

APRIL 2023

inspiration

M A G A Z I N E



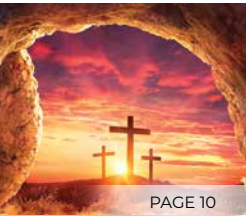
YOUR PASSOVER
Breakthrough

Why Did God
Abandon Jesus?

Delivered from
a Demon

A Blessing in
Disguise

Your Passover Breakthrough



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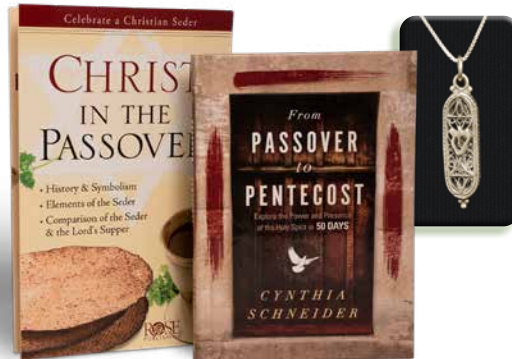


Do you need a breakthrough in some area of your life? On **page 5**, David shares how this Passover can be your special season of extraordinary blessings. You also don't want to miss the powerful THANK YOU GIFTS

we will send you this month in appreciation for your faithful partnership (**page 28**).



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EDITOR'S CORNER



Roone Acree

Just as God instituted Passover as a powerful feast to foreshadow Jesus' death on the cross and His victorious resurrection from the dead, God also wants to raise you up to a new life today. The tomb is empty...Resurrection life has come! All of God's promises to His people under the old covenant—and more—are yours in Christ today. I'm praying for you to experience God's BEST this month. He loves you more than you will ever know.

If you have Passover blessings you would like to share... please send me a note at editor@inspiration.org.



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HOW POWERFUL IS FORGIVENESS?



The Power of Forgiveness

April 10–28

If you've ever been deeply wounded, it's natural to feel angry, bitter and offended. But until you learn to release those who have offended you and totally forgive them, you'll live in chains. Your ability to forgive is an essential key to your own breakthrough.

In this 15-day series, David Cerullo tackles the powerful subject of forgiveness, defining what it is, what it is not, how to give it, and how to receive it. You'll learn how to let go of the past and walk in the peace and joy the Lord desires for you!

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Your Key to **Passover Blessings!**



STRENGTHEN
your walk
with David Cerullo

Throughout the history of Israel, there were many ups and downs in their relationship with the Lord. God's people often strayed from His ways, and repentance was needed in order to spark a new beginning of His blessings and favor.

King Hezekiah's father, Ahaz, had been "*increasingly unfaithful to the LORD*" (2 Chronicles 28:22). Instead of leading the people closer to the Lord, he took them down the path of pagan idolatry, "*to burn incense to other gods*" (v. 25). Predictably, God was angry!

When King Ahaz died, Hezekiah became king, and "*he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done*" (2 Chronicles 29:1–2). What did this include? First, Hezekiah repaired and cleansed the temple, and "*the service of the house of the LORD was set in order*" (v. 35).

My friend, take a moment to consider how this story may apply to your life at this point. Have you been "*unfaithful to the LORD*" in some way? Have you allowed some kind of idolatry to creep into your heart and life? Are there some areas of your life that God wants to "*set in order*"?

**“Children
of Israel,
return to the
LORD God of
Abraham,
Isaac, and
Israel.”**

2 Chronicles 30:6

It’s interesting that one of the things Hezekiah set in order was the observance of Passover and God’s other “*appointed times.*” We read in 2 Chronicles 30:1, “*Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah...that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover to the LORD God of Israel.*”

This is pretty stunning, isn’t it? Of all the reforms Hezekiah could have made after the disastrous reign of his father, one of the first things he did was to reestablish the celebration of Passover. This was no easy task “*since they had not done it for a long time in the prescribed manner*” (v. 5).

Sadly, the same could be said of most of the church today. Most Christians haven’t celebrated the feasts of the Lord “*for a long time*”—if they ever did in the first place.

Hezekiah sent runners throughout the land to command his people, “*Children of Israel, return to the LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel; then He will return to the remnant of you who have escaped from the hand of the kings of Assyria*” (v. 6). Notice that this command to celebrate Passover was framed in terms of returning to the Lord. In order to fully return to a place of God’s favor, they had to obey Him by returning to His appointed times.

Hezekiah’s message warned, “*Now do not be stiff-necked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves to the LORD*” (v. 8). This is significant because the previous generation had followed Ahaz and other unfaithful kings into idolatry. It was going to take a real decision for the people to break with that sinful tradition and yield to the Lord.

Hezekiah’s messengers did not have an easy time. Instead of immediately embracing this message of repentance and restoration from the king’s envoys, “*they laughed at them and mocked*

them” (v. 10). This reminds me of the many people today who still mock anyone declaring that God’s appointed times are relevant.

Fortunately, Hezekiah was not deterred from this response, and eventually the Lord convinced some people to join in the Passover restoration: “*The hand of God was on Judah to give them singleness of heart to obey the command of the king and the leaders, at the word of the LORD*” (v. 12). Eventually, “*a very great assembly*” gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate Passover, which included special offerings presented to the Lord.

As the massive congregation prepared their hearts to seek God, we’re told that the Lord “*healed the people*” (vs. 19–20) and brought them “*great gladness*” (v. 21). The outpouring of blessings and joy was so overwhelming that “*the whole assembly agreed to keep the feast another seven days*” (v. 23).

What an amazing scene! Because of their disobedience, God’s people had not celebrated Passover for a long time. But once they did, the blessings were so evident that they extended the celebration for an additional seven days! As the chapter ends, we’re told that the Levites “*arose and blessed the people, and their voice was heard; and their prayer came up to His holy dwelling place, to heaven*” (v. 27).

BELIEVE FOR YOUR BLESSINGS

I can’t think of a better testimony, can you? As you set your heart to obey the Lord and honor Him during His appointed times, you will be blessed, and your prayers will ascend to Heaven!

Just as in Hezekiah’s day, God promises specific Passover blessings to you if you will obey Him, celebrate Passover, and come before Him with a special Passover offering. Exodus 23 says He will send an angel before you to guard you... be an enemy to your enemies...prosper you ...

**God promises
specific
Passover
blessings to
you if you
will obey Him.**

remove sickness from you...prevent death before your appointed time... give you increase and an inheritance...and return what was lost to the enemy. And this is just the beginning.

Would you like to claim these amazing promises for yourself and your family this month? Do you need a season of fruitfulness and favor? As you come before the Lord with your Passover offering, exercise your faith to believe God to release His Passover blessings in your life!

Referring to the covenant blessings offered during the Feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles, Deuteronomy 16:16 says, *“None shall appear before the LORD empty-handed.”* Yes, God put conditions on His promises.

The celebration of His feasts represents a cycle of giving and receiving between God and His people...a cycle of seedtime and harvest. From Passover to Pentecost...from Pentecost to Tabernacles...from Tabernacles back to Passover... the Israelites obeyed the Lord and experienced a wonderful rhythm of His supernatural blessings.

NOW IS THE TIME!

Whether you need a breakthrough in your health, finances, emotions, or relationships, NOW is God’s appointed time to come to your aid—if you obey Him. God still promises that if we follow His Word, He will protect us, guide us, provide for us, heal us, and keep us safe!

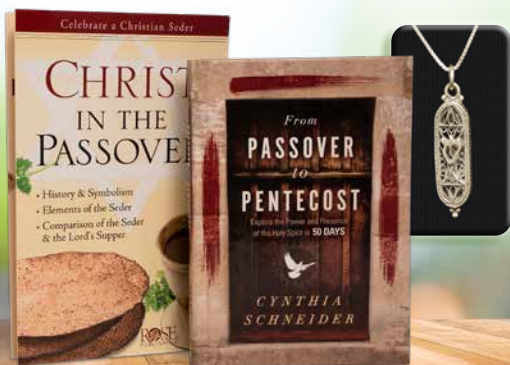
So take a step of faith and obedience...come before God to honor Him with your worship...prepare for Him a special offering...then trust that your amazing season of miracles and blessings is at hand!

God has made an appointment to meet with you...to speak to you...and to bless you with amazing turnarounds! Come celebrate Passover and surrender your heart to the Lord, so you can experience a new level of victorious, overflowing abundance today.

God bless you,



P.S. Turn to page 28 to see the life-changing THANK YOU GIFTS I want to send you this month.



As Tax Time Rolls Around, Your Choice Is Clear...

Caesar or Souls?

“Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” —Jesus, Matthew 22:21

At this time every year, you get to decide...

Will you give more of your money to the government or more to God’s Kingdom?

When you give a gift to a ministry, you may be entitled to a charitable deduction on your income taxes. And gifts of real estate or stock can enable you to avoid any tax that would otherwise be due upon sale.

By investing MORE into God’s Kingdom, it’s often possible to pay LESS to Caesar!

