

APRIL 2024

inspiration

M A G A Z I N E



come out of
EGYPT

More Grace,
More Favor

The Place
of Prayer

The Great
Exchange



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Come out of Egypt

Have you been in some kind of spiritual, financial, or relational captivity? As God delivered the Israelites from “*the house of bondage*” at Passover (Exodus 13:14), He has delivered you and me from our bondage through the cross and resurrection of Jesus. See **page 5** for David’s article.



Turn to page 28 for details about our THANK YOU GIFTS.

Act quickly—our supplies are limited.

EDITOR’S CORNER



Roone Acree

In this Passover issue, I invite you to boldly claim the Lord’s promises of blessings on your finances, health, and relationships. Even if you have been held captive by years of trials and tribulations, your breakthrough can come with stunning speed.

By faith in Jesus Christ, YOU have access to ALL the covenant promises the Lord made to His covenant people Israel. No longer are you a citizen of Egypt, but a citizen of the land of His Kingdom. This month, honor the God of Passover and trust that your amazing season of blessings is at hand!

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Keys to Abundant Life Series

By ourselves we can do nothing, but in Christ, we have the glory of His Spirit residing in us—transforming and renewing our hearts and minds.




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Today's Articles



Choosing to Trust God in the New Year
When you trust God even MORE than you trust your own senses you...



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



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

Tonight On Inspiration | TV

Shaped BY FAITH

Shaped By Faith - View Full TV Schedule
Monday, January 1 at 1:30 p.m. ET / 12:30 UK
Join Theresa Rowe for **Shaped by Faith**. In each workout, Theresa increases your faith and fitness as she leads you through a series of exercises designed to increase your energy, strength, flexibility, and endurance ... Continue Reading **WATCH LIVE**

Daily Devotional - January 1

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

STRENGTHEN your walk

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



Today's Prayer
"So that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest ... since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted."
Hebrews 2:17-18



Thank You for all You have done for me. Teach me. Open doors for me to share my testimony. I trust you.
AMEN

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God brought you OUT of slavery to sin so that He could bring you INTO the Promised Land of His Kingdom!

come out of **EGYPT**



STRENGTHEN your walk with David Cerullo

When I see all the blessings and breakthroughs offered to us in God's appointed times, I have a hard time understanding why everyone wouldn't be eager to participate.

Are you in need of more assurance of God's forgiveness and favor today? Is there some difficult situation in your health, finances, emotions, or relationships that you need deliverance from? Have you come to the end of yourself, needing a new beginning in your life?

The first Passover marked the Israelites' deliverance from 430 years of captivity in Egypt. God's people were told to describe this event in simple but powerful terms: "By strength of hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Exodus 13:14).

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For generations, the Israelites had suffered cruel oppression—but that was about to change in sudden and dramatic fashion. God promised Moses:

*I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant... **I will bring you out** from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. I will take you as My people, and I will be your God...**And I will bring you into** the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you as a heritage* (Exodus 6:5–8).

Perhaps these great promises also apply to your life today. As you await your breakthrough, maybe you need God to bring you OUT from under your burdens...to rescue you from some kind of bondage...to show you His supernatural redemption...and to bring you INTO your spiritual inheritance. That's exactly what He wants to do for you!

And never forget that during the first Passover feast, the Israelites weren't *just* released from slavery, as wonderful as that was. They also unexpectedly received great abundance when they "*stripped the Egyptians of their wealth*" (Exodus 12:36 NLT).

Although the Israelites had been robbed of their blessings for centuries, they left their captivity with unimaginable riches and prosperity. Instead of still being hard-pressed slaves with little to call their own, they were abundantly blessed with silver, gold, clothing, and livestock.

What an amazing turnaround! And it's a powerful illustration of God's desire to reverse *your* negative circumstances and bless you

beyond your wildest dreams. Even if you have been in some kind of spiritual, financial, or relational captivity for a long time, your breakthrough can come with stunning speed.

EXPECT HIS PROMISES

Proverbs 13:22 promises, "*The wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous.*" However, I've met many Christians who can quote that great promise, yet they seem unable to experience its fulfillment in their lives. Could it be that they need to return to what the Israelites did when they plundered the Egyptians during the first Passover celebration?

Remember, God has appointments to bless you. When you follow His instructions, you can confidently expect His amazing promises to be fulfilled in your life.

Just as God supernaturally intervened to bless the children of Israel during Passover, He wants to stretch out His mighty hand to bring *you* into His land of abundance today.

Whatever turnaround you need in your life—your special season of blessings can begin when you honor God and celebrate the Feast of Passover as He asked.

In Exodus 23, God promises specific Passover blessings to you if you will obey Him, celebrate Passover, and come before Him with a special Passover offering. Scriptures say, He will send an angel before you to guard you... be an enemy to your enemies...prosper you... 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 over your life? Do you need a season of

Though the Israelites had been robbed of their blessings for centuries, they left their captivity with unimaginable riches and prosperity.

When you follow His instructions, you can confidently expect His amazing promises to be fulfilled in your life.

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!

NOW IS YOUR 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 guide us, provide for us, heal us, keep us safe, and set us free!

During the first Passover, the Israelites sprinkled the blood of an unblemished lamb on the doorposts of their homes. This protected them from the death angel that struck the Egyptians.

Do you see how beautifully this foreshadows what Jesus did for us on the cross? As God's spotless Passover Lamb, He shed His blood to purchase our salvation, protection, and favor.

And just as Passover struck a devastating blow to the false gods of the Egyptians, the cross forever crippled Satan's evil kingdom: *"Having disarmed principalities and powers, [Christ] made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it"* (Colossians 2:15).

