His Spirit is alive within you. Now is the time to allow faith to rise up within you, enabling you to advance God's Kingdom and overthrow the power of the enemy.

Stand strong! Believe God's Word, and you will see His glory manifested in your life. ❖



ARE YOU A LIFE GIVER?

Is there anything more exciting and hope-filled than *new life*? Hearts melt when babies come into the world. Green sprouts popping through the melting snow bring joy. Our spirits revive with every reminder of life's beauty.

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You have granted me life and lovingkindness; and Your care has preserved my spirit (Job 10:12).

And that's the same hope and joy we want to bring to millions who don't know Him. Will you help us invite them to abundant, eternal life in Christ?

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Priorities

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 1 KINGS 6

Solomon faithfully built the temple to the exacting plans provided by his father, David. The process took seven years and seemed to demonstrate his commitment to seek first the things of God. However, the Bible also tells us that Solomon spent twice as long building his own house—13 years.

Reading these accounts back to back provides insights into Solomon's priorities. He made sure God's house was magnificent but invested even more time, energy, and resources into building his *own* house.

At the time, there may not have been any indication that Solomon was changing. But, during the coming years, he changed in dramatic ways. The man who once sought God and wanted more of His wisdom became dominated by carnal desires. A man with 700 wives and 300 concubines, he allowed his wives to turn his heart away from God (1 Kings 11:3). He even worshiped idols.

Do we see evidence of this change as he built his own house? Was he placing a higher priority on his own interests than on the things of God?

All of us demonstrate *our* priorities by what we do with our time, talents, and treasures and what we do with the opportunities we have been given. God looks at our choices to see what really is important to us.

What messages are you sending through your words and deeds? And what are the most important priorities in *your* life?

Make and evaluate a list of how you spend your time and your treasures.

In the eleventh year... the house was finished in all its parts and in accordance with all its plans. So he was seven years in building it.

1 Kings 6:38 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, You are more important to me than anything else. I seek first Your Kingdom. I dedicate my life to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

May your hearts be fully committed to the LORD our God, to live by his decrees and obey his commands.

1 Kings 8:61 NIV

PRAYER:

Father, I am committed to You. Help me live according to Your Word. Thank You for answering my prayers and meeting my needs. In Jesus' name, amen.

Examine your heart and your attitude for Christlikeness.

Answered Prayers

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 1 KINGS 8

Solomon asked God to make the temple a special place where prayers were answered. God reassured him that the temple was an important place in the life of His people. But praying from the temple itself was not enough. The Bible demonstrates that God has different requirements and priorities. The condition of our hearts is even more important.

God reminds His people that He can be trusted and that He delights to answer our prayers. But God does not make empty promises. We need to obey Him and do our part if we want His blessings. He continually examines our hearts, looking for the right attitudes. Are you fully committed to Him and living by His decrees?

The Bible assures us that He wants to answer our prayers. But just as He spoke to Solomon, He looks for people who have committed their hearts fully to Him, who seek Him and obey His Word. It is not enough to make emotional promises. God looks at our hearts and lives to see if we are being faithful.

The Bible assures us that God is ready to answer your prayers and meet your needs. But remember that He looks at your heart. Are you fully committed to Him? Are you living according to His principles and applying them in your daily life? Are you being faithful to His call?

Rewarded Living

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PSALM 58

Dmitri Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 7*, "Leningrad," was performed for the first time in August 1942 during World War II. More than just a piece of music, this symphony symbolized hope for all who fought against Nazi Germany, not just in Russia but also in the United States, where it was performed to enormous acclaim. Shostakovich himself was featured on the cover of *Time Magazine*.

Shostakovich wrote this symphony while the invading Nazi army besieged his native Leningrad. While serving as a fireman for the civil defense, he dedicated much of his free time to writing this symphony. It became music that influenced the outcome of the war, encouraging beleaguered people everywhere.

Shostakovich later told of another, surprising inspiration for this music: "I began writing it having been deeply moved by the Psalms of David." When he read the Psalms, Shostakovich took comfort in the fact that God "doesn't forget the cries of victims." He even requested that the Psalms be read before every performance of this symphony.

You may feel that ungodly people have an advantage and that defeat is inevitable. But God knows what you are going through. Continue to do His will, trust Him, and live for Him. He is Judge and sovereign over the whole earth! You can be confident that He will protect you and bring you victory. Trust Him today!

Which Psalms bring you the most comfort for deliverance?

The godly will rejoice when they see injustice avenged... Then at last everyone will say, "There truly is a reward for those who live for God; surely there is a God who judges justly here on earth."

Psalms 58:10–11 NLT

PRAYER:

Father, thank You that I can trust You. Thank You for Your peace and protection. I declare victory in Jesus' name. In His name, amen.

The path of the righteous is like the light of dawn that shines brighter and brighter until the full day.

Proverbs 4:18 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for giving me peace. Thank You for taking away my burdens. Open doors that I might share this Good News. In Jesus' name, amen.

How do you plan to choose to walk in light instead of darkness today?

Dawn of a New Day

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PROVERBS 4

As he was writing his first symphony, Russian composer Dmitri Shostakovich described feeling gloomy and uncertain. Wanting to “cry out in terror,” he felt suffocated by darkness. Listening to this music, we can sense these emotions even today.

Like many who lived in Russia in those days, Shostakovich struggled with fear and doubt. He felt like he was living in a prison, overwhelmed with fear for himself and his children.

In similar ways, people all around us live in fear and worry. Many are burdened by financial or health problems or challenges in their families.

Christians are not immune from pressures, struggles, and fear. We make mistakes and face challenges and problems. But the Bible reminds us that God can change everything. We become new creatures in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). We can draw on the power of the Spirit to have peace and joy, even amid the darkest of times. God can give us a path that “*is like the light of dawn.*” He can give us direction, hope, and peace.

We also have the joy of sharing the Good News with others. Help them realize that there is hope. There is an answer. The answer is in Jesus and in trusting our lives to Him.

Today, renew your faith in Jesus. Don't wallow in fear or give in to darkness. Celebrate the hope you have in Christ. And dedicate yourself to bringing light to the lost.

The Wrong Decisions

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 1 KINGS 12

Rehoboam's father, Solomon, had much to say in the proverbs he wrote about making decisions. But Rehoboam did not apply his father's advice. When facing the first big test after becoming king, he made a series of wrong decisions.

First, there is no indication that Rehoboam prayed about the matter or asked God for His direction. He rejected the advice of men with experience and perspective and did not consider studying the record of history. He made clear that he did not care about the impact of his decision on his country or other people. He simply did what seemed best at the moment for *himself*.