Our Partner Relations Team can help you receive a *guaranteed future income* through a Charitable Gift Annuity. Not only will you benefit from a charitable deduction for the value of your gift, but a

portion of the income you receive can be tax-free. But that’s not all...

In addition to the great tax and income benefits available when you make a special gift to win souls and disciple believers through Inspiration Ministries, you’ll also experience new peace of mind!

Instead of procrastinating on creating your Will and Estate Plan, you will be taking a huge step forward in your financial stewardship by reaching out to our Partner Relations Team.

Remember, the best Estate Plan balances your personal and family needs with your heart to keep fulfilling the Great Commission even after you’ve gone to be with the Lord.

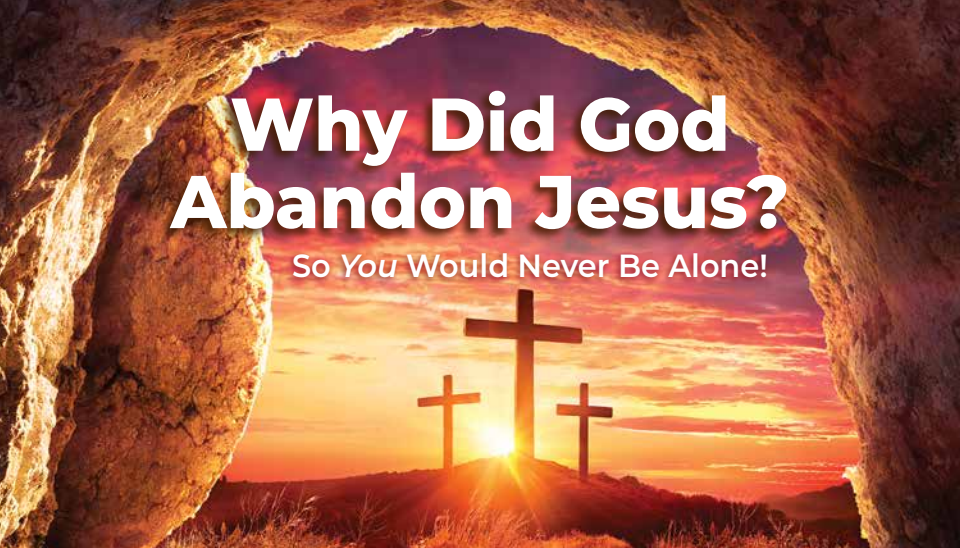
Let our Partner Relations Team help you create a more secure future for your family—and an eternal legacy of winning souls for God’s Kingdom! Contact us today:

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Why Did God Abandon Jesus?

So You Would Never Be Alone!



“My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?”
Mark 15:34 NLT

No matter what might be shaking the foundation of your life right now, because of what Jesus did, you will never be abandoned or left alone.

God was willing, in Christ, to leave the glory of Heaven and become a vulnerable child. He was willing to walk where we walk, weep where we weep, and on the cross receive the punishment for every one of our sins. We have a Savior who has suffered more than any one of us ever will.

I don't mean to minimize your suffering; let me explain. On the cross, when the sky turned midnight black, Christ was utterly alone. I can't begin to imagine what it was like for Christ, the perfect, sinless Lamb of God, to have His Father turn His face away from Him. Their eternal union was broken for three long, agonizing hours.

We are simply allowed to listen to His cries: *“My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?”* (Mark 15:34).

Let's stay there for a moment. It's easy to think we know the story and hurry over those devastating hours to get to the moment when Christ victoriously rose from the dead. When we do that, we miss the profound empathy our Savior has for the depth of our suffering because He has been there.

Jewish historian Josephus records that three o'clock in the afternoon was when the evening sacrifice was made. The one true Passover Lamb was about to be sacrificed for us.

Christ had been on the cross since nine o'clock in the morning. Three hours of physical agony

yet nothing compared to what the next three hours would hold. When the sky turned dark, for the first time in eternity, God turned His face away from His Son. Christ wasn't simply quoting from Psalm 22 when he cried out, *“My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?”* He was living it.

During those three hours, Christ, who had never sinned, was treated as if He had committed every sin that those of us who would come to trust in Him had ever committed. Addiction, adultery, greed, abortion, self-righteousness, pride, hatred, bitterness, unforgiveness... the list is endless. Christ drained the cup of the wrath of God to the very last drop—too much for us to comprehend.

Christ did not deserve what happened to Him, but it was His choice because He loves you. It was His choice to fulfill every promise ever made to us from Genesis through Revelation.

If you have ever felt alone, abandoned, forgotten, I want you to know that Christ is right there with

you. He knows what it feels like to be tossed into that dark, filthy ditch.

He was disregarded.
You are seen.

His cries were ignored.
You are heard.

He was abandoned.
You are never alone.

That is a rock-solid promise!

My dear friend Dr. David Jeremiah writes that Hebrews 13:5 can be translated this way: *“I will never, by no means leave you, and I will never, by no means utterly forsake you.”*

Never.

By no means.

Whatever your pain is, whatever happened to you that still torments you, I ask you now in the name of Jesus to reject the lie of the enemy that you were abandoned, all alone. You were never abandoned. And you were never alone. Your pain is real, but you are not alone. You were not then. You are not now. You will never be abandoned. You are held by that promise of God. ❖



Sheila Walsh is a powerful communicator, Bible teacher, and bestselling author. She lives in Dallas, Texas, with her husband and dogs.

Excerpt from *Holding on When You Want to Let Go: Clinging to Hope When Life Is Falling Apart* by Sheila Walsh. Published by Baker Books ©2021. Used by permission.

KATHIE LEE GIFFORD PRESENTS

THE WAY



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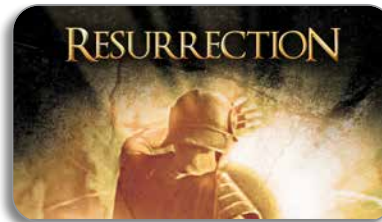
Moving Bible stories are brought to life as never before in this powerful musical written and narrated by Emmy Award winner Kathie Lee Gifford.

Friday, April 7, 12:00 p.m. ET
Sunday, April 9 at 5:30 p.m. ET



Celebrate Our Savior's

Resurrection!



Friday, April 7 at 10:00 p.m. ET

Resurrection *A Max Lucado Story*

In *Resurrection*, a Roman guard confronts a cover-up after Christ's execution. What are the religious leaders and Roman government hiding?



Saturday, April 8 at 2:00 p.m. ET

Polycarp

Rescued from slavery as a child by Christian leader Polycarp, young Anna must decide if the truth she's been living is worth dying for.



Saturday, April 8 at 9:00 p.m. ET

The Savior

The Savior reminds us that God is love and brings peace to everyone. From His miraculous birth to His agonizing death, the story of Jesus is like no other.

Watch life-changing, Christian programming 24/7 from Inspiration TV worldwide on all your favorite devices and streaming tools. Go to inspiration.org/tv, or check out our FREE Inspiration TV app on your smart phone, tablet, or computer.

Delivered from a DEMON

The enemy must bow to the power of our living God.

Along with biblical teaching on the topic of demons and deliverance, my book *Setting Captives Free: How to Break the Chains of Demonic Influence* has many modern-day testimonies of freedom from evil spirits. Below is one such testimony.

Our church hosted a water baptism service. Nyla came to the service to be baptized, but I knew very little about her background. I had met her briefly and talked to her on the phone about her desire to be baptized. She attended a different church but heard about the baptism service through some friends.

Nyla was born in the Middle East and grew up as a Muslim. She ended up in the United States as a refugee. Christians reached out to her, but at first, she was resistant. She eventually went to church with them, and without knowing why, she cried throughout the service. God was softening her heart. Jesus soon revealed Himself to her through a dream, and she committed her life to Him.

About 200 people were in attendance at the baptism service. We gathered at a pond and worshiped, and then I shared briefly about the significance of being baptized in water. The Holy Spirit had put

on my heart that there would be deliverance from evil spirits at this service in connection with water baptism. I had heard of testimonies of deliverance happening during baptism, but had yet to see it happen in my own ministry.

Though baptism is not what saves us, an actual spiritual transaction takes place, and there is a cutting off of the enemy. I declared that some who had been under demonic influence and oppression would be delivered as they obeyed the Lord in water baptism.

As I began to lead those who were getting baptized in a prayer of declaration of faith in Jesus, Nyla prayed along. But about halfway through the prayer, I noticed that she was no longer praying. She seemed to be struggling and was crying. I discerned that a spiritual battle was taking place.

She later told me that during this prayer she was hearing a demon say things like, *What are you doing here? You're going to go to hell if you do this! Go back to Islam! Get out of here!*

Nyla stepped into the water to

be baptized, and I laid hands on her and began to pray, breaking off any demonic power and commanding it to go in the name of Jesus. Within seconds, she began to tremble and then let out a long, loud shriek as the demon was cast out of her. As the demon was leaving, Nyla felt it being torn out of her chest and throat as it screamed in terror at the power of the resurrected Christ!