As God delivered the Israelites from *"the house of bondage"* (Exodus 13:14) at Passover, He has delivered us from *our* bondage through the cross and resurrection of Jesus: *"He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son"* (Colossians 1:13 ESV). Once again, God brought us OUT of slavery to sin so that He could bring us INTO the Promised Land of His Kingdom!

Friend, this is where your victory comes from. As you apply the blood of Jesus Christ by faith to the doorposts of your heart, you can forever end the accuser's right to torment you (Revelation 12:10–11).

This month can be YOUR appointed time to take back what the enemy has stolen and escape from his bondage once and for all.

God Bless You!



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



Make Tax Time Less Painful (next year)



A free call to the Inspiration Ministries Partner Relations Team can help you find deductions to take on your 2024 income taxes and save on estate taxes when you go to be with the Lord!

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Did you know...

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Did you know...

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MORE GRACE MORE FAVOR

You Can't Give
What You
Never Receive

Humility keeps you from getting angry. It reminds you of all the mercy God has shown you, and it helps you show that mercy to others. Jesus told a story of a servant who owed his master an exorbitant amount of money. When his master called him for an accounting, the servant couldn't pay. He begged his master for mercy, saying, "Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all." The master was merciful. He forgave the man his debt and let him go (Matthew 18:23–27 KJV).

Jesus said this same man then left his master and found a fellow servant who owed him a few dollars. The man threatened the fellow servant who owed him money and demanded to be repaid. The servant fell at his feet and begged for mercy, but the man wouldn't

give it. He threw his fellow servant into prison until the debt was paid (Matthew 18:28–30). When the master heard of his servant's behavior, he called for the man to appear before him.

Then his lord...said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt...shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wrath, and delivered him to the tormentors (Matthew 18:32–34 KJV).

Though this man was shown mercy, he refused to give mercy. He was proud and selfish. He enjoyed the personal results of his master's mercy, but he didn't allow that mercy to change his heart. That man was like a lot of Christians. But

notice what Jesus said: "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses" (Matthew 18:35 KJV).

God has forgiven us a huge debt! If we truly understood how much mercy and grace we've been shown, it would cause us to be gracious and merciful to others. People who are unforgiving and harsh—who demand what they aren't willing to give—don't really understand how much God has forgiven them.

Claiming that your attitude or the way you treat others is a personality trait or part of your gifting is a carnal copout. You can be straightforward without being harsh. You can learn to speak the truth from a motivation of love (Ephesians 4:15). Scripture says we must die to self to become a true follower of Christ (Luke 9:23–24).

What happens when you insult a corpse? Nothing. You can ignore

that corpse, cuss it out, spit on it, kick it, and that corpse will just lie there. It won't respond. Why? Because it's dead. If you're struggling to respond to people with mercy and grace, it's because you've not died to self. Your self is still very much alive. If you were to humble yourself, look at the big picture, and put God and His Kingdom ahead of your personal agenda, it wouldn't matter so much what happened to you.

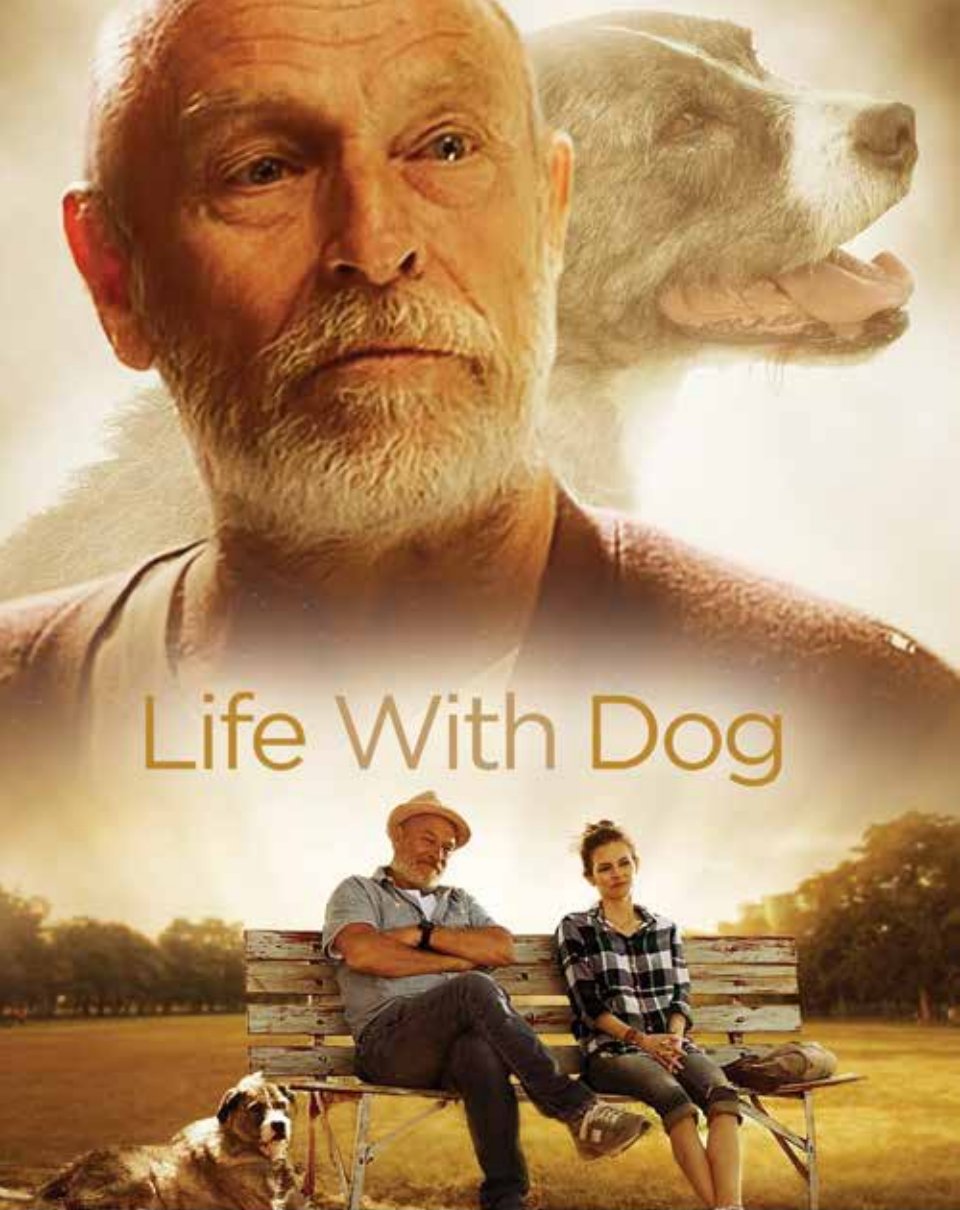
We can't give away what we don't have. Most of us don't understand how much God loves us, how much He's forgiven us. Love is the antithesis of pride. Jesus said the greatest demonstration of love is a person laying down their life for another (John 15:13). That's what He did for us. And that's what—as children of God—He's asked us to do for others. We are to reflect God's character by laying down our lives, our good, our advancement for the sake of another. ❖