His mistakes remind us why it is important to be careful to whom we turn for advice and to whom we listen. There is much we can learn from studying the actions of other people, but if we seek advice, we should look to mature believers. If we want God's help in making the right decisions, we need to base our decisions on His Word, commit the questions we face to God, and seek His guidance.

Committing every decision to God, we need to apply the advice of Solomon and “*trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding*” (Proverbs 3:5–6).

What decisions do you face today? Learn from the mistakes of Rehoboam. Trust God. Seek Him. Obey His Word. Stay humble.

What decisions do you need to take to God today?

All the assembly of Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam, saying, “Your father made our yoke hard, lighten the hard labor imposed by your father and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you.”

1 Kings 12:3–4 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I commit these matters to You: _____. Give me wisdom. Help me know the right thing and have the courage to do it. In Jesus' name, amen.

At that time Abijah the son of Jeroboam became sick. And Jeroboam said to his wife, "Arise now, and disguise yourself...go to Shiloh. Behold, Ahijah the prophet is there... He will tell you what will happen to the boy."

1 Kings 14:1–3 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, search my heart and reveal anything that displeases You. Forgive my sins. I humble myself before You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Compose a prayer asking God to reveal and forgive your sins.

Trying to Fool God

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 1 KINGS 14

After leading Israel's northern tribes in rebellion and establishing a separate kingdom, Jeroboam descended into a life of sin. But when his son became sick, he decided to seek God. But instead of repenting, he decided to try to fool Him.

At his request, his wife disguised herself and approached the prophet, Ahijah. But having been warned by God, the prophet told her He knew her husband's plan. She was to tell Jeroboam that, because of his sin, his family would experience calamity.

Jeroboam thought he could fool God but never considered that he would reap what he had sown. God knew the condition of his heart and his secret thoughts. If Jeroboam wanted God's help, he needed to repent, humble himself, seek forgiveness, and obey His Word. But Jeroboam was not willing to change and suffered the consequences of his sins.

Throughout history, many people have made the same mistakes. They think they can ignore and even try to fool God. Filled with pride, they are not willing to humble themselves. They don't consider the eternal consequences of their actions or the condition of their hearts.

Remember, *"Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart"* (1 Samuel 16:7). Don't make the mistake of trying to fool God. He knows every thought and every plan. Make sure your heart is right in His sight.

Compromise

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 1 KINGS 16

Phoenicians are remembered as the inventors of a uniform alphabet and masters of the sea. This explosion of influence took place around the twelfth century BC following the decline of some other major civilizations. Over the next several centuries, they built a commercial empire and explored much of the known world.

These shrewd entrepreneurs gained influence in part because they controlled important raw materials, particularly cedar wood. We read about them in the Bible through their major cities, including Tyre and Sidon.

Recognizing their skills, King David became a friend to Hiram, king of Tyre, who provided materials and talent for the construction of the Temple and other buildings. Solomon used Tyre's seafaring prowess on voyages of exploration, commerce, and development.

Hiram's dynasty ended late in the ninth century BC when Ethbaal revolted and assumed the throne. Ethbaal retained good relations with Israel. His daughter Jezebel married Ahab, the king of Israel. But the result was a disaster for God's people, as Ahab abandoned the worship of God and embraced Phoenician gods.

We can learn from the Phoenicians. Others may possess skills that can help us and resources that can empower us. But we must be on guard and not allow them to weaken our faith. This can happen to anyone, even you.

Make sure you stay focused on God's Word. Be on guard and don't give in to compromise.

What happens when you've given in to the temptation to compromise?

It came about, as though it had been a trivial thing...that he married Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went to serve Baal and worshiped him.

1 Kings 16:31 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, show me if there is any compromise in my heart. I seek first Your Kingdom. May I please You. In Jesus' name, amen.

“Hide by the Brook Cherith...I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.” [...] The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening; and he drank from the brook.

1 Kings 17:3–6 NKJV

PRAYER:

Father, help me obey You and do what You want to do. I surrender my will to You. Thank You for guiding and directing me. In Jesus' name, amen.

When has God provided for you in an unexpected way?

Fed by Ravens

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 1 KINGS 17

How would Elijah have reacted when God told him ravens would feed him? This might have seemed unexpected. We need to realize that ravens are scavengers, feeding on insects, worms, young birds, frogs, and other small animals. They even eat dead animals and rubbish. In addition, every Jew knew that ravens were unclean, an “*abomination*” that could not be eaten (Leviticus 11:13–15).

Yet God said it was these unclean birds that would feed Elijah! This tested the degree to which he trusted God. He needed to have faith in God, surrender his will, and be willing to do whatever God wanted him to do, to the point of being fed by ravens.

God might move in our lives in similar ways. He might call us to do something that may not make sense. He might ask us to go somewhere or do something that makes us uncomfortable. He may lead us on a path that seems the opposite of our natural inclinations.

But in every situation, we need to surrender our lives to Him. Remember, Elijah trusted God and was faithful to obey Him. And he allowed God to use ravens to take care of him.

As you surrender your life to God, He might use you in surprising ways. He can bring you to a new level of blessing, maturity, and ministry. Commit your life anew to Him! Follow Him wherever He leads.

Giving in to Fear

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 1 KINGS 18

Obadiah had been a faithful servant, managing the household of King Ahab. Even though Ahab had been an evil king, Obadiah had remained faithful to God. While Ahab did more evil than all before him, Obadiah “*feared the Lord greatly*” (v. 3). And when Queen Jezebel sought to destroy God’s prophets, Obadiah hid many of them. He seemed like a man whose faith could not be shaken.

But Obadiah reacted differently when Elijah asked him to tell Ahab Elijah’s location. Instead of demonstrating courage and faith, Obadiah reacted with fear. Instead of trusting God, Obadiah imagined that if he delivered this message, he would be killed.

When Obadiah finally obeyed the prophet, there were no negative consequences. Obadiah’s life could have been much simpler if he had trusted God and not given in to worry and fear.

How often do we find ourselves doing the same things, imagining the worst, creating uncertainty, fear, and turmoil? In the process, we work ourselves into a state of turmoil over nothing.

Remember to trust God in every situation you face. If you have questions, simply seek Him. Ask for His guidance. The Bible promises that as you are faithful and trust Him, He will deliver you from fear and worry and guide you. As you commit your ways to Him, acknowledge Him and don’t rely on your own understanding. If you seek Him, He promises to direct your steps (Proverbs 3:5–6).