The crowd witnessed a clear demonstration of God's power over the kingdom of darkness. For some, this was nothing new, as it is not uncommon for deliverance ministry to happen at our church. But for others, this scene was a little shocking.

The following week, Nyla testified in our Sunday service about her experience. She explained that she had been oppressed by this demon for many years. Nothing that she or her parents tried to do brought any relief. There was not a dry eye in the crowd as she explained her story in broken English and testified how Jesus delivered her in His love and mercy. The place erupted in spontaneous praise to our great God! ❖



Jake Kail serves as the apostolic leader of Threshold Church in Pennsylvania. He is an author, preacher, and teacher who is passionate for the presence of God.

Excerpt from www.jakekail.com. Reprinted by permission.

Popstar Pastor

Julius had fought his calling most of his life until an earthquake awakened his compassion for others.

Being born into a Christian family is one thing. But when you're a believer, and you also live in a Muslim country, you know you're going to need God's hand on your life.

Take Julius for example. He was born and raised in Pakistan, an overwhelmingly Muslim country. In fact, nearly 96% of the 2.25 million people practice Islam. Only 0.6% of the population is evangelical.

So as a Christian, he often felt different and out of place. On top of that, Julius wanted to sing for a living and become a famous popstar. His parents, however, weren't exactly crazy about that idea.

"My father was a pastor, a theologian, and principal of the Bible college. They wanted me to become a pastor. As a good Pakistani boy, I didn't oppose my parents, but I wasn't sure whether it was my calling."

Caught between his desires and his family's wishes, Julius surrendered his will and began to follow in his father's footsteps. He became an ordained pastor in 1990 through Gujranwala Theological Seminary and served in rural villages. He was content with his quiet, simple life, but when a deadly earthquake hit the area 15 years later causing unbelievable devastation, he was shaken out of his doldrums.



Overnight, over 80,000 people were dead and at least four million people became homeless. Whole sections of towns slid off cliffs; entire families were killed. To make matters worse, landslides wiped out many of the roads to the affected areas, making it difficult for relief workers to access hard-hit areas.

As Julius witnessed the devastation, he couldn't help but think about the plight of the people. "In our area, hundreds of people died, and only seven were alive. None of the survivors were believers in Christ, but all had thankfulness toward God." Julius was humbled by the power of nature and the fragility of life. His awe became an amplifier for the call of God.

"I prayed and cried to the Lord for forgiveness and gratitude. I promised God and myself that I would work for Him and for His people. That was my calling—at the right place and the right time."

Julius went with his church to help in areas devastated by the earthquake. And when he returned, God sent him into other areas to help build churches. With the help of friends, he has built three churches in his Muslim nation!

Julius feels confident he's living in his God-given calling and understands why the Lord gave him his love of music.

"Gospel music, audio, and video are my passions. I see that I can use my dreams to spread the message of Jesus Christ and His love through Christian programmers in this Islamic country. I love to encourage young Christians by supporting their Gospel music ambitions. I prayed to God to show me a way I can do His work better. I opened the internet and found Inspiration Ministries. God shows the way, and He guided me to you." ❖

What God did for Julius, He can do for YOU!

Visit inspiration.org/souls today to sow a seed for souls, or send your prayer request to our International Prayer Center at inspiration.org/prayer.



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
1.4 Million people
have responded to the salvation message
presented by Inspiration Ministries.

5.1 MILLION Souls in 2023

Share the Power of the Resurrection

This month we celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. But, so many people around the world have never heard of Jesus—nor the power of His resurrection!

Thanks to your generosity, more than **1.4 MILLION** people have responded to the message of salvation through Jesus so far this year. Be encouraged by these testimonies of people YOU helped:

“I’m alive today, and I’m giving praise for food, shelter, and clothing. I’m glad I’m not what I used to be; God is truly great!”—Cynthia R., Jamaica

“I am glad to get your insights and inspirational messages, thanks.”—James T., Kenya

“We gave five days ago, and God blessed our life with a financial blessing. God is good, and His mercy endureth forever.”—Melissa S., OH

We can change eternity for millions together!
Sow your Resurrection Seed today.

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On a Mission

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!*” (John 12:13). This triumphal entry may seem spontaneous, but Jesus’ actions demonstrate that everything unfolded exactly as He planned.

As He and His disciples approached Jerusalem, He told them what was about to happen. He clarified His own destiny and gave them marching orders (Mark 10:32–45). Then, Jesus Himself told two disciples to bring a colt. He told them where to find it and exactly what to say. He would ride into Jerusalem on it.

Regardless of what some might have thought, Jesus was not trying to start a revolt or gain power. His focus was on obeying the Father, completing His mission, and fulfilling prophecy. This entry *needed* to take place to set in motion things that *needed* to take place. As events unfolded, Jesus *knew* what would happen. He knew “*that His hour had come*” (John 13:1–3).

Through His actions, Jesus consistently showed us the importance of *knowing* His destiny and purpose, being sensitive to the Father, seeking to accomplish His goals, and following His specific call.

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

What is your God-given mission, and how are you accomplishing it?

He sent two of His disciples... “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied there, on which no one has ever sat; 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 focus on accomplishing Your call for me. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is righteous and endowed with salvation, humble, and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Zechariah 9:9 NASB

The Triumphal Entry

BIBLE READING: ZECHARIAH 9

Riding into Jerusalem just days before His crucifixion, Jesus was fulfilling a prophecy given to Zechariah hundreds of years earlier. Through eyes of faith, this prophet saw how a King would come to Jerusalem, humble and mounted on the foal of a donkey.

When the day came, a large crowd spread their cloaks on the road in preparation for His arrival, shouting, “*Hosanna to the Son of David.*” They cried, “*Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord.*” This was a major event, for “*all the city was stirred.*” People wondered what could have caused such an uproar. The crowds announced, “*This is Jesus the prophet*” (Matthew 21:8–11).

The whole community seemed to join in praise. Yet, just a few days later, Jerusalem crowds would cry for His crucifixion. It seemed like a radical change, but Jesus was not surprised.

At an earlier Passover celebration, many people *said* they believed in Him. But Jesus knew this belief was superficial. In their hearts, they were not totally committed. Jesus did not entrust Himself to them, for He “*knew what was in mankind*” (John 2:23–25).

Many people say that they are Christians but have not made Jesus their Lord. Many *say* they believe but have a shallow commitment.

How about you? Is Jesus the Lord of your life? Is He your Lord *all the time*? Praise Him from your heart. Commit your life to Him.

How deep is your commitment to Jesus?

Glory, Laud, and Honor

BIBLE READING: 1 THESSALONIANS 5

Theodulph of Orléans made many positive contributions as a church bishop but was suspected by France’s King Louis the Pious of being disloyal. As a result, Theodulph was sentenced to prison. In these poor conditions, he could have given up or become bitter.

Instead, there, he wrote a hymn filled with praise. Today we know this hymn as “All Glory, Laud, and Honor” in the translation done in 1854 by John Mason Neale.

Over the years, many churches featured this hymn in Palm Sunday services, often as a processional. In dramatic settings, choirs would encourage the congregation to enter praise. This hymn was given a place of honor because it was in keeping with the spirit of Palm Sunday, for it focused on praising Jesus.

Theodulph called us to give “all glory, laud, and honor” to Jesus, our Redeemer and King. Referring to Palm Sunday, he described how the lips of children made “sweet hosannas ring.”

Theodulph found reason to praise God in the darkest prison when there was no hope. Through his example, we are reminded to rejoice all the time and give thanks in everything!

No matter what you are going through, stop to praise God. Praise Him in the morning and at night. Praise Him when you are alone and with others. Praise Him silently and aloud! Sing and speak His praises. Wherever you are, praise His name. He is worthy!

Thank God for His character and for blessing you even in hardships.

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 5:16–18
NASB

PRAYER:

Dear Lord Jesus, I worship and praise You. Thank You for all You have done for me. I dedicate my life to You. In Your name, amen.

Herod and his soldiers ridiculed and mocked him. Dressing him in an elegant robe, they sent him back to Pilate. That day Herod and Pilate became friends—before this they had been enemies.

Luke 23:11–12 NIV

PRAYER:

Father, I will not compromise but will stand bold for You. I seek first Your Kingdom and trust my life to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Write out a prayer for your country's leaders.

The Real Power

BIBLE READING: LUKE 23

The story of Jesus' death can be seen as a power struggle or clash of kingdoms. On one side, we see governments and religious rulers; on the other, God Himself and King Jesus.

This conflict was framed when Jesus rode triumphantly into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. The religious rulers already were concerned. They must have wondered what He could be planning. They had been "looking for some way to get rid of Jesus" (Luke 22:2). When Judas agreed to betray Jesus, the religious leaders seized upon the opportunity and had Him arrested.