If we truly understood how much mercy and grace we've been shown, it would cause us to be gracious and merciful to others.



Andrew Wommack builds the Kingdom with daily *Gospel Truth* broadcasts, writing, and serving at Charis Bible College.

Excerpt taken from *More Grace More Favor* by Andrew Wommack, ©2020 by Harrison House Publishers. Used by permission.



Life With Dog

Sometimes God speaks to us without words. When Joe's wife dies, God ministers through a stray dog that refuses to leave him.

Saturday, April 20 at 9:00 p.m. ET
Sunday, April 21 at 5:30 p.m. ET
Wednesday, April 24 at 9:00 p.m. ET

Program times subject to change.
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The Frontier Boys

A drive-by shooting leaves long-time friends with a complicated secret and one big question: Where is God in all of this?

Saturday, April 27 at 9:00 p.m. ET
Sunday, April 28 at 5:30 p.m. ET



In-Lawfully Yours

Quirky New York girl Jesse creates a stir when she divorces her cheating husband then falls for the local pastor.

Friday, April 12 at 10:00 p.m. ET

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The Place of Prayer



“Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there” (Matthew 14:22–23).



by Ben Cerullo

If you’ve ever wondered how the fervor of your spiritual life can be sustained, the answer is found in Jesus’ example. Stepping away from the chaos and busyness of the crowds, the Master went up on a mountain to pray alone.

In contrast, most of us are continuously on the run, pushing to keep up, always having something else to get done. But Jesus showed us that our spiritual life must be renewed day by day through prayerful, intimate fellowship with our Heavenly Father.

As a father and husband, juggling work, family responsibilities, and hobbies, I know there never seems to be enough time, money, or breaks from life’s pressures. Yet

in the midst of all the turmoil and noise of our lives, God is whispering to us, *“Be still, and know that I am God”* (Psalm 46:10).

Can you hear His call? Have you even stopped to listen? Do you have the comfort of knowing He is with you, *right now*?

God wants to be your truest friend. He longs to spend time with you. But He is asking you to quiet yourself, sit at His feet, and listen to Him (Luke 10:39–42).

SOLITUDE

You need to get alone with God today. Remove the distractions and turn off all the noise around you, listening only for the voice of the Holy Spirit.

The Lord waits for you to share your dreams, concerns, and fears with Him. In His presence is fulfillment and freedom like you’ve never known before. He is not far off, but right there waiting to meet your deepest needs.

So get alone and quiet your soul, for it is in solitude with God that you will learn to depend on Him alone. As you meditate on Him and open His ageless book, you will hear His gentle words of affirmation and instruction. His truths will no longer be mere head knowledge, for they will be written on your heart.

SPEND TIME

God will pursue you relentlessly until He is the love of your life because He knows He’s the answer to every need you have. As you tell Him of your joys and hopes and desires, you’ll receive back His answers on the questions that once paralyzed you with indecision. He will calm your fears, give you His perspective, and fill you with peace and rest—even when the world seems to be going crazy all around you.

In those quiet times, the Lord will comfort you in His loving arms and touch you with His grace. Your heart will become one with His as you wait on Him. You will gain new strength and soar above life’s storms like an eagle (Isaiah 40:31).

Your Good Shepherd has promised to lead you beside still waters, give you rest in green pastures, and restore your soul (Psalm 23). As you make an appointment to spend time alone with Him each day, He will make certain that *nothing* can separate you from His love. Even on the day of battle, you will have overwhelming victory (Romans 8:31–39).

God has opened wide the door to His throne room (Hebrews 4:16). Don’t let *anything* stop you from finding the place of prayer. ❖

I Want to Live!

Scott's supposed death sentence was actually a miracle in the making.



What does God do with a good ol' southern boy taken captive by the demon of alcohol? He meets him at death's door with love and forgiveness.

And that good ol' southern boy—what does he do? He accepts that love and the transformation it brings. Here's his story!

Scott grew up in church, and he never strayed from his commitment to his faith. But a friendship with alcohol developed into a deadly enemy that devastated him on a work trip in 2016. As a traveling member of his local union, Scott headed to California. Far from home and earning excellent money as a union electrician, he

lost sight of his faith and wasted every cent in unholy pursuits.