Has God ever told you to do something that you were afraid to do?

“What sin have I committed, that you are giving your servant into the hand of Ahab to put me to death?”

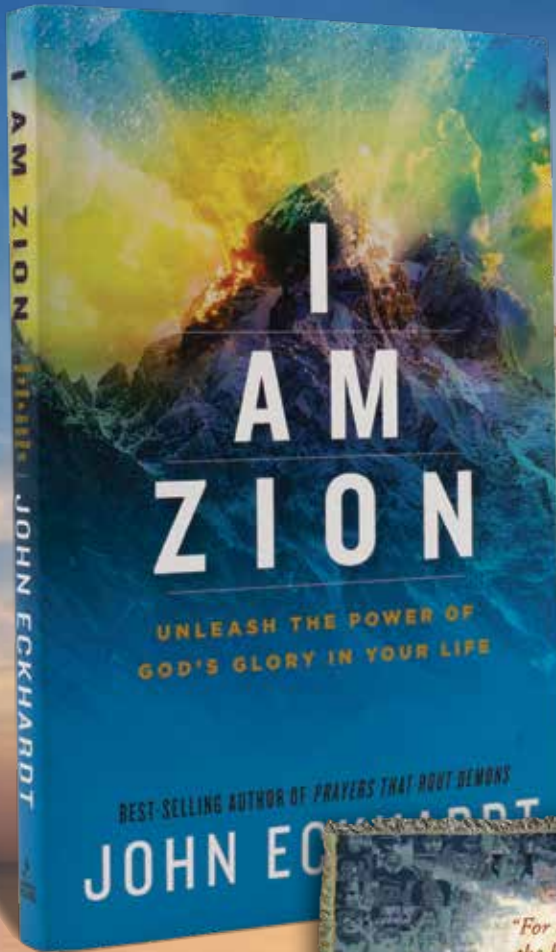
1 Kings 18:9 NASB

PRAYER:

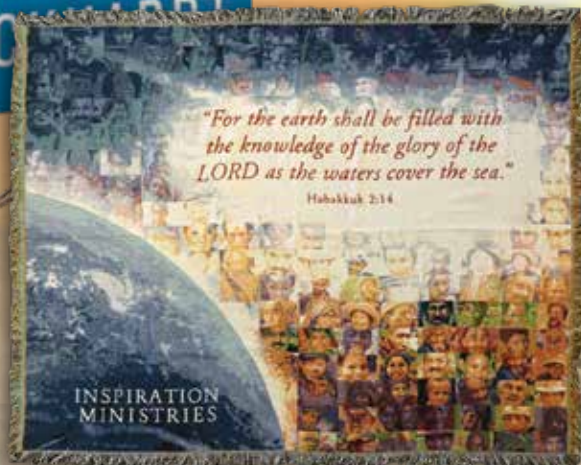
Father, I commit these situations to You: _____. Guide me to make the right decisions. I trust You. Deliver me from fear and worry. In Jesus' name, amen.

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“Have you noticed how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself, I will not bring this disaster in his day.”

1 Kings 21:29 NIV

PRAYER:

Father, forgive me for being prideful. I humble myself before You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

In what ways have you been harboring pridefulness?

The Power of Humility

TODAY’S BIBLE READING: 1 KINGS 21

The Bible says Ahab did more evil than any king before him (1 Kings 16:30). Because of his sins, he clearly deserved to receive judgment. Yet God declared He would not bring “*disaster*” on Ahab. Why? Because he “*humbled himself*.”

This story demonstrates that people can change. Even though Ahab had done much evil, he repented.

This also demonstrates the importance of humility. The Bible says God hates pride (Proverbs 8:13), and “*those who humble themselves will be exalted*” (Matthew 23:12). God so values humility that even wicked Ahab received mercy when he humbled himself.

As much as He hates pride, God stands ready to forgive us if we *humble* ourselves and *repent*. As James wrote, God “*opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble*” (James 4:6).

We also need to be careful about being judgmental ourselves. Are there people whom you have condemned in your heart, whom you believe God could *not* forgive? Have you felt these people are so evil that they can never be redeemed? Thinking about your own life, do you feel God cannot forgive you for mistakes you have made? For things *you* have thought?

The story of Ahab should inspire us to realize God can save and restore all who truly humble themselves. It is *never* too late. We should always seek to stay humble and remain on guard against the poisoning influence of pride.

Whose River?

TODAY’S BIBLE READING: 2 KINGS 5

As commander of Syria’s armies, Naaman knew how to lead troops. He expected obedience and wanted others to do things his way. Facing leprosy, he displayed the same attitude. He wanted to do things his way.

When he heard Elijah’s proposal as a solution, Naaman was surprised and even angry. It seemed like a simple command: “*Go and wash in the Jordan seven times*.” Elijah promised that if he obeyed, he would be healed.

But Naaman became furious because of the choice of rivers. He felt the rivers of Damascus were better than those in Israel. He wanted to *choose* the river. He wanted a river that was familiar to him and part of his tradition.

Eventually, Naaman obeyed. When he did, he was healed. This was because he did things God’s way and washed in *His* river.

Like Naaman, we can want to choose the rivers for our own lives. We find it easier to follow our traditions or lifestyles and do things that seem more familiar.

But God wants us to learn to do things *His* way. This can be challenging. We may resist Him and insist on doing things that make sense to us. But the real key to blessing is obedience and trust. Realize that He pours out blessings on those who obey Him *unconditionally* and walk by faith!

What happens when you insist on doing things your way?

“Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you” . . . But Naaman became furious . . . “Are not . . . the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?”

2 Kings 5:10–12

PRAYER:

Father, forgive me for doing things my way. Help me obey You. I want to follow You. Thank You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Naaman was furious... "Behold, I thought, 'He will certainly...call on the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the site and cure the leprosy.'" [...] He went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times... and his flesh was restored.

2 Kings 5:11, 14 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I commit these needs to You: _____. I lay aside my prejudices and preconceived ideas. I will obey and trust You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Has God ever asked you to do something you felt was unusual?

Simple Faith

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 2 KINGS 5

The Bible describes Naaman as a mighty warrior. But after developing leprosy, he must have felt *helpless*. Desperate for a cure, he followed the recommendation of his wife's servant and turned to Elisha. But this warrior became angry when the prophet told him to wash in the Jordan River seven times. It didn't matter that Elisha promised that, if he obeyed, he would be clean.

Naaman seemed to think Elisha would do something *dramatic*, so the idea of dipping in the Jordan made *no sense* to him. But his servants argued, "*If the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it?*" (v. 13). Why would he not follow the simple command to wash and be clean? When Naaman obeyed, he was healed *instantly*.