Reflecting the interests of the government, Pilate, the Roman governor, focused on maintaining the peace and keeping control of the situation. To him, Jesus seemed a pawn to be manipulated. But history was to demonstrate that Jesus held the ultimate power. Pilate tried to intimidate Jesus, but Jesus knew that Pilate's power was limited (John 19:10–11).

After Jesus' death and resurrection, the struggle continued. Religious rulers tried to intimidate Peter and John, asking, "By what power or what name" had they healed a lame man? But Peter wouldn't back down, affirming, "We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:5–20).

This pattern is still true. Some mock believers. Others seek to minimize the impact of the Gospel or intimidate us. Remember that leaders and governments rule for a brief time. Their power is limited. But Jesus will reign throughout eternity.

Purity and Holiness

BIBLE READING: MATTHEW 21

As Jesus entered Jerusalem, He was welcomed by the multitudes who waved palm branches and shouted "Hosanna!" Riding into the city, He must have seemed serene and regal.

But His demeanor changed when He entered the temple area. This kind of emotion was displayed by Old Testament prophets or by God Himself acting with anger (Psalm 2:5) and rising in anger (Psalm 78:31) against those who would not believe Him.

Entering the temple, Jesus acted with this kind of righteous indignation, displaying His total devotion to the Father and His uncompromising dedication to removing anything impure or inappropriate.

There was an *overwhelming* sense that God was present. With the temple purified, He could be expected to move powerfully. *Miracles* could happen. The blind and lame came, and Jesus healed them. Children, too, shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David" (vs. 14–15).

Jesus was showing us that God's house should be a place of *worship* and *praise*, a place of prayer where people could seek His presence. Jesus also was demonstrating His *holiness* and reminding them of God's standards. Standing in His holy place required clean hands and a pure heart (Psalm 24:3–4).

In this holy week, remember the importance of purity. Enter God's presence with holiness. Purify your life, expecting Him to be present and to meet you with power.

Write a renewed commitment to enter your church with the right attitude.

Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables... "It is written... 'My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it a 'den of robbers.'"

Matthew 21:12–13 NIV

PRAYER:

Father, I commit these needs to You: _____. Help me be clean in Your sight. Forgive my sins. May my life bring You praise. In Jesus' name, amen.

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

John 2:13 NASB

Passover Commitment

BIBLE READING: JOHN 2

To Jesus, Passover was not just another day, and celebrating Passover was nonnegotiable. During His earthly ministry, He went to Jerusalem for the last time *specifically* to celebrate Passover. It was no accident that He was arrested, tried, and crucified then, for Passover was *His* appointed time.

The Bible tells us that six days before Passover, Jesus came to Bethany to visit His friends, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus (John 12:1–11). And it was in Jerusalem that Jesus and His disciples gathered to celebrate Passover (the Last Supper).

Why was this so important? Jesus knew God's commandments. Passover was "a feast to the LORD," to be celebrated throughout all generations. It was "a permanent ordinance" (Exodus 12:11, 14), one of "the LORD's appointed times" (Leviticus 23:2). Jesus knew that by dying on the cross, He was fulfilling Passover as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

The Bible tells us that Passover *still* is God's appointed time. God still promises special blessings for those who keep *His* Passover.

Ask God to reveal to you the importance of Passover in a fresh way.

Remember, Jesus became the Passover Lamb for you. Because of His death, *your* sins are forgiven. He rose again that *you* might have eternal life. He is your sacrificial Lamb, taking away *your* sins, and giving you victory and freedom.

How do you plan to celebrate Passover this week?

Christ Our Passover

BIBLE READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 5

The feasts were central to the New Testament church. Knowing their importance, Paul wrote from a position of credibility, as a "Hebrew of Hebrews." He had studied the Law and knew the history of his people (Philippians 3:5).

As he interacted with churches, he *assumed* they would celebrate the feasts. This was never clearer than with the church in Corinth. He did not write them to *explain* the feasts but *how* they were to be celebrated.

For Paul, Jesus made the difference in approaching the feasts, for Jesus *was* the Passover Lamb who had been sacrificed. Paul also referred to "leaven." This was central to Passover, with its emphasis on "unleavened bread" (Exodus 12:8). Therefore, Paul said that Christians needed to celebrate the feast "with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." They needed to be clean in God's sight, freed from any "leaven."

Today is a day many Christians celebrate as Good Friday, commemorating the death of Jesus. We must never forget that His death took place in the middle of the Passover celebration, He died as a *fulfillment of prophecy*, and He was the *Lamb of God*.

Remember all that Jesus has done for you. He died and rose again that *your* sins might be forgiven, that you might be cleansed and healed, that you might be right with God. Yes, celebrate the feast, for "Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed"!

Compose a prayer thanking Jesus for dying for your sins.

Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? Clean out the old leaven...Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed...celebrate the feast, not with old leaven...but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

1 Corinthians 5:6–8 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You that Jesus is my Passover Lamb. Thank You that He died for my sins. I commit my life to serving You. In Jesus' name, amen.

He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha.

John 19:17

Bearing the Cross

BIBLE READING: JOHN 19

When composer Arvo Pärt left his homeland Estonia in 1980, he brought the first musical compositions for what became his *St. John Passion*. This was an important work for him, published soon after he arrived in the West.

As a Christian, Pärt left Estonia to have the freedom to write music like this. He was then able to express what was in his heart, writing about Jesus, His life and death, teachings, resurrection, and miracles.

Pärt's *Passion* tells the story of Jesus' death using the text from John's Gospel. Those who dig deeper discover that the music itself helps tell the story. In subtle ways, musical elements link back to the story.

The character singing the part of Jesus always has the longest and lowest notes, in stark contrast with other characters. Pilate, like Christ, was accompanied only by the organ, singing in faster rhythmic values and with a higher range.

Pärt began his *Passion* with the denial by Peter and ended with the crucifixion. The most extended section is the confrontation between Jesus and Pilate, and the crowd's calls for Jesus' death.

The story of Jesus' death has been told in many ways, in many styles and interpretations. It is a story that needs to be *heard*, studied, and pondered. Why did He die? What does His death mean for each of us?

What does His death mean for you?

Reflect on what Jesus' death means to you.

The Ultimate Victory

BIBLE READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 15

To many people, Easter is a social event or cultural celebration. For others it is just a story or an excuse for shopping. But for Christians, Easter is the ultimate expression of God's power at work.

A day commemorating the resurrection of Jesus, Easter changes our attitudes toward death and everything we face. For those who hope only in this life, death is the ultimate sadness, something to be feared. It means the end. It means no more hope or joy, no more pleasure.

Our natural minds accept these limits because they only draw on their own finite understanding. The devil desires to spread the fear and discouragement of death. He wants us to assume its finality and give up. He wants us to believe that God cannot do the impossible.

But the Bible reminds us of the importance of grasping the power of the resurrection and its practical significance. God wants us to see that He already has *shattered* every barrier! Death has no more sting! As the resurrection proves, *all* things are possible! There are no limits! We can have hope!

Do not accept defeat or give in to hopelessness. Praise God that Jesus rose from the dead! He can solve even your most unsolvable problems and conquer your most overwhelming obstacles. Now and in eternity, He has given you "*the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!*"

Reflect on the importance of Jesus' resurrection in your life.

We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed... the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable [...] The sting of death is sin...but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:51–52, 56–57 NASB

PRAYER:

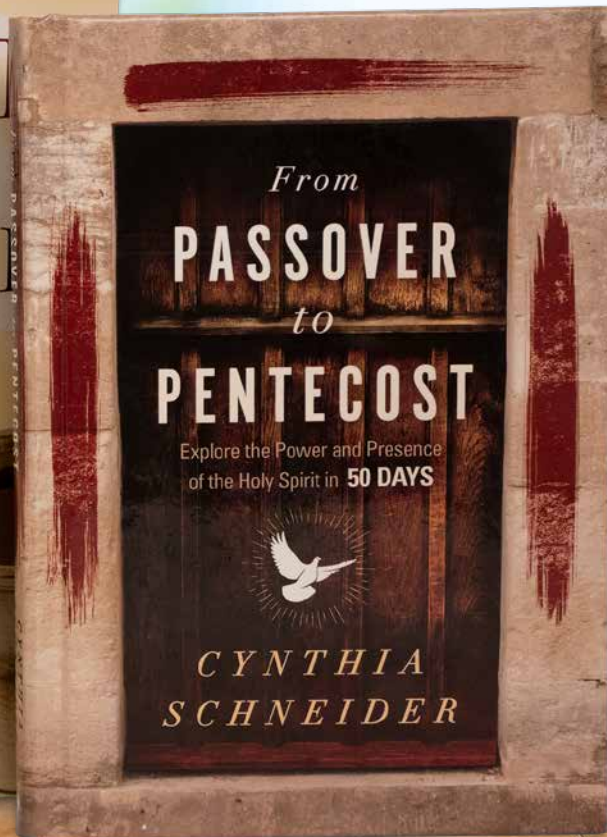
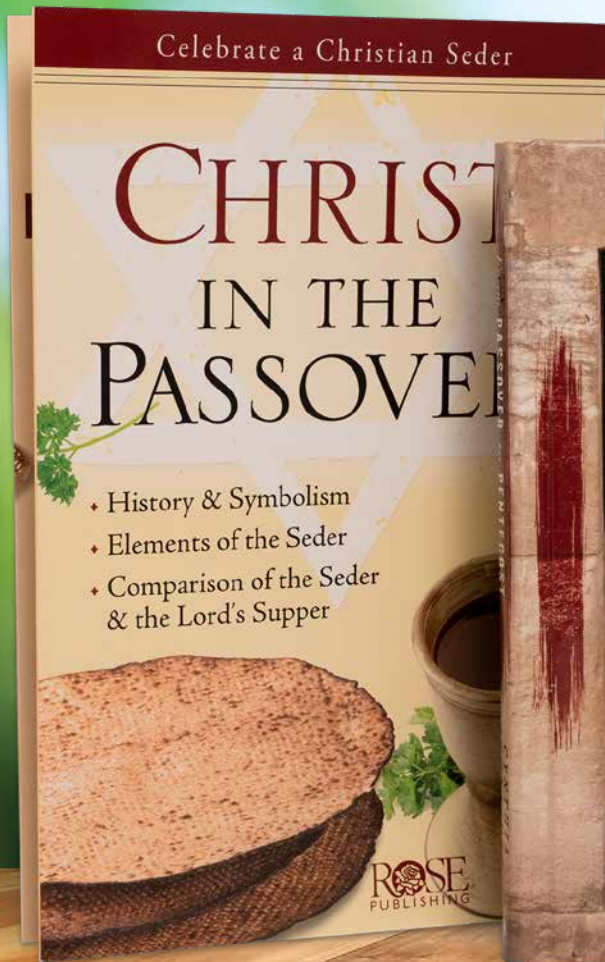
Father, thank You that Jesus rose from the dead! All things are possible with You. I can be victorious through You! In Jesus' name, amen.

WANT TO GO DEEPER WITH GOD?

From Passover to Pentecost: Explore the Power and Presence of the Holy Spirit in 50 Days by Cynthia Schneider is a devotional book designed to help you focus on knowing, following, and worshiping the Lord with great expectation. It will encourage you to enter a new place of intimacy with the Holy Spirit and receive a fresh discovery of power and revelation.

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He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day...that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time.

1 Corinthians 15:4–6 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You that Jesus rose from the dead. May others see the proof of His resurrection through my changed life. In His name, amen.

How has Jesus' resurrection changed your life?

Proof

BIBLE READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 15

No one seemed to believe that Jesus had risen from the dead—not even His mother or brothers. Even His disciples seemed to have forgotten that, at least five times, He said He would rise from the dead. When Mary Magdalene and other women came to His tomb, they came to anoint His *dead body*. But not only had Jesus told them He would be crucified and rise again on the third day, He also told them where to meet Him *after* the resurrection!

What changed their minds to believe? Simply this: They became *eyewitnesses* to the resurrection! They *saw* Him, *talked* with Him, and even *touch*ed His nail-scarred body. At one point, the resurrected Christ appeared to more than 500 people.

These eyewitness experiences convinced them that Jesus had risen! They *knew* what was true, and the truth radically transformed their lives!

We can read these accounts and know that Jesus rose from the dead! But the greatest proof comes to those who have a *personal relationship* with Jesus, who have experienced the power of His resurrection, and who *know* the risen Savior.

How real is Jesus to you? Are you *sure* He rose from the dead? If the resurrection is real to *you*, you are an eyewitness. What a joy to *share* that truth with others! The proof? It is what He has done for you and what you *know*. Commit yourself to spread this Good News.

Useless?

BIBLE READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 15

For many people, Easter is just a feel-good holiday celebrated with bunnies and flowers. Easter is celebrating spring and buying new clothes. It's remembered with greeting cards and special events. Some do not even know that this is a day that commemorates the resurrection of Jesus!

The original purpose of Easter seems like an archaic concept to many. The idea of the resurrection of the dead can seem like nothing more than a story filled with magic and fantasy.

Christians can find themselves caught up in these cultural interpretations. But every Easter we can think about the *true* meaning, read the biblical account, celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus, and decide for ourselves if we *really* believe in the resurrection. Is this just a tradition? A story? Or a real event?

The Bible tells us that the resurrection is so important that without it, our faith is “*in vain*.” The Greek word here suggests having no truth. Being empty. Lacking content. It is just *that* important.

Ponder the impact of the resurrection on your life. Do you have any doubts? Are you sure you believe Jesus rose from the dead? God promises resurrection life to you as well. Make this a day to *believe*. Celebrate our resurrected Savior. As Jesus Himself said, “*I am the resurrection and the life; the one who believes in Me will live, even if he dies*” (John 11:25).

Why do you believe in the resurrection?

If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, your faith also is in vain.

1 Corinthians 15:14 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I believe that Jesus died and rose from the dead. I celebrate the impact of the resurrection on my life. In Jesus' name, amen.

Like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each person must be careful how he builds...no one can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:10–11
NASB

PRAYER:

Father, Your promises are true. Help me build my life on Your Word. Keep me from wandering into error. I trust in Jesus! In His name, amen.

Are there biblical principles that you're tempted to ignore? Why?

A System that Works

BIBLE READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 3

Imagine creating a mathematical system that remains as accepted today as it was more than 2,000 years ago! Euclid accomplished this amazing feat.

Born in Egypt around 300 BC, he developed the 13-volume *Elements*, which provided rules, definitions, and procedures that still ring true. It has been said that other than the Bible, this is the most translated, published, and studied book produced in the Western world.

The ruler of Egypt once asked Euclid if there were shortcuts to mastering math. Euclid said there were no shortcuts. Building a sound system depends on a *solid* foundation and doing everything the right way.

These same principles apply to our work, finances, health, relationships, and spiritual lives. As Paul taught, each of us needs a sturdy foundation. He declared, *“No one can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”* No society, nation, or person can thrive or survive without the right foundation. There are no shortcuts.

Some have abandoned biblical principles because they seem out of date. Some embrace ideas that sound attractive, unaware that they will not last. Fashions and trends will change. Movements will come and go. *“The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever”* (Isaiah 40:8).

Base your life on Jesus Christ and God's unchanging Word. It works!

A Lasting Foundation

BIBLE READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 3

Geirr Tveitt found an ideal place to compose music: a farmstead in Hardanger, in southwestern Norway. In this tranquil environment, he generated what one critic called an “unstoppable waterfall” of compositions. But Tveitt, who was extremely sensitive, did not publish some works, storing them in his farmstead.

Then in 1970, tragedy struck when his home and homestead burned. As a result, more than 300 manuscripts were lost. Some were reconstructed from other sources, but many compositions were lost forever.

As tragic as this was for Tveitt, his experience symbolizes what awaits *all* of us and *all* our work. Paul wrote that, eventually, everything will be brought to light, and fire will test the quality of our work. Through this judgment, we will find out if we have based our lives on the imperishable Word of God or perishable things—even precious metals like gold and silver.

Jesus, too, warned us not to store our treasures on earth. Why? There, moth and rust destroy, and thieves break in and steal. Instead, we are to store our treasure in Heaven. *“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”* (Matthew 6:19–21).

Ask God to help you evaluate *your* foundation. Are you laying up treasures on earth or in Heaven? Remember, *“No one can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ”* (1 Corinthians 3:11). Make Him the foundation of your life.

How are you making Christ the foundation of your life?

If anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw, each one's work will become evident...it is to be revealed with fire and the fire itself will test the quality of each one's work.

1 Corinthians 3:12–13
NASB

PRAYER:

Father, help me build my life on Jesus Christ and store up treasures in Heaven. Make my life count for You. In Jesus' name, amen.

If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool [discarding his worldly pretensions and acknowledging his lack of wisdom], so that he may become [truly] wise.

1 Corinthians 3:18 AMP

PRAYER:

Father, I take up my cross and follow Jesus. I seek Your truth and commit myself completely to You. Grant me Your wisdom. In Jesus' name, amen.

How can you ensure that you're only paying attention to God's voice?

How to Become Wise

BIBLE READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 3

The world is full of people ready to give advice or recommend ways to gain intelligence. They become wise by their own standards and criticize anyone who believes in the Bible. But the Bible reminds us of another dimension of wisdom found only in God.

Paul said that if we want to receive this wisdom, we need to do things God's way, even if it seems foolish to people around us. People may react like the Roman governor Festus who accused Paul of being "out of [his] mind." But Paul wouldn't compromise. He knew what he was saying was true (Acts 26:24–25 NIV).