Devastated to realize the power alcohol had over him, Scott vowed to never drink again. "I just knew I could never betray God or my family like that again. I began to seek God's will, strength, and wisdom every morning. I would read a chapter of Proverbs, a devotion, and pray before the day got going."

Scott thought the damage of alcohol was behind him. Soon an opportunity to take early retirement popped up, and he gladly took it. Life was good. Part of his routine was buying a meal each day from a next door neighbor.

When Scott failed to come by two days in a row, the neighbors

went to check on him. They found him lying unconscious in a pool of blood.

Emergency services came and rushed Scott to the hospital. As staff frantically searched for the cause of the excessive bleeding, his body began to shut down. Within five minutes he was put in a medically induced coma to keep him alive until family could come.

The shocking cause pointed back to Scott's days of drinking: cirrhosis of the liver.

Loved ones came, and Scott held onto life but didn't improve. Three weeks later, the hospital confronted his family with the dire news that it was time to remove life support. Scott's mother, a nurse herself, understood all too well that danger of stripping a patient on life support. Whether Scott lived or died would be in the hands of God alone.

The following day found Scott still clinging to life. While in a semi-comatose state, Scott slipped into something like a dream. He felt like he was in a body of water when he felt something grasp his

leg. In his head, he heard a voice, "If you want to die, swim down. If you want to live, swim up to the light." Nursing staff later said this was the moment he erupted into consciousness—gasping for breath and screaming, "I want to live. I want to live."

And in less than five months, the man who had been slated to die walked away from the hospital with the blessing of the staff. The liver specialist told him, "Mr. Johnson, you are the fastest-healing patient we've ever had. You are a miracle of God."

Scott can't stop telling people about this God who loves so deeply and meets you at your point of greatest need. Staying strong in faith takes work, but he is thankful for the resources and support he finds at Inspiration Ministries.

"God didn't just heal me, He rebuilt me like new. All the parts of me that were damaged by the past have been made new! My liver, kidneys, lungs, eyes, everything. I want everyone to know God really is **FOR** them. I want to spend the rest of my life telling people about my Jesus." ❖

What is YOUR testimony of God's faithfulness or His healing? Share it with us and our Inspiration partners by visiting inspiration.org/praise TODAY!



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DELIVERED FROM DRUGS...

“I was addicted to drugs and spent many years on the streets. [Your] prayer minister led me in the prayer to surrender my life to Christ; I know God has saved me and delivered me from drugs!”—Jean, Georgia

TOTAL FORGIVENESS...

“As I watched David Cerullo’s video, I asked God to forgive me of my sins, and He helped me out of this hole of condemnation!”—Oscar, Peru

LIFE TRANSFORMED...

“Through your prayers, I am now saved, baptized, and filled with the Holy Spirit. I want to thank God for you, and I pray that He will continue blessing your ministry as you help others come to Christ.”—Hortence, United Kingdom

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The Man

TODAY’S BIBLE READING: JOHN 19

Many consider Titian the greatest painter of the sixteenth century, perhaps of all time. Born in northeastern Italy, he gained fame after settling in Venice.

Many of his masterpieces focused on biblical themes. In 1543, Titian turned his attention to the moment when Pilate presented Jesus to a crowd that demanded His crucifixion. The painting is called *Ecce Homo* (Latin for *Behold the Man*).

Titian filled this painting with people, with a focus on the crowd. Some wave their arms. One man listens carefully. A child seems confused and seeks to understand what is taking place. Jesus and Pilate are seen in the upper left corner. Just below them, a Roman crouches near a boy who is screaming.

A bearded man looks at two men on horseback. One of the horsemen is Suleiman the Magnificent, the powerful Ottoman sultan who was threatening Europe with his radical Islamic vision. The other horseman is a Roman commander sympathetic to Christ.

A study of this painting reveals that Titian dealt with issues and people relevant to his time. But this painting urges us to think about *our* time and *our* lives.

What happens when we picture ourselves standing in the crowd before Pilate? We can imagine the political and social forces of our time and the clash of ideas and cultures.

Who is Jesus to you?

Write about what Jesus means to you personally.

FRIDAY

April

1

Jesus then came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said to them, “Behold, the Man!”

John 19:5 NASB

PRAYER:

Dear Lord Jesus, You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. You are my Savior and Lord. I submit my life to You. In Your name, amen.

He will be like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers.

Psalms 1:3 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, help me trust You. Thank You that Your Word always is true. I stand on Your promises. In Jesus' name, amen.

How can you make sure Jesus is your source of living water?

Always Fruitful

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PSALM 1

It was a great mystery. Observers wondered why the Congo River in Africa seemed to have a *constant* flow of water regardless of the season. Water levels never seemed to vary.

Those who tried to solve this mystery faced serious obstacles. Traveling the course of the river seemed impossible because it was lined with cataracts, rock formations, and other natural barriers. These foreboding conditions enhanced the mystery.

Finally, a breakthrough took place when explorer Henry Morton Stanley walked the length of the Congo from its source. His journey revealed the solution to the mystery. Because of its length, the river traveled through many elevations and climate changes. It might be dry in some areas but rainy in others. As a result, its flow never dropped.

Some people have *spiritual* lives that change from moment to moment. Sometimes they feel victorious and close to God. But at other times they feel spiritually dry.

The Bible tells us we don't need to be content with an inconsistent spiritual life. In fact, we can experience God's *constant* blessings in *every* season. He *never* changes. His principles *are always* true. We simply need to *stand* on His Word and live by faith in Him.

Don't give in to doubt or depend on the unstable things of this world. Trust in God. Be sure you plant your life in His Word. He can make you *fruitful* in *every* season.

He Is Risen!

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: MATTHEW 28

As a young man, Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther faced the reality of death. Attending college in Leipzig, Germany, he suffered a crippling lung disease. During the months required for recuperation, he poured himself into Bible study and other spiritual writings.