Just like Naaman, we can find it hard *simply* to *obey* and *trust* God and act on faith. How natural it can seem to be skeptical and *doubt* that His Word is true. It can seem unrealistic to believe that we just need to obey Him and put His Word into action. But the Bible tells us that He *rewards* those who have this kind of childlike faith.

Today, turn to God with the problems you face with childlike simplicity. Don't argue with Him or hold back. Trust in Him *completely*. Believe His Word and step out in faith. Commit your needs to Him, ready to receive His mighty power.

Spiritually in Tune

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 2 KINGS 6

When his nation was at war with Israel, the king of Aram was determined to find a strategy that would bring victory. He knew that to be victorious, he needed to make confidential plans, so his armies could have the maximum surprise and impact.

Meeting privately with his servants, he decided to establish his camp in a particular location. But when Aram arrived, the Israelite army *already* was there. The king was furious and demanded that his servants explain what had happened. Israel's reaction was so precise that he felt one of his servants must have been a spy.

But one servant knew the real reason: Israel had Elisha, a prophet who was in tune with God's Spirit. He knew the words the Aramean king spoke even in private. In fact, as soon as the king decided, Elisha "*sent word to the king of Israel,*" telling him what would happen (v. 9).

The king of Aram learned important lessons. God is not limited by space or time. He knows every secret and every private thought. And He can reveal these secrets to His servants.

Today, remember that God knows your heart and mind and the things you do in secret. But He also knows the secret plans of governments and armies, politicians, and businesses. He knows what will happen today and tomorrow. You can call on Him for the wisdom you need.

What secret are you harboring even from God?

One of his servants said, "No, my lord, the king; but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom."

2 Kings 6:12 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, here are the decisions I need to make: _____. I seek Your wisdom and discernment. Help me be in tune with Your Spirit. In Jesus' name, amen.

Elisha prayed and said, "LORD, please, open his eyes that he may see."

And the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

2 Kings 6:17 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, give me Your insights into these events: _____. Open my eyes. Help me see clearly. In Jesus' name, amen.

What situation do you need God's clarity for right now?

Clear Vision

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 2 KINGS 6

For years, Benjamin Franklin was forced to take two pairs of glasses wherever he went—one to see close objects and a second to see distant objects. This solution was acceptable but awkward. Then one day in 1785, Franklin announced that he had solved this problem: two lenses combined in one frame.

He asked his optician to cut the lenses of his spectacles in half horizontally and fit these half-lenses in a single set of frames. Franklin was thrilled with the results. "I have only to move my eyes up or down, as I want to see distinctly far or near." He called his invention "double spectacles," but they would come to be known as bifocals.

The problem Franklin faced parallels the problems many people have seeing the world with clarity. All of us need clear perspectives on the things going on around us, in the world, and in our spiritual lives. That is why we need God. His vision is 20/20. He sees all the details of our daily lives but also has command of world events, both now and into the future. He can help us see clearly in every situation we face.

Today, ask God to help you have His perspective on the world and your life. Ask Him to help you see clearly. Fill your mind with His Word. And ask Him to give you *spiritual* discernment.

Opinions

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOB 2

Through the book of Job, we learn much about Job himself. We learn about his background, his relationship with God, the ways he was tested, and all he learned. We also learn much about God Himself.

But central to this book are the contributions of Job's friends, each of whom interacted with Job in personal ways. We read their individual perspectives on life and their own explanations for the cause of Job's problems and what they believed he should do.

Their exchanges remind us of people we encounter in our daily lives, the words we hear in the media, and debates about politics. We hear gossip, rumors, and how they develop. The opinions of these friends symbolize theological arguments and the various perspectives that develop about the Bible and the nature of our faith.

Ultimately, the observations of these friends remind us of how easy it can be to develop opinions and justify our conclusions. But they also remind us why it is so important to know God's Word, be sure about His principles, commit every situation to Him, and humbly seek His definitive perspective.

Remember that it can be easy to have opinions and develop conclusions that make sense to you. But as the end of the book of Job reminds us, the key is remembering the sovereignty of God. His perspective is always right. His views are the only ones that really matter.

How are you seeking God's wisdom daily?

When Job's three friends heard of all this evil that had come upon him, they came each from his own place...They made an appointment together to come to show him sympathy and comfort him.

Job 2:11 ESV

PRAYER:

Father, I seek Your perspective on the Word, the world, and life. Give me Your wisdom. In Jesus' name, amen.

Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Proverbs 16:18

Fame and Pride

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PROVERBS 16

“Love of fame is the last thing even learned men can bear to be parted from.” These are the observations of Roman historian Tacitus, the results of his extensive studies of history.

In our time, we see how the drive for fame can be addictive. We see this among politicians and entertainers, authors and athletes, and even among Christians. It can be hard to be content with just a *little* fame.

The Bible warns us how easily we can be infected by pride, the desire for fame, and a consuming obsession with more attention. We may not recognize it, but there is a price to be paid for this kind of pride. The Bible says it leads to destruction.

This quest for fame can be inspired by excessive concerns for our appearance. But the Bible warns that this kind of excessive concern can lead to a loss of perspective (Ezekiel 16:14–15).

But the Bible reminds us there is a *healthy* kind of fame that *comes from God* and accomplishes His purposes. This is what happened as David's fame spread everywhere (1 Chronicles 14:17). This happened to Solomon as the Queen of Sheba heard of his fame (1 Kings 10:1). This happened with Pharaoh as God spared him in order to spread His fame throughout the earth (Exodus 9:16).

Seek to stay humble before God. Worship Him. And always give Him glory.

Compose a prayer asking God to remind you to do things for His glory.

Misplaced Confidence

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOB 5

Job's friends were confident, sure they knew the reasons for Job's problems. Eliphaz, for example, emphatically declared they had investigated his condition and concluded that Job must have started trouble for himself. Eliphaz counseled Job to seek God, humble himself, and repent of pride.

Ultimately, God revealed His anger toward Job's friends. He told Eliphaz that His “*wrath*” was kindled against them “*because you have not spoken of Me what is trustworthy, as My servant Job has*” (Job 42:7–8). The Hebrew words here suggest they did not have a firm understanding. Their conclusions were wrong.

Eliphaz suggested that Job was foolish. However, God declared it was Eliphaz and his friends whose comments were folly. The Hebrew word here suggests they had committed a crime—something disgraceful and morally wicked! They were *foolish* to think so highly of their own opinions. They were wrong to judge Job and be so confident about their own subjective reactions.