If we want God's supernatural wisdom, we need to die to ourselves and commit ourselves to serve Jesus. We must seek God and fill our minds with His Word, surrendering our lives to Him. We must be willing to "become a fool," believe the Bible wholeheartedly and live according to its principles.

Ask yourself whether you are more concerned about what other people think or what God thinks. The Bible reminds us that real wisdom comes from being *completely* committed to God, living according to His Word, and following the leading of His Spirit.

Don't be deceived. People in the world may think it's foolish to be a Christian, to believe the Bible, or to confess faith in Jesus. Do not let them keep you from receiving God's wisdom. Commit yourself to Him!

Managers

BIBLE READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 4

How did Paul view himself? Not as a spiritual superstar, a mighty warrior, or a powerful minister. No, he was simply a *servant* of Jesus and a "steward of the mysteries of God."

The only important measure was God's calling. Paul knew we all will appear before God when He "will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart" (v. 5). Then He will judge us fairly and accurately.

The word translated as "servant" was derived from a Greek word suggesting rowing. Thus, Christ was his *captain*, directing the ship, and Paul was His helper.

Using another analogy, Paul described himself as a steward or simply a manager. Everything changes when we approach life as managers. We own *nothing*, and *everything* we own belongs to God. Our responsibility is to be found trustworthy and to take care of what we've been given.

Paul knew we can be our own worst critics. We can feel that we are failures, that we have not accomplished anything significant. But God knows the truth. The key is being faithful and receiving His approval.

Remember, you will receive *your "commendation from God"* (v. 5), not based on what others say or your subjective conclusions but based on your faithfulness in His sight and judgment. Seek to be a good manager of what He has given you. Be faithful to fulfill *your* calling.

How are you stewarding the resources God has given you?

This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.

1 Corinthians 4:1–2 ESV

PRAYER:

Father, I commit my time, talents, and treasures to You. I seek to serve You with my life. Help me to be faithful. In Jesus' name, amen.

All things are permitted for me, but not all things are of benefit. All things are permitted for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.

1 Corinthians 6:12 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for setting me free. Help me stay on guard and not allow myself to be mastered by habits or temptations. In Jesus' name, amen.

How are you using the freedom you have in Christ?

Not Mastered

BIBLE READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 6

Cicero was born into a family without the aristocratic heritage normally required to achieve success in Rome. Yet he gained influence as a lawyer and gifted orator.

In 63 BC, he became a consul, the highest elected Roman office, performing with distinction. But when Julius Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus took control of Roman politics, Cicero was forced to leave Rome because of his outspoken beliefs. In exile, Cicero wrote extensively about his observations and experiences.

Cicero had seen that freedom was important but easily could be abused. He wrote, "The fruit of too much liberty is slavery."

Paul, who lived just a few decades after Cicero's death, might well have studied his writings. He certainly knew of his life. Paul knew that freedom was central to the Christian life. *"The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death"* (Romans 8:2). *"It was for freedom that Christ set us free"* (Galatians 5:1).

Paul also knew that freedom could be abused as an opportunity to give in to harmful temptations. He urged us to maintain a balance and celebrate the freedoms we have in Christ but not allow ourselves to be *"mastered by anything."*

Celebrate the freedom *you* have in Jesus, but seek to live so you are *freed from* temptations. Be free to impact others for the Gospel.

Freed From Control

BIBLE READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 6

Paul made it clear: Because of what Jesus had done in his life, he knew that *"everything is permissible for me."* This sounds like he was free to do *anything* he wanted. But he knew that this reaction missed the point.

Yes, everything is permissible and even lawful. However, Paul said that we should be concerned not so much about what is lawful but about what *controls* us. If we are Christians, we still can be slaves to things like habits or behaviors. We may feel that we are freed from obvious vices and blatant sins, but there are many other ways we can be slaves.

Ask God to search your heart and mind and help you evaluate the forces that might be exercising control over you. You may be under the influence of habits or thoughts. You may feel pressure from people around you, from a financial need, or a job. The Bible says that God wants you to be resolved not to be *"brought under"* the power of any of these things.

Surrender your will to God. Ask Him to give you His priorities and the power to resist temptations. Fill your heart and mind with His Word. Spend quality time with Him in prayer. Declare that Jesus is the Lord of your life. Then live for Him. With His help, resolve not to become a slave to anything or anyone else.

Are you living as a slave to a sinful habit or behavior?

Everything is permissible for me, but not all things are beneficial. Everything is permissible for me, but I will not be enslaved by anything [and brought under its power, allowing it to control me].

1 Corinthians 6:12 AMP

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for my freedom in Christ. Show me if I am a slave to anything but You. I surrender to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

For the present form of this world is passing away. But I want you to be free from concern.

1 Corinthians 7:31–32
NASB

Free from Anxiety

BIBLE READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 7

The church was founded during a time of tremendous uncertainty. The Roman Empire dominated the culture. Believers were subject to the whims of local leaders and the changing rulings of emperors, governors, and generals. Christians faced opposition from other religions, local businesses, and secular authorities.

They had many reasons to be anxious, but Paul encouraged them to remember that “*the present form of this world is passing away.*” This included the political, military, social, and economic climate, possible persecution and ostracism, stress, uncertainty, and even physical danger or death.

It would have been easy to focus on the present phase of things. But Paul urged them to remember that all of this was “*passing away.*” The Greek word here could be translated as passing by, as though external conditions were moving past, like on a conveyor belt.

They could be obsessed with world conditions; however, their attitude would change when they realized that all these worldly things were just *temporary*.

Paul urged us to focus on *eternity*, with lives surrendered to Jesus. We’re to remember that none of our problems will last. Instead of being worried, we should focus on the Kingdom that will not fade away and our timeless relationship with God.

The present phase of the world is passing away. Make sure you are ready for the future. Serve Jesus. Always trust Him.

Reflect on your future in God’s eternal Kingdom.

Focused on the Gospel

BIBLE READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 9

Can we imagine purchasing ten records just to listen to one short piece of music? How bulky! How impractical! Yet for many years, this was normal—until 1948 with the introduction of something remarkable: the long-playing phonograph record (LP).

The LP made it possible to pack as much as an hour of music or information on one disk. By the millions, people bought record players and records. At that time, this was state of the art. But many wondered if sound and recorded music could be improved.

Technology continued to change, bringing innovations. The stereo was added in the 1950s. Records themselves were impacted by the development of audio tapes and compact disks (CDs). In recent years, streaming and internet downloads have become the standard with fewer CDs being sold.

Changes in technology impact the entertainment and business communities and provide more options for consumers. But technology also provides important new tools for evangelism and discipleship, giving us new ways to reach people for Christ and deliver the Gospel, as well as new ways to provide teaching tools and connect believers.

Join in the prayer that God will help us use technology to deliver the Gospel. Make sure you seek first His Kingdom. Dedicate your life to serving Him and bringing the Gospel to the nations. Let Him use you to impact lives for Christ.

With whom can you share the Gospel today or this week?

To those who are under the Law, I became as one under the Law... so that I might gain those who are under the Law...I have become all things to all people, so that I may by all means save some.

1 Corinthians 9:20–22
NASB

PRAYER:

Father, give me a burden for souls. Open my eyes to how I can help spread the Gospel. I commit my resources to You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak; I have become all things to all people, so that I may by all means save some.

1 Corinthians 9:22 NASB

By All Means

BIBLE READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 9

In October 1861, the Pony Express delivered its last transcontinental telegrams across the United States. When the Express started just 18 months earlier, long-term success seemed guaranteed. The Express employed a revolutionary concept, filling a practical need.

Its mail delivery system used horse-and-rider relays operating between St. Joseph, Missouri, and Sacramento, California, stopping at 157 points on the 1,900-mile route. But after a few months of operations, it became clear that the Express was a financial disaster. Its death was made certain when the transcontinental telegraph line was completed. The Express was no longer needed.

Today, through media such as satellites and the internet, we can communicate instantaneously with people around the world. Millions of people worldwide now are accustomed to the speed and convenience of email and social media.

Every era has its own means of communication. In New Testament times, there were no cars or trains. No one could conceive of telephones, television, or the internet. But what drove the early church was its commitment to using every available technology to spread the Gospel. And in just a few years, they reached the known world.

Like Paul, we're to have a passion for souls. Pray for the lost, seek opportunities to witness, and support the work of evangelism so that "by all means" the Gospel may be preached to the nations of the world.

How are you using current technology to share the Gospel?

Your Specific Calling

BIBLE READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 12

David Stirling seemed like a failure. Born in Scotland in 1915, he had abundant talent but failed at everything he tried.

After being thrown out of college, he drifted. He decided to become an artist and moved to Paris to study, only to be told that his artistic abilities were inadequate. Then, he failed in becoming an architect. When his mother pressured him to do something practical, he decided to climb Mount Everest. Not surprisingly, his mountaineering efforts failed.

He joined the military at the outbreak of World War II but was described as "a nightmare recruit," often slipping away to drink and gamble. Generally, he was uncooperative, ignoring instructions.