His studies brought him closer to the Lord and led him to conclusions that conflicted with church officials. Seeking freedom to follow his convictions, he immigrated to America, settling near St. Louis. There, he helped establish the Lutheran Church's Missouri Synod.

The work was challenging, but Walther made a significant impact. As his health began to suffer, he felt it was necessary to return to Germany for a time of rest. He was at sea on Easter 1860 when he became inspired to write the hymn "He's Risen, He's Risen!" (It is sung in English and known by the translation provided by Anna M. Meyer.)

Walther expressed the triumph he knew to be true because of the resurrection: He knew that through His death and resurrection, Jesus had "opened death's prison" and all who believe in Him are free!

Although Jesus is "the Lord of creation," He had been "nailed to the tree." His foes thought they were "triumphant," but Jesus arose from the dead. He "vanquished" every foe, including death, hell, and Satan.

No matter what challenges you face, you can celebrate. Jesus has risen! Because of Him, you can be more than a conqueror.

How has Jesus' resurrection impacted your recent challenges?

He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

Matthew 28:6

PRAYER:

Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for rising from the dead. Thank You that I can triumph over every foe! In Your name, amen.

You, O LORD, are a shield around me...I was crying to the LORD with my voice, and He answered me from His holy mountain. Selah. I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the LORD sustains me.

Psalms 3:3–5 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for being a shield around me. Thank You for delivering me from every worry and fear. I trust in You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Compose a prayer asking for God's protection and deliverance this week.

Freedom from Worry

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PSALM 3

It was a time of emotional turmoil. David was fleeing for his life, pursued by his son Absalom. We hardly can imagine what thoughts must have flooded David's mind—the pain and confusion. In the complexities of this moment, David wrote this psalm.

Feeling overwhelmed and outnumbered, he cried out to God. There did not seem to be any hope. Others may have concluded that God would not deliver him, but David did not give up. Instead, he turned to God because he knew He was “a shield around” him. And he knew that God would answer him and protect him.

After turning to God, David had such peace that he could sleep in tranquility. He knew God would sustain him. Even if he was besieged by thousands on every side, he refused to worry. He could have peace.

Throughout his life, David had many opportunities to worry and be afraid. But he also knew how to be free from these burdens. The solution was to depend on God. As David also wrote, “Cast your burden upon the LORD and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken” (Psalm 55:22).

You, too, can be delivered from fear and worry. Cast your cares on the Lord. Cry out to Him. Stand on His Word. Believe His promises. Trust Him. Rest in Him. Let Him give you real freedom and real peace.

Chasing the Wind

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ECCLESIASTES 1

Known as a brilliant philosopher, Thomas Hobbes concluded that most people were motivated by “a perpetual and restless desire for power.” Born in 1588 in England, he came to distrust democracy.

Convinced by his conclusions, he believed that society needed strong leadership. His ideas helped shape the political culture of his time. They have continued to be influential in the realms of politics, the military, education, and business throughout the past four centuries.

Instead of looking to God, he believed that every person was his own judge. He felt that “good and evil are names that signify our appetites and aversions.”

Throughout history, many have been like Hobbes, confident in themselves and trusting their conclusions. Like Hobbes, many have thought that strong leaders are necessary to solve the world's problems.

Like the preacher in Ecclesiastes saw, many think they can find satisfaction through the pursuit of power. But the Bible warns that all human effort is merely chasing the wind. Only God can provide lasting satisfaction and meaning. And only He can provide solutions.

Don't waste your life chasing the wind or trusting the passing things of this world. Only God can give you true fulfillment and joy. Only He can provide lasting peace and the answers you need. Trust in Him. Spend your life seeking to please Him.

Examine your life for things that are chasing after the wind.

My mind has observed a wealth of wisdom and knowledge. And I set my mind to know wisdom and to know madness and folly; I realized that this also is striving after wind.

Ecclesiastes 1:16–17 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, help me focus on things that really matter. Bring meaning and purpose to my life. In Jesus' name, amen.

But rejoice, all who take refuge in You, sing for joy forever! And may You shelter them, that those who love Your name may rejoice in You. For You bless the righteous person, LORD.

Psalm 5:11–12 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, show me clearly the path You want me to take in my life. I commit my time, talents, and treasures to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

How do you plan to spend your time and talents for God this week?

Joy in Serving God

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PSALM 5

Sergei Rachmaninoff dreamed of becoming a composer. When he was only 19, he graduated from the Moscow Conservatory, winning a gold medal for his opera *Aleko*. Despite these successes, he struggled with self-doubt and had bouts of depression. In particular, he suffered wounds from critical comments after the debut of his first symphony.

After the Russian Revolution of 1917, he left his homeland, dividing his time between homes in Switzerland and the United States. Although still dreaming of concentrating on composing, he spent much of his life as a conductor and a pianist.

Looking back, he once reflected, “I have never been able to make up my mind as to what was my true calling.” He admitted being constantly troubled that “in venturing into too many fields, I may have failed to make the best use of my life.”

Many people, including many Christians, face the same kind of uncertainty and question the decisions they have made. They aren't sure how to spend their time and energy. The Bible makes clear that God wants us to be able to trust in Him and be at peace, to be filled with joy, not doubt and uncertainty, and to know He will guide us.

Today, remember that God loves you and has a plan for your life. Commit your way to Him and let Him direct your path. Then serve Him faithfully in every situation you face with all your energy.

Whom Do You Trust?

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PSALM 11

According to a recent survey, people have become less trusting. And they are trusting each other to tell the truth less than they did in the recent past. Levels of trust have declined for almost every profession. Similarly, product guarantees mean less.