How easily we can criticize Job's friends for their hasty conclusions. But we can find ourselves acting like them.

Today, be careful before you judge others. Remember to seek God for His wisdom. Humble yourself before Him. Submit your thoughts to Him. Fill your mind with His Word. Trust Him. Remember the words of Jesus: Remove the “*log*” in your own eyes before taking the “*speck*” out of others' eyes (Matthew 7:1–5).

Make a list of people whom you have judged and ask for their forgiveness.

Behold this; we have investigated it, and so it is. Hear it, and know for yourself.

Job 5:27 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, forgive me for being prideful. I humble myself before You. Give me Your thoughts. Help me to serve You and please You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Oh, that my request might come to pass, and that God would grant my hope!

Job 6:8 NASB

Trust God

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOB 6

As he began to grow deaf, composer Ludwig Van Beethoven reacted with strong emotions. He recalled how he once possessed a perfect sense of hearing but had been forced to live in silence. He felt hopeless.

Beethoven's reaction reminds us of Job. Like Job, Beethoven cursed God for the trials he was experiencing. He cried out to God, knowing He looked down on his inmost soul. Yet despite his questions, he continued to believe in God.

In the end, Job realized how wrong he had been, how little he understood, and how much he needed to trust God. He had heard so much about Him, *"But now my eye sees You; therefore I retract, and I repent sitting on dust and ashes"* (Job 42:5-6).

Beethoven was still able to accomplish great things. Instead of giving in to hopelessness and defeat, he broke new ground and impacted the course of history with his compositions. He had proven the Bible to be true: *"Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial"* (James 1:12).

If Beethoven and Job could speak to us, they might remind us that we, too, can trust God. We need to stay humble before Him and persevere in the face of trials.

Today, commit every situation you face to God. Be honest with Him and let Him know your concerns and frustrations. But always remember the blessings of perseverance, and always trust God.

What challenges are you currently trying to persevere through?

Overcoming Weariness

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOB 7

Job felt hopeless; nothing made sense. He felt like he was drudging through his days like an unhappy laborer, just going through the motions.

Nothing ever seemed to change: *"When I lie down, I say, 'When shall I arise?'"* Then, he tossed all night. His words remind us of Ecclesiastes. That life can seem pointless and meaningless. That nothing can seem to matter (Ecclesiastes 1:2-3).

This is how David felt when he wrote, *"I am weary with my sighing; every night I make my bed swim, I flood my couch with my tears"* (Psalm 6:6). On a similar occasion, he wrote, *"I am weary with my crying...my eyes fail while I wait for my God"* (Psalm 69:3).

The weight of life's challenges can make us weary. We can be overwhelmed by worries about work and family. We can be troubled and feel like giving up.

In moments like these, David turned to God. His cry? *"I shall be watching for You; my soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, in a dry and exhausted land where there is no water"* (Psalm 63:1).

If you feel weary, cry out to God about the troubles you face. Seek Him. Stand on His Word. Remember, the things of this world are passing away. Don't focus on the temporary things you can see but on the eternal things (2 Corinthians 4:18).

Compose a prayer for help with an exhausting situation.

As a hired worker who eagerly waits for his wages...and nights of trouble are apportioned to me. When I lie down, I say, "When shall I arise?" But the night continues, and I am continually tossing until dawn.

Job 7:2-4 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for bringing meaning to my life. Help me find joy in serving You and being faithful. I trust in You. In Jesus' name, amen.

If he would take his rod away from me and not let dread of him terrify me, then I would speak without fear of him, for I know I am not what I am thought to be.

Job 9:34–35 NRSVUE

PRAYER:

Father, I acknowledge You are my Creator. Thank You for the way You have made me. I trust in You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Know Yourself

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOB 9

After being struck by adversity, Job became obsessed with proving his own innocence. Yet it seemed impossible to defend himself. He asked how any person could be just before God (v. 2).

Job knew God was powerful but did not know *how* to interact with Him on a *personal* level: “*He passes by me, and I do not see Him*” (v. 11).

He felt helpless: “*Though I am innocent, I cannot answer Him.*” If God called, “*I do not believe that he would listen to my voice*” (v. 15–16). Job felt there was no way to answer God because “*there is no mediator between us,*” since the Holy Spirit had not yet been revealed (v. 33).

Like Job, it can be natural to feel defensive and justify ourselves. But it is important to start with a personal relationship with God, stay humble, and realize He knows us better than we know ourselves.

David knew God had searched him. He knew each word even before it was spoken. He saw his entire life and knew what was best. Job might have challenged God, but David humbled himself, crying out, “*Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts*” (Psalm 139:23).

What is *your* attitude toward the challenges you face? Recommit your life to serving God. Focus on worship and prayer. Have faith in Him. Trust Him.

Are you reacting more like Job or David in a challenging situation?

What We Deserve

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOB 11

Job's friend Zophar concluded that Job's problems resulted from talking too much. He believed everything would change if Job *listened*. Surely, Zophar concluded, Job must have committed many sins. He implied that Job could not possibly understand what happened to him. Job just needed to repent and turn from iniquity.

But Zophar was wrong. The Bible says Job had *not* sinned (Job 1:22; 2:10). God Himself had said that there had been no “*cause*” for his problems (Job 2:3).

Throughout our lives, we may experience problems because of sin, poor choices, or moral impurities. We do reap what we sow. But as Job's situation demonstrates, we also go through times of testing when God is teaching us. We need to *persevere*. We need to trust God even when we don't understand what is happening.

No one gets what he deserves. As Paul wrote, all of us “*have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:23).

When you face difficulties, be sure you search your heart and mind. Ask God to show you if you need to make changes or if He wants to speak to you. Ask Him to reveal any sin. But always remember God loves you. He is always ready to forgive and accept you. He is with you even when He might seem absent. Continue to stand on His Word and press forward by faith.

Write a prayer of confession and repentance.

Oh, that God would speak, and open His lips against you, that He would show you the secrets of wisdom! For they would double your prudence. Know therefore that God exacts from you less than your iniquity deserves.

Job 11:5–6

PRAYER:

Father, search my heart and mind. Reveal anything displeasing to You. Thank You for forgiving my sins. I trust my life to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Strength and sound wisdom are with Him. One who goes astray and one who leads astray belong to Him. He makes advisers walk barefoot and makes fools of judges.

Job 12:16–17 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, open my heart and mind to understand more of Your truth. Show me where I have been closed minded. Teach me. In Jesus' name, amen.

What happens when you rely on your perceptions instead of God's?