But suddenly, everything seemed to gel. He developed ideas for commando-style warfare that some rejected as being impractical but ultimately were seen as innovative. His ideas led to the founding of the Special Air Service (SAS). In the leadership of this special corps, Stirling served with distinction.

Everything fell into place. Suddenly his life had meaning. He became focused. He had found his niche, the place where he fit.

A similar process takes place for many people in the spiritual realm when they realize they are unique with special gifts and abilities. They find fulfillment by embracing God's unique calling. You are *special* in God's sight. Seek to be faithful to accomplish your calling.

How are you using your time and talents for God's glory?

There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit [...] distributing to each one individually just as He wills. For just as the body is one and yet has many parts... though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:4, 11–12 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I commit my time, talents, and treasures to You. Use me for Your Kingdom. Help me fulfill Your specific calling for me. In Jesus' name, amen.

*When I was a child,
I spoke like a child, I
thought like a child, I
reasoned like a child.
When I became a man, I
gave up childish ways...
we see in a mirror
dimly.*

1 Corinthians 13:11–12 ESV

PRAYER:

Father, help me to mature in my faith. Fill me anew with Your Spirit. I humble myself and trust in You. In Jesus' name, amen.

As you are maturing in the Christian faith, what are you learning?

Maturing

BIBLE READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 13

Even as adults, we sometimes talk like children, think like children, and reason like children. Paul explained that we need to go through the process of being less like children and more like mature adults.

This involves conscious decisions to put away childish things. We begin to realize that we have choices to make. As we trust in God, He is ready to help and give us the strength and ability we need.

Paul made clear that a key step in this process is realizing our *limits*. No matter what we see, we see things “*imperfectly*.” No matter what we know, what we know is “*partial and incomplete*” (NLT).

Along the path toward spiritual maturity, we reach important conclusions. When we realize how little we know and how much we need God, we are humbled. We see that we cannot succeed on our own but need to depend on the presence and power of the Spirit. We realize why we need to be people of *prayer*, constantly seeking God for direction, protection, and wisdom.

Ask God to help you mature in your faith, no matter your age or how long you have been a believer. Humble yourself before God. Repent of pride. Cry out to Him for wisdom. Ask Him for clarity and discernment. Learn to be more sensitive to His Spirit. Ask Him to give you an outpouring of love for others.

Edification

BIBLE READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 14

Unity among believers is important to Jesus. He prayed that His followers would “*be one*” (John 17:21). The reality is that unity can be fragile. It easily can be tarnished when people think about themselves first, forget that every gift, talent, and resource is a gift from God, or become competitive and think of other believers as rivals.

Instead of thinking about ourselves first, Paul urged us to approach life from the context of the body of Christ. We are to remember that we all are part of the same body. We need each other. Yes, there are “*varieties of gifts*,” but there is only one Spirit. And there is only one body (1 Corinthians 12:4).

He emphasized the importance of the body by using the word edification four times in 1 Corinthians 14. This word focuses on the importance of building up the body and doing what it takes to make the body *stronger* and more *unified*.

Each person contributes in unique ways. We all are part of the same body. We should “*strive to excel*” because this will encourage “*the edification of the church*” (v. 12). It will bless others and advance God’s Kingdom.

Remember, you are special in God’s sight and important to His Kingdom. Don’t hoard or hide your gifts. Seek to edify others and build up the body. You have been blessed so you can be a blessing!

How can you use your spiritual gifts to encourage other believers?

*But one who prophesies
speaks to people for
edification, exhortation,
and consolation [...] All
things are to be done for
edification.*

1 Corinthians 14:3, 26
NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for the gifts You have given me. Help me be a blessing to others and contribute to Your body. In Jesus' name, amen.

Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals."

1 Corinthians 15:33 NASB

Bad Company

BIBLE READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 15

Writing to the Corinthian Christians, Paul quoted Menander, an important Greek poet. The writer of more than 100 plays, Menander left a memorable quotation about bad company. By referencing this quote, Paul was demonstrating a principle that was recognized as true, not only from a Christian perspective but also from the context of their own society.

Paul used this quote to address the reality of the resurrection. Some had been teaching the Corinthians that there had been no resurrection. Paul stressed that the resurrection was *central* to the Christian faith. If there had been no resurrection, Christianity would not be valid. In fact, *"if Christ has not been raised... your faith also is in vain"* (v. 14). It was all a waste of time. If there was no resurrection, *"Let's eat and drink, for tomorrow we die"* (v. 32).

But, as Paul explained, the resurrection *had taken place*. This truth changed everything. It was why Paul could risk his life and why he preached without compromise.

Menander's quote reinforced the truth that the company we keep influences us. The Greek word, used for the only time in the Bible, suggests *relationships*. The warning was clear: Wrong relationships can corrupt us even if we have strong morals.

You can be corrupted by the people with whom you spend time, the things you watch, the social media you read, and the music you listen to. Be careful. Be alert.

How does the resurrection rank in your life?

Planning and Saving

BIBLE READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 16

The Bible makes it clear. Stewardship is essential to being a Christian. It demonstrates our commitment to God and proves our priorities. Giving to Him helps us remember that *everything* we have belongs to Him and that He needs to have first place in our lives.

But the Corinthian Christians needed to be reminded about these principles. Apparently, giving to God had not been a priority. The problem? A lack of *planning*.

They might have had excuses, but Paul wanted them to know that this lack of planning was unacceptable. Every week, they needed to lay aside resources that were to be given to God's work. They were to *"put aside"* these resources. These concrete actions would help them *remember* that God was concerned about their lives all the time, not just when the collection was taken. Stewardship wasn't an option.

Saving and giving should become *habits*. What was the basis of their giving? They were to examine their lives and seek guidance from God. Then, they were to act based on what they had been given and what He showed them.

Many Christians, even today, do not realize the importance of stewardship. Make sure you are in the habit of giving to God. As necessary, put aside resources so you can give. Put God in first place. Show Him your commitment by giving Him your time, talents, and treasures.

How can you remind yourself to make tithing a priority in your budget?

Concerning the collection for the saints...so you are to do as well. On the first day of every week, each of you is to put aside and save as he may prosper, so that no collections need to be made when I come.

1 Corinthians 16:1-2 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for the resources You have given me. Help me to plan and be faithful in supporting Your Kingdom. In Jesus' name, amen.

If anyone does not love the Lord, he is to be accursed. Maranatha!

1 Corinthians 16:22 NASB

Come, Lord Jesus

BIBLE READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 16

The Corinthian church had many differences. But, concluding his letter to these believers, Paul stressed that they should *focus on Jesus*.

It was not enough to know *about* Him. The key was to love Him. Paul knew that having a love relationship with Jesus changes everything. When we love Him, we realize that Christianity is not a religion or a set of rules. Rather, it is about a *relationship*.

Being in love with Jesus helps us develop the right priorities and changes our approach to life. Instead of being concerned with ourselves, we will seek to know and serve Him. We will want to be with Him, and we will desire His presence. Like Paul, we can say, “*Maranatha*,” a word that means come, Lord Jesus.

Only the Father knows when Jesus will return (Matthew 24:36). But the Bible reminds us that He could return at any time, and we should be ready to meet Him. How can we be sure we’re ready? We can start by developing a love relationship with Him. We can be so in love that we long for His presence—here on earth or with Him in eternity.

Are you in love with Jesus? Do you have a vital relationship with Him? Make this your priority. Don’t allow anything to come between you and your Lord. Long to be with Him. With Paul, say from your heart, “Come, Lord Jesus!”

PRAYER:

Dear Lord Jesus, I want to deepen my relationship with You. You are more important than anything in this world. Come, Lord Jesus. In Your name, amen.

How are you preparing yourself for Jesus’ return?

The Spirit’s Power

BIBLE READING: LUKE 24

Mount Washington rises to a height of 6,288 feet in the heart of the White Mountain National Forest in New Hampshire. It is the highest peak in the northeastern United States and is notorious for harsh weather conditions, with a climate that is said to rival that of Antarctica.

This mountain is known for its wind. The annual average wind speed is just under 35 miles per hour. But hurricane-force winds are recorded there 110 days per year. One day in 1934, the wind reached 231 miles per hour, considered the highest wind speed ever recorded on earth outside of a tornado or cyclone.

While amazed at winds of this speed, we need to remember that this pales in comparison with the wind God sent for us—the mighty Holy Spirit. Jesus told the disciples they would be “*clothed with power from on high*.”

He promised that the Holy Spirit would fill their lives with life-changing power. Power to raise the dead. Power to heal the sick. Power to change the course of nations.

Today, that same power is available to you. Do not look at the circumstances you face in your own strength or depend on your own abilities. Instead, look to the Holy Spirit God has given you. He is the Spirit of miracle-working power. With Him, nothing is impossible. Nothing! Call on Him for the problems you face! Do not limit Him!

Compose a prayer asking for an extra outpouring of the Spirit.