This pattern should not surprise most observers. In fact, polls like this confirm observations we all share. Trends may change from year to year. At times, levels of trust might increase. But circumstances cause people to be disappointed in others. Promises often are made and not kept. We wonder who we can trust and on whom we can depend.

Christians should know the answer. The Bible clearly warns us against placing our trust in the circumstances of life or other people. Summarizing the biblical perspective, David wrote that he trusted in the Lord for protection. He realized that God “watches everyone closely, examining every person on earth.” He rules over Heaven and Earth. David knew that he could trust in God in every situation. He keeps all His promises.

Today, realize that other people may disappoint you. They may fail and fall short of your expectations. The Bible reminds us that no one is perfect. All of us are flawed and make mistakes. This is why we need to depend on God and place our trust in Him.

Remember, you can stand on His Word. And you can trust Him.

Have you been tempted to trust in anything other than God and His Word?

I trust in the LORD for protection [...] the LORD still rules from heaven. He watches everyone closely, examining every person on earth [...] For the righteous LORD loves justice. The virtuous will see his face.

Psalm 11:1, 4, 7 NLT

PRAYER:

Father, forgive me for placing my trust in other people or circumstances. I trust in You. Thank You that You are dependable. In Jesus' name, amen.

Whoever speaks is to do so as one who is speaking actual words of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified.

1 Peter 4:11 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, help me to focus on the mission You have given me. Help me not to become discouraged. Thank You for providing everything I need. In Jesus' name, amen.

Are you ready and spiritually equipped to endure?

Persistence

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 1 PETER 4

History often celebrates triumphs associated with decisive moments when brilliant commanders seized the initiative. But historian Cathal Nolan reminds us that quick victories often are not as decisive as some assume. Other factors may be more important.

While armies may prevail in single battles, it often is more important to have the resources to *sustain* their efforts. Sometimes the decisive factors include maintaining morale and securing adequate supplies.

As an example from history, look at the campaigns of Hannibal in fighting the Romans in the third century BC. This brilliant commander produced stunning victories. Yet ultimately, he and his armies were defeated. Why? They could not *sustain* their triumphs.

In contrast, the Romans overcame initial losses by *persistence*. Fighting on their home grounds, they secured the necessary resources.

In our spiritual lives, we must be supplied for *sustained* effort. This means having a *reservoir* of spiritual resources. We must know God's Word, be guided by His principles, and be people of prayer, with an intimate relationship with God. We need to be properly connected with the body of Christ, have the right attitude, be *persistent*, and don't become weary.

Make sure you are ready. Depend on God. Be spiritually equipped. Always be prepared for battle. Be ready to be trained and disciplined. Be persistent. Walk by faith.

Tested

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOB 23

Job did not grasp what had happened. Once he had been successful and respected. Yet for reasons he could not understand, he experienced loss and suffering. Eventually he recognized that he was being tested.

His friends, on the other hand, were quick to judge him and explain the reasons for what had happened to him. However, they did not consider that God might have been trying to accomplish something in Job's life.

Job continued to focus on God. Here in this chapter, Job grappled with problems because he could not find God. Job seemed to sense that his situation related to his relationship with Him and that he needed to understand better what God was trying to teach him.

As we go through life, we, too, may go through times of testing. In these situations, the Bible encourages us to consider it all joy when we encounter trials. Remember that the testing of our faith produces endurance (James 1:2-4). The Bible tells us God allows trials because He wants to perfect and refine us (Proverbs 17:3).

When you go through trials, remember to seek God. Ask for His insights to see what He might be doing in your life. He may be stretching you, teaching you new truths, refining your character, and deepening your faith.

Call on Him for situations you face. Have faith in Him, knowing that He wants to purify you, refine you, teach you, and bring you greater blessings.

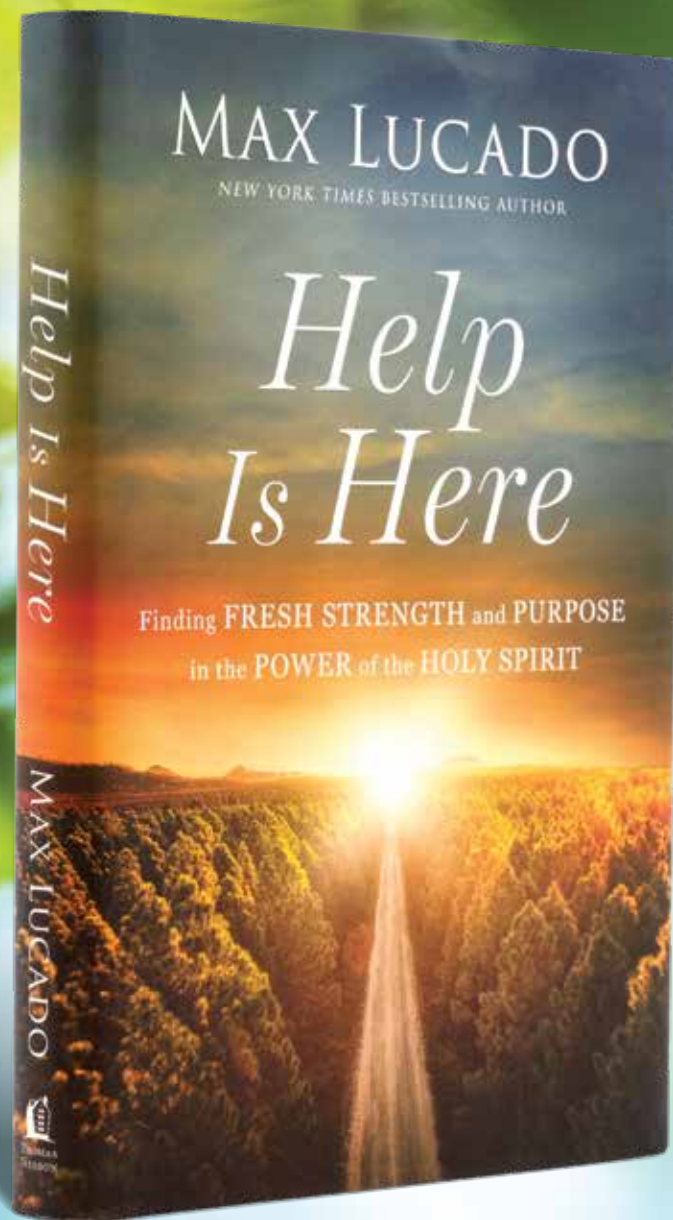
Do you feel God is currently trying to refine you?