God's Dimensions

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOB 12

Each of Job's friends was convinced he had the only correct way of understanding what happened to him. Job, too, had his own conclusions. Yet going through his ordeal, he was forced to look at life in new ways.

Through the process, Job realized how easy it can be to develop explanations that make sense to us and support our own opinions. We can easily develop biases and prejudices that may not be true.

Grappling with life's complications, Job was driven to *dig deeper* and develop a deeper perspective. He *began* to understand more about God: He could make some articulate, or render them speechless. He could give wisdom, or bestow confusion and folly.

Studying the book of Job, we realize our human limits. Regardless of how confident we may feel, we must realize how *imperfect* we are! We need God's wisdom. We owe everything to Him. We have the greatest peace when we realize He is sovereign over our lives.

Through His grace, we can have a personal relationship with Him. We can know that Jesus died for our sins. We can be filled with His Spirit and experience His peace and direction.

Today, submit your life to God. Ask Him to give you discernment for His plans for you. Seek His wisdom and trust Him.

Deception

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOB 15

To Eliphaz, the facts were clear. Job had experienced serious problems. From Eliphaz's perspective, this inevitably meant that Job could *not* be as innocent as he claimed. Guilt must have motivated him. The Hebrew word suggests moral evil and perversity. He also must have been crafty.

Eliphaz claimed Job was condemned by his own words, and that he had elevated himself above God. He was like the wicked man who "*writhes in pain all his days*" (v. 20). It was a horrible existence. This had happened "*because he has reached out his hand against God*" (v. 25). Such men will "*not escape from darkness*" (v. 30).

Eliphaz concluded that Job *must* be a deceiver, even a fraud. But the Bible tells us Job's problems were *not* the result of sin. He genuinely was blameless. He was going through problems to test his character and prove his core values.

All of us face the reality that others will judge us and evaluate our behavior. The story of Eliphaz demonstrates that these opinions can be wrong even if they *appear* correct and even biblical.

Today, be *careful* before you criticize others. Remember Jesus' warning, "*Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned*" (Luke 6:37). Surrender your mind and heart to God. Let Him give you His wisdom and His discernment before you express judgments.

What happens when you judge others without seeking God's wisdom?

For your wrongdoing teaches your mouth, and you choose the language of the cunning.

Job 15:5 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I seek Your discernment about the people and issues I face. Guide me. Give me spiritual insights. I trust You! In Jesus' name, amen.

As they approached Jerusalem...He sent two of His disciples, and said to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there...untie it and bring it here."

Mark 11:1–2 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I surrender my time, talents, and treasures to You. Give me Your priorities. Help me accomplish Your call for me. In Jesus' name, amen.

What do you need to do to be ready to work for God?

Prepare and Fulfill

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: MARK 11

The crowds were excited. Learning that Jesus was about to enter Jerusalem, they welcomed Him, shouting, "*Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord!*" (v. 9).

This triumphal entry may seem spontaneous, but Jesus' actions demonstrate that everything unfolded exactly as He planned.

As Jesus and His disciples approached Jerusalem, He told them what was about to happen. He clarified His destiny and gave them marching orders (Mark 10:32–44). He told two disciples to bring a colt, where to find it, and what to say. He rode the colt into Jerusalem.

Jesus was not trying to gain popularity or start a movement. His actions were dictated by knowing that His hour had come. He focused on obeying the Father, completing His mission, and fulfilling prophecy. His triumphal entry *needed* to take place to set in motion other events that *needed* to take place (John 13:1–3).

Throughout His life, Jesus consistently showed the importance of *knowing* His purpose. We need to have a clear understanding of *our* destiny, be sensitive to God's Spirit, seek to accomplish His goals and follow His specific call. This might lead us to the cross or a triumphant celebration—or both.

Ask God to help you be clear about *your* mission. What can you do to accomplish His purposes? Seek to be ready and obedient, faithful with the resources He has given you.

Questions

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOHN 14

As Jesus and His 12 disciples gathered to celebrate the Passover, He disclosed revelations about His life and the future. He also assured them not to let their hearts be troubled. He was going to prepare a place for them. Jesus said, "*I am coming again and will take you to Myself, so that where I am, there you also will be. And you know the way where I am going*" (vs. 3–4).

Questions must have flooded their minds. What exactly did Jesus mean? Others might have pondered these issues, but Thomas was bold enough to ask Jesus what He meant.

Here and throughout John's Gospel, Thomas appeared fearless and willing to speak when others were timid or afraid. His boldness provided the context for Jesus to give a statement central to the Gospel: "*I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me*" (v. 6).

The disciples often seemed reluctant to respond when Jesus said something they didn't understand. But Thomas was willing to ask questions. From his example, we see that Jesus doesn't get angry or reject us if we ask questions. These can open the door for life-changing revelations and insights that we would not receive any other way.

Do you have questions about the Bible? Your life? The world? Remember the example of Thomas. Be bold. Don't hesitate. Ask God for the answers you need.

What answers are you seeking from God this week?

Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?"

John 14:5 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, here are questions I have: _____ . Thank You for Your answers. I seek more of Your wisdom. In Jesus' name, amen.

“I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, so that He may be with you forever; the Helper is the Spirit of truth...you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.”

John 14:16–17 NASB

PRAYER:

Holy Spirit, speak to me. Guide me. Help me hear You more clearly. Use me to impact lives for the Kingdom of God. In Jesus' name, amen.

What role do you need the Holy Spirit to fill the most today?

Ready for the Spirit

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOHN 14

In the night before He was crucified, Jesus spent time teaching His disciples central truths they would need in the days after His resurrection. One central theme was knowing about the Holy Spirit. As Jesus prepared to return to Heaven, they *needed* to know that the Spirit would be with them forever.

The Spirit truly would be *God with them*. He would live *in them*. They would be filled with the Spirit Himself! He is a Person, and they could have a *personal* relationship with Him.

He would be their Counselor, Defender, and Advocate, always ready to plead their cause. He would be by their side in every situation, always ready to help.

The Spirit is a Teacher who can teach about the Bible and spiritual things but also about *any* subject! He reminds us of the words of the Bible. He is the Spirit of Truth; everything He does is true.

Jesus also explained that people in the world may know about God and the Bible but *cannot* know the Spirit. They cannot understand what He does or grasp His existence. But for those who believe, the Spirit changes everything. He empowers us and gives us wisdom and anointing.

Right now, seek to be more sensitive to the Holy Spirit. Listen to His voice. Let Him guide you, give you His peace, and fill you with power. Remember, He is with you. Trust Him.