I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.

Luke 24:49 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for sending Your Spirit. I ask You to help me with these problems: _____. I believe You for miracles! In Jesus’ name, amen.

We were burdened excessively, beyond our strength...we despaired even of life. Indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead...He will yet deliver us.

2 Corinthians 1:8–10 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You that I can trust You in every situation I face. Thank You that You are faithful. I depend on You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Write a prayer thanking God for being with you in every situation.

Learn to Trust God

BIBLE READING: 2 CORINTHIANS 1

The reality is that all of us experience problems—even great men of God like Paul. He wrote to the Corinthians that he was “*burdened excessively*” in ways that were beyond his strength. He “*despaired even of life.*” Yet he emerged victorious.

Facing situations like these brought power to his ministry. As he looked back, he realized that troubles like these forced him to trust God and kept him from trusting his abilities. They also stretched him beyond his limits and made him see how vulnerable he was without God. He needed to depend on Him. God provided everything he needed.

When we go through situations that test and challenge us, it may be natural to feel discouraged and hopeless. But we need to learn from Paul's example and realize that in every situation, we need to trust God. We need to be sensitive to His Spirit so that He might show us what to do and what He is accomplishing.

Through every situation, remember to place your hope in God. Look to Him for the wisdom, protection, and deliverance you need.

Truly, He can raise the dead. He can turn a situation that seems hopeless into a victory. He can open doors that seem closed. He can provide answers when no answers seem possible. You can hope in God no matter what you are going through! Trust Him to deliver you!

Manipulation

BIBLE READING: 1 JOHN 2

Colonel Wilhelm Stieber was a master manipulator. Called “one of the nastiest men who ever lived,” he revealed his character while serving with the Prussian police, who dismissed him because of his abuses. But the Russian government decided to hire him.

Stieber returned to prominence when the Prussian ambassador in Russia, Otto von Bismarck, became the Prussian president. He asked Stieber to head the Prussian police force. This ushered in a new era of manipulation.

Stieber learned that by *controlling information*, he could *shape* what people thought. He doctored telegrams and spread false rumors. During the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1871, he planted a story that French troops were panicking and suffering “appalling losses.” The story was fake yet encouraged the Prussians and discouraged the French.

Over time, many in business and politics have applied his techniques. Even today, believers need to realize the many ways information is manipulated.

The Bible warns us to be alert and not to be deceived “*with empty words*” (Ephesians 5:6) or “*well-crafted arguments*” (Colossians 2:4 NLT). Satan desires to *deceive* us, plant ideas, and manipulate our thoughts. Jesus warned, “*He is a liar and the father of lies*” (John 8:44).

You will face many forms of manipulation. Be sure you are grounded in God's Word. Be filled with the Spirit and sensitive to His leading, always ready, always alert.

How are you guarding your mind against the devil's deception?

These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you.

1 John 2:26 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, guide my thoughts. Help me guard what I allow into my heart and mind. Help me stay free from deception. In Jesus' name, amen.

Around the throne were twenty-four thrones... twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads. Out from the throne came flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder.

Revelation 4:4–5 NASB

PRAYER:

Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for preparing a place for me. I will seek first Your Kingdom and share the Gospel with others. In Your name, amen.

What do you think Heaven will be like?

The Heaven Room

BIBLE READING: REVELATION 4

The Heaven Room is unique in an estate in southeastern England. This room is dominated by massive murals painted by Antonio Verrio, an Italian painter who lived in the seventeenth century. Many consider his work for this room to be his masterpiece.

In this room, how did Verrio picture Heaven? There are no scenes from the Bible, no prophets or angels, nor Jesus or the disciples. Verrio painted Heaven as a scene from Greek mythology with Greek gods as heroes.

These scenes tell us a great deal about Verrio. They also remind us of the many ways people view Heaven. It is the subject of myths and legends, visions and theories. Many religions claim to have the correct understanding of Heaven.

Believers know that Heaven is not filled with Greek gods. The Bible tells us that Heaven is filled with thrones and elders and saints from every nation and generation, a sea of glass, rainbows, lightning, and thunder. Most of all, here in this place, God is enthroned and worshiped! Here, His people will spend eternity with Him.

What is your vision of Heaven? The Bible is filled with vivid descriptions. Perhaps above all, remember that this is your eternal home. Jesus said that He went there ahead of us, to prepare a place for every believer (John 14:2). Demonstrating His great love, He has promised a place for you!



A Blessing in Disguise

A car wreck turned out to be the perfect provision.



by Ben Cerullo

Don't you just love it when God shows up at the right time with exactly the right provision? Recently, a friend going through a challenging time financially shared this amazing story.

Not long ago, someone hit my friend's car, totaling it. God miraculously provided a new car for him with affordable payments even though he didn't have a full-time job.

Around the same time, a huge, unexpected expense occurred. While my friend was wondering how he would pay that bill, a check arrived in the mail—for the exact amount he owed! It was an insurance settlement from the earlier car accident.

We wouldn't ordinarily think of a wrecked car as a blessing. But God knew all along what my friend would need. Because God's ways are higher than ours (Isaiah 55:9), His plans for provision often look different from what we expect. So how can we learn to see God's provision in our lives?

EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

When the Israelites were wandering in the desert after leaving

Egypt, they complained about being hungry. God sent them two provisions they had not anticipated—manna and quail.

While it's tempting to grumble about our difficulties, let's instead show God our gratefulness by focusing on the unexpected blessings in the middle of the mess.

Remember, *"We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose"* (Romans 8:28 ESV).

PURSUe GOD FIRST

We think we know exactly what we need, but God knows what we REALLY need: more of Him.

When we pursue God first, He promises to take care of us and richly bless our lives. Matthew 6:33 (ESV) says, *"Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."* Can you think of a better promise?

No matter your circumstances, you can be confident in God's blessings of provision! ❖



What do we
REALLY need?

Jesus offers us more than enough in every situation.

We tend to see verses such as Philippians 4:19, “My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (ESV) as promises of a big house, a full bank account, and a happy family.

But what if it’s not about those kinds of things at all?

We think we need all these things, but all we *really* need is Jesus. Psalm 23:1 perfectly captures this sentiment: “The LORD is my shepherd; I **have** what I need” (CSB). Let’s look at what God has already provided for us:

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the

knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature
(2 Peter 1:3–4 ESV).

Do you see what Peter is saying here? When we are saved, God gives us His divine nature! HE is our inheritance and perfect provision! But what does it mean that God is our inheritance? The apostle Paul explains it this way:

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things

according to the counsel of his will
(Ephesians 1:11 ESV).

Children receive an inheritance from their parents. This means that, as believers, we are adopted into God’s family! Isn’t that amazing? We are entitled to call God our Father and Jesus our brother (John 20:17). As our inheritance from God, we have been richly given His blessings and benefits.

With that kind of favor, we do not need to turn to anyone else to fulfill our needs. God is our provider—our ultimate source. When we look to others to fulfill our needs, we’re only disappointed.

In addition to God’s blessings, we also inherit Jesus’ suffering. Wait, what? How is that a provision? Suffering leads to “steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing” (James 1:3–4 ESV).

If we’re looking for the provision of something new, often that means something old has to die first. We must suffer and die to our old selves for our new selves—our new nature—to be manifest.

But to deal with these trials, God promises to provide us with His grace. “And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work” (2 Corinthians 9:8 ESV).

So, you see, Jesus as **Jehovah Jireh** is all we *really* need. ❖

Meditate on these verses
this month:

Week One

“If God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?”

Matthew 6:30 ESV

Week Two

“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence.”

2 Peter 1:3 ESV

Week Three

“The young lions suffer want and hunger; but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.”

Psalms 34:10 ESV

Week Four

“He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”

Romans 8:32 ESV



I Stepped Out in Faith

A simple way to unlock God's blessings in your life!

An **Inspiration Ministries Monthly Partner** is someone who joins hands with David Cerullo and commits to **sowing monthly seeds** into God's Kingdom through the Good Ground of Inspiration Ministries. Each month, you'll be impacting more than 200 nations through Inspiration Ministries' media outreaches!

"As a Nigerian living in France, my wife and I had planned to start doing ministry work in Lyon, the second biggest town in France. But the cost of housing is extremely high. Then last year, I found Inspiration TV. I felt the Holy Spirit telling me not to consider my small income, but to stand on the promises of God. So I sowed a seed.

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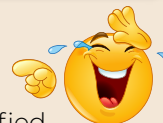


A Merry Heart...

does good, like medicine. – Proverbs 17:22



CORRECTION:



Last week's classified ad advertising a new crop of pagans in the shell or shelled halves should have been pecans. We are unaware of the availability of a new crop of pagans for sale.



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

Email it to:
MerryHeart@inspiration.org

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See page 28
for more details.

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CHRIST IN THE PASSOVER

- History & Symbolism
- Elements of the Seder
- Comparison of the Seder & the Lord's Supper



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