He knows the way I take; when He has put me to the test, I will come out as gold.

Job 23:10 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I commit these situations to You: _____. Give me wisdom. I submit my life to You. In Jesus' name, amen.



When You Feel Powerless...

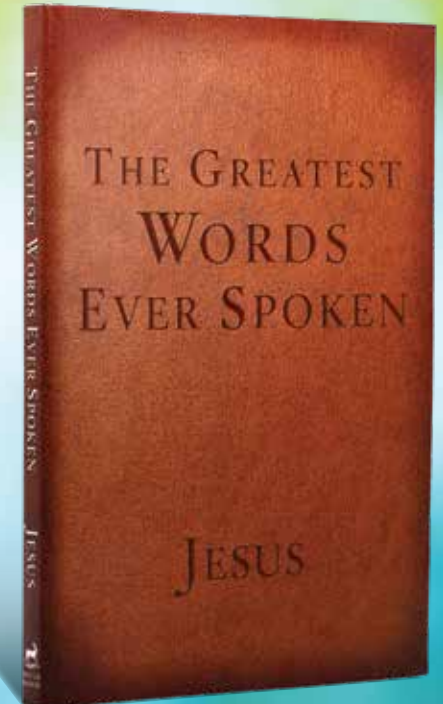
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Since times are not hidden from the Almighty, why do those who know Him see not His days?

Job 24:1

PRAYER:

Father, I trust my life to You. Give me compassion for others. Open my eyes to things You want to show me. In Jesus' name, amen.

How does facing challenges help you to be more compassionate?

A New Perspective

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOB 24

Job was prosperous and content. Even God declared him to be “*blameless and upright*” (Job 1:8). But things changed when he experienced problems. His friends came to help but mostly battered him with accusations. Meanwhile, through real pain and loss, Job was forced to look at himself in new ways.

He faced serious problems. In the process, he understood how the poor often are abused. They must search for necessities. He saw the impact of broken homes and realized that people with serious problems do not need platitudes but hope and encouragement.

Through his experiences, Job became more compassionate. He was more concerned about the way he used his own resources. He realized how easy it can be to criticize others.

Job realized how often people take advantage of others. He saw how the ungodly seem to prosper. Thinking they are immune from problems, they can have a false sense of security.

Today, make sure you are sensitive to God's leading. Remember, He might use circumstances to disrupt your status quo or allow experiences that force you to look at life in new ways to develop a more intensified prayer life and cause you to dig deeper into His Word.

Be sensitive to the things God allows in your life. Ask Him to speak to you. Be careful to listen. Let Him teach you, refine you, deepen you, change you.

Right But Wrong

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOB 25

The comments Bildad made to Job can seem right. Here was a friend of Job who recognized the greatness of God and made statements that often echo those found throughout the Bible. Why, then, was God so angry with Bildad? Why did God say he had not spoken “*what is trustworthy*” (Job 42:8)? How could Bildad have reached conclusions that seemed so right and yet were so wrong?

As we study Bildad's speeches (chapters 8, 18, and 25), they reveal that he had many opinions *about* God but didn't seem to know Him *personally*. He had knowledge but not real spiritual discernment. He was more concerned with his own prejudices than being a comforter or friend. We also sense arrogance and a man sure of his own opinions. He was confident that Job had committed many sins.

Through Bildad's example, we realize the importance of humility—the kind of humility Job felt after *his* encounter with God when he repented “*on dust and ashes*” (Job 42:6). We also realize anew that God is interested in a *relationship*. He doesn't want people who just have a lot of information but rather those who know Him *intimately* and *personally*, people whose lives have been changed by God Himself.

Today, remember that God desires to know you *personally*. Deepen your relationship *with* Him. Humble yourself before Him. Spend time in prayer. Submit every thought to Him. Seek to be led by His Spirit.

How can you be a true encouragement to others?

Dominion and awe belong to Him [...] How then can mankind be righteous with God? Or how can anyone who is born of woman be pure?

Job 25:1, 4 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I humble myself before You. I seek a more intimate relationship with You. Help me to impact others for Your Kingdom. In Jesus' name, amen.

But where can wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?

Job 28:12 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I need Your wisdom. I look to You. Open my mind to understand Your truths. I commit my life to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Compose a prayer asking God for wisdom to face a particular challenge.

Finding Wisdom

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOB 28

Driven by problems, Job found himself asking profound questions about himself, God, and life itself. Facing challenges, he needed to know what to do to gain perspective on life and the issues he faced, so he could make the right decisions.

The friends who gathered around him believed they had all the answers. Job sensed they had information and opinions but not real wisdom. Job knew he could gain insight from nature and learn from life experiences. But he wanted *real* wisdom and understanding (vs. 13–22).

What could he do? Where could he turn? Job realized that he had to look to God and God alone, the source of true wisdom: *“For He looks to the ends of the earth; He sees everything under the heavens”* (v. 24).