Be Fruitful

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOHN 15

How can we lead a fruitful life? Addressing His disciples the night He was betrayed, Jesus made it clear that the key was to be *connected* to Him. Just as a branch depends on the tree for nourishment, so we must depend on Jesus. He enables us to be fruitful. And fruitfulness is a byproduct of our relationship with Him.

Abiding in Christ, we can be fruitful regardless of what goes on around us. But separated from Him, we become useless. How can we tell if changes are taking place? Just think about trees. Carefully observing them, we see evidence of whether they are healthy and still bearing fruit.

Similarly, if we are discerning, we can recognize if our lives are fruitful. Do we see evidence of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23)? Are we still flowing with God's love? Are we focused on ourselves? Less considerate of others? More possessive? More self-centered? Do we see joy? Are we patient and kind? Demanding and irritable?

Remember, changes can take place gradually just like changes taking place in a tree. And changes may be hard to recognize. This is why we need to remember the standard provided by God's Word and be sensitive to His Spirit.

How *connected* are you to Jesus? Is His life flowing through you? Are you abiding in Him? Remember that this relationship is the key to a fruitful, abundant life.

How do you plan to stay connected to Jesus as the vine?

“Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned.”

John 15:6 NLT

PRAYER:

Dear Lord Jesus, help me to stay connected to You. May Your Spirit flow through me, so I can impact others with Your life. In Your name, amen.

Raising His eyes to heaven, He said, “Father, the hour has come.”

John 17:1 NASB

The Posture of Prayer

TODAY’S BIBLE READING: JOHN 17

In His hour of crisis, Jesus turned to prayer. It was a personal, intimate prayer filled with emotion. In this sacred moment, He spoke with His Father. He talked about the day and hour, knowing that the time had come for the Father to be glorified. Jesus had accomplished the work for which He had been sent.

Knowing what was to come, He prayed for the disciples and for all who would believe because of their testimony. He prayed for their protection, sanctification in the truth, and unity.

Here, Jesus gave us a model prayer. And our prayer life changes when we follow His example. This is a prayer that begins with an intimate relationship with God when we know Him as our Father. This type of prayer happens when we don’t rush through our prayers but long to spend time with Him. It happens when we feel free to talk about any needs and problems we face, questions and difficult decisions, challenges, anything.

We must never take God for granted and always must approach Him with reverence and humility. Yet something wonderful happens when we have an intimate, personal relationship with Him.

Today, follow the example Jesus gave you. Approach God as your Father. Talk with Him openly and freely. Pour out your heart to Him. Listen to His voice. Fill your life with His Word, and seek to have an intimate relationship with Him.

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for loving me. I long to know You more intimately. I commit these needs to You: _____ . Thank You for answering. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Compose a prayer asking God how you can know Him on a deeper level.

Dying to Self

TODAY’S BIBLE READING: MATTHEW 27

The people who watched Jesus die on the cross were typical human beings. If Jesus was God’s Son, they believed that it was logical for Him to focus on Himself. Any other course, to them, demonstrated that He was a fraud.

Ironically, these observers identified the one thing that made Jesus so different: He did not live to please Himself or to be rich, famous, powerful, or live a long life. He lived to serve the Father and deny Himself.

Jesus reminded them of principles found in nature, that the only way a grain of wheat can produce much grain is to fall into the ground and die. In a similar way, *“He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life”* (John 12:24–25). Jesus became our example.

He did have the power to save others, but that salvation was possible because He died on the cross. Because of His death, our sins can be forgiven, and we can live with Him forever! Because of His death, we can have victory and eternal life!

The world expects us to be self-centered. They do not understand any actions that are not based on this objective. But God wants us to live lives of sacrifice, service, and obedience to Him.

Today, recommit your life to serving God and living a life of sacrifice and service.

What practical act of service can you complete this week?

Save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross. [...] He saved others; Himself He cannot save.

Matthew 27:40, 42

PRAYER:

Father, forgive me for thinking about myself. I surrender my life to You. Help me live for You and die to self. In Jesus’ name, amen.

The dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. [...] Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:52, 57
NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You that You have destroyed death. I declare the *complete* victory You have given me. Nothing is impossible with You. In Jesus' name, amen.

How will you celebrate your Savior's resurrection tomorrow?

The Ultimate Victory

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 15

To the Roman and Jewish leaders, the cross ended Jesus' life and any challenge to their kingdoms and lifestyle. To them, this was *their* triumph. With the crucifixion, His disciples seemed ready to concede defeat. They felt sad and discouraged—even afraid and hopeless.

But all these people looked at events from a human point of view. With their limited understanding, they felt death was the end. As those who hoped only in this life, death was the ultimate sadness, something to be feared.

But the Bible urges us to grasp the power of the resurrection and its practical significance. Jesus' death shattered every barrier! There was no more sting to death! Now, all things are possible! There are no more limits! We can have hope!

In our time, the world wants to treat Easter as just a social event or cultural celebration. And the devil continues to spread fear and discouragement. He wants us to believe that God cannot do the impossible, to assume the finality of death, to accept limits and even defeat.

But for Christians, the resurrection is the ultimate expression of God's power—the dynamic, life-changing proof of the complete victory we have through Christ.

Today, rejoice in the resurrection. And don't allow anything to rob you of its power. Through the resurrection, God demonstrated that all things are possible! Now, and in eternity, He has given you *"the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Resurrection Power

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PHILIPPIANS 3

Many Christians today believe that Jesus rose from the dead, yet they are not sure what difference this makes in their lives. They read the Bible and hear about the power of Jesus' resurrection. But they wonder how to appropriate this power and why they don't seem to experience it.

Paul said if we want this resurrection power, we need to lay everything else aside and place Jesus first in our lives. We must spend time with Him, read His Word, and seek Him with our whole hearts. We must believe and have faith.

It is easy to focus our attention on our physical needs and personal interests and to think like people in the world. But if we want to experience the full power of God we must learn not to rely on the flesh or cater to its demands. Instead, we must live by faith in Jesus with lives submitted to Him.

Paul said our goal must be to *"know Him and the power of His resurrection"* (v. 10). Everything else must be like *"rubbish,"* so we can *"gain Christ and be found in Him"* (vs. 8–9). We must realize that we have no righteousness of our own and must receive His blessings and power through faith.

Ask God to help you know Jesus more deeply than ever before. Give Him first place in your life. Then watch as you experience more of His resurrection power in your life.

What do you need Jesus' resurrection power to do in your life?

What things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.

Philippians 3:7–8

PRAYER:

Father, I count everything as loss, so I can know Jesus. May I experience the power of His resurrection in my life. In Jesus' name, amen.



You Are Set FREE!

GOD can break through your troubling circumstances and give you a new start!

One Sabbath day, Jesus was teaching in the synagogue, and the Bible says, “A woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years” (Luke 13:10–13 NIV). Can you imagine how hopeless this woman must have felt? For 18 long years, she had endured this debilitating condition.

Perhaps *you* are struggling with some issue in your life today that has persisted for a long time. You feel as though you’ve tried *everything*, but to no avail. Like the woman in this story, you still find yourself “*crippled*” by something out of your control.

Thankfully, the Bible promises us, “*With God ALL things are possible*” (Matthew 19:26). When you’re unable to help yourself, and no human has a solution to your problem, GOD can break through your troubling circumstances and set you free!

The story goes on to say that this woman “*was bent over and could not straighten up at all.*” This is such an apt picture of what it’s like to be burdened down with sins, sicknesses, or other situations that seem overwhelming. Sometimes the cares of life are simply too much for us to handle,

and all we can do is cast our burdens on the Lord (Psalm 55:22).

Notice that the woman was unable to straighten up “*at all.*” Sometimes we still have hopes that we can straighten things out by our own strength and ingenuity. But this woman had come to the end of her own devices. She needed a *miracle*—something only God could do!

However, despite years of suffering, everything was about to change for her in mere moments. Luke 13:12 NIV says, “*Jesus saw her*” and “*called her forward.*” Friend, no matter what you are going through today, you can be sure of this: Jesus SEES what you are going through. He CARES about you. And He’s calling you FORWARD to draw near to Him, so you can receive His healing touch.

After 18 years of suffering, this distressed woman heard Jesus tell her, “*Woman, you are set free from your infirmity*” (v. 12 NIV). The Greek word for infirmity is *astheneia*, which means to be feeble or have a lack of strength. Perhaps you can relate!

Pause and insert your *own* name into the powerful statement Jesus made to the crippled woman: “[Your Name], *you are set free from your infirmity.*” As you allow those words to sink deeply into your heart, faith will rise. Troubles that have persisted for years will melt away more quickly than you can imagine as you’re set free in Jesus’ mighty name! ❖

Take time this month to meditate on these life-giving Scriptures:



Week One

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

2 Corinthians 3:17



Week Two

Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

John 8:36



Week Three

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:13



Week Four

But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

Romans 6:22

Do They Know the Giver of Life?



Thirty years ago, Inspiration Ministries had a partner named Jackie who left this world and entered *eternal life*. She wanted to continue her legacy of soul winning and left instructions for some of her land to be sold and a portion of the proceeds to be given to Inspiration Ministries. Jackie understood that eternity never ends, and she longed for more people to find *real life in Jesus Christ*—so they could one day join her in Heaven.

Here's the amazing TRUTH. Decades after her death, Jackie is still inviting people to know Jesus, the giver of life, through the outreaches of Inspiration Ministries!

When you include Inspiration Ministries in your Will and Estate Plan, you'll find great personal satisfaction in knowing your legacy will bless people around the world *eternally* with the hope, healing, and salvation of Jesus Christ.

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inspirationPG.org



A Merry Heart...

does good, like medicine. – Proverbs 17:22

A man goes out ice fishing one morning. He reaches the ice and is about to cut a hole in it when he hears a voice from above: "There are no fish here."

The fisherman is shocked but gets up and moves to another spot. As he's about to cut a hole, he hears a voice from above again, "There are no fish here either."

He gets up and moves to a third spot. Before he's even finished walking, the voice says, "I'm telling you, there are no fish here."

The fisherman says, "God, how can you be so sure there aren't any fish here?"

The voice replies, "This is the ice rink manager."



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

Email it to: MerryHeart@inspiration.org



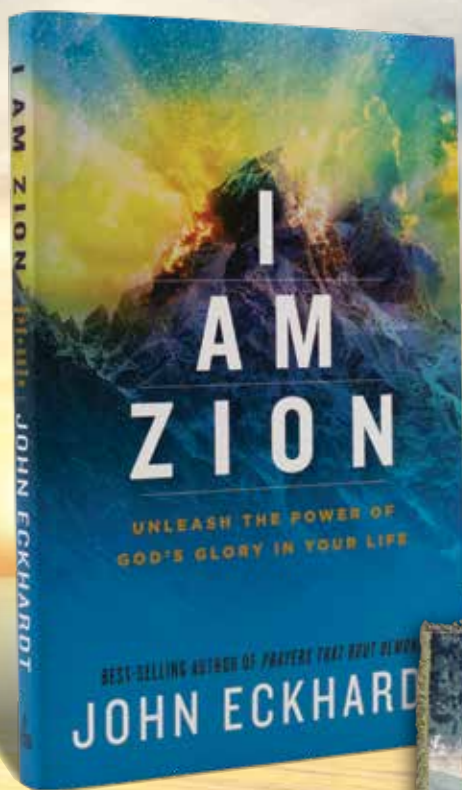
One Sunday our pastor was preaching, and mid-sentence he suddenly stopped and cleared his throat.



Then he said, "Well! A fly just entered the ministry!"

Unleash God's Glory!

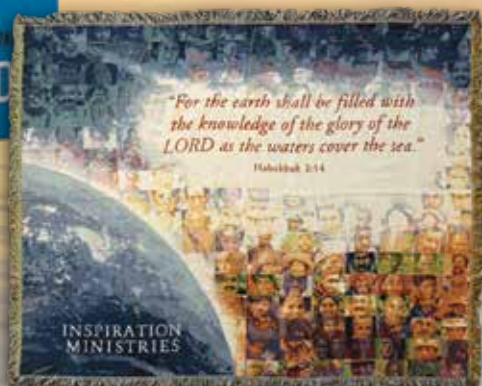
You know that Zion is a place in Israel—but were you aware that it's also a spiritual reality in you? Exploring the characteristics and blessings in Isaiah 60, Eckhardt offers a fresh revelation of the Christian's identity as "the place in which God dwells." Learn who you are in Christ, so you can experience blessing, healing, deliverance, wealth, and promotion in your life.



PLUS, our custom Inspiration Prayer Tapestry will be a beautiful addition to your home, featuring the promise of Habakkuk 2:14:

For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

Display it or use it as a comfortable and cozy sofa throw blanket. It's our **THANK YOU GIFT** to you for sowing your seed into the good ground of Inspiration Ministries.



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

Actual tapestry size: 50" x 65"