Today, the world is filled with many advisors, people who claim to be experts, and people who might be smart and possess vast quantities of information. Even friends and relatives think they know what is best. But this does not mean they possess *real* wisdom and understanding.

Do you have questions about your life? Do you face important challenges and need direction? Do you need wisdom and understanding? Start by seeking God in sincere prayer. He is the source of true wisdom and understanding about every subject. Humble yourself before Him. Fill your life with His Word. Do not be deceived by the world's imitations, but go right to the Source.

Bound to Integrity

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOB 31

Job had been through many trials. Then, he was battered by accusations from friends who thought he must have committed great sins. But neither Job nor his friends realized that God said he was innocent. Even his wife asked him, *“Do you still hold firm your integrity?”* Her advice was, *“Curse God and die!”* (Job 2:9).

Despite all he suffered, in his final speech, Job affirmed his commitment to integrity. He had questions but still refused to compromise. He knew God could weigh him because He knew his integrity. His heart had not *“been enticed by a woman.”* He had not *“lurked at [his] neighbor's doorway”* (v. 9). He knew such things would be lustful crimes worthy of judgment.

Job was confident because his character had been consistent, always trying to do what was right and trying to be compassionate. He didn't trust his resources or rejoice when his enemies faced unfortunate experiences. He was careful about what he said and did not allow his mouth to sin.

The Bible tells us that *“fire tests the purity of silver and gold, but the LORD tests the heart”* (Proverbs 17:3 NLT). Job had been tested and passed.

Today, make sure *you* are ready for life's tests. Live so God is pleased with *your* character. Stay committed to integrity, be a person of principle, always trust God, and remain faithful to His Word.

Are you spiritually ready to be evaluated and refined?

I have made a covenant with my eyes; how then could I look at a virgin? And what is the portion of God from above or the inheritance of the Almighty from on high?

Job 31:1–2 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, convict me of sin and anything that displeases You. Help me to live according to Your Word. Use me to impact others. In Jesus' name, amen.

Wait for me a little, and I will show you that there is yet more to be said on God's behalf.

Job 36:2 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, give me discernment. Teach me by Your Spirit. Guide and lead me to understand Your Word more clearly. In Jesus' name, amen.

Write a prayer asking God to guide your words and actions.

Assumptions

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOB 36

Elihu was convinced he alone correctly understood what happened to Job and why; Job and his other friends were wrong. But Elihu took these conclusions to another level. He genuinely felt that he was called to speak on "God's behalf."

There is no evidence that God spoke to him or directed him to speak. In fact, Elihu is not mentioned anywhere outside of Job 32–37. It seems more likely that Elihu simply was confident God would approve. But he was wrong.

It can be easy to be confident like Elihu. But the Bible warns us to be careful before assuming we are hearing from God.

We see this kind of assumption when Israel and Judah were deciding whether to fight against Aram (1 Kings 22). One prophet, Zedekiah, stated emphatically that God wanted them to go to war, and the other prophets agreed. But they all were *wrong*. They had been victims of a deceiving spirit. Only one man, Micaiah, knew the *real* word of God.

The Bible instructs us to be *careful* before we assume that we speak for God or have heard from Him. Even "*a sign or a wonder*" didn't mean a prophet was speaking for Him. He even may be trying to deceive (Deuteronomy 13:1–5).

Today, remember that God alone is God. Humble yourself before Him. Seek Him with a pure heart. And seek to be led by His Spirit.

Comfort

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOB 38

A freed slave, Elizabeth Keckley became a dressmaker for Mary Lincoln. In this unique position, she shared many private moments with Mrs. Lincoln and her husband, Abraham.

One moment occurred in the summer of 1863 as America was mired in the tragic Civil War. As she fitted a dress on Mrs. Lincoln, the president walked into the room and threw himself upon a sofa "like a tired child." He was a "complete picture of dejection." He commented that the news was bad. "It is dark, dark everywhere."

He then picked up a Bible. As he read, his countenance changed. The dejected look was replaced with hope.

Wondering what could have brought this change, Elizabeth observed he was reading from Job. She could almost hear God "speaking to him from out of the whirlwind of battle, 'Gird up thy loins now like a man.'" Reading Job had given him new "courage and hope."

Over the centuries, the book of Job has spoken to many people who relate to his struggles and questions. Many feel the reality of his suffering and have drawn strength from his encounter with God. The Bible tells us that through the "*endurance of Job*" we learn how "*the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful*" (James 5:11).

Today, remember that He is the "*God of all comfort*." Turn to Him for the comfort you need. But also remember that you can comfort others (2 Corinthians 1:3–4).

Which Scripture passage(s) brings you the most comfort?

Now tighten the belt on your waist like a man, and I shall ask you, and you inform Me!

Job 38:3 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for being with me in every situation. Use me to impact others and be a source of encouragement and comfort. In Jesus' name, amen.

No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

2 Corinthians 11:14 NASB

Role Model

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 2 CORINTHIANS 11

To many people, Satan is a kind of role model. He represents a lifestyle and attitude they admire. They admire his independence. And his example provides a model for their attitudes and actions.

We see a demonstration of his attitude in his interaction with Jesus during His temptation. We see this in Satan's interaction with Adam and Eve and with Job. We see this in the way he was able to lure the children of Israel into idolatry and abandoning God. We see this in the ministry of the early church.

Why would Satan be a hero to so many people? He can try to make the darkness seem like light. His realm is characterized by darkness. It is secretive and closed. Its true purposes and impact are hidden. As Paul described, one of the byproducts of being saved is that our eyes are opened, and we turn *"from the power of Satan to God"* (Acts 26:17–18).

This context of darkness demonstrates the ways Satan continually tries to deceive us. He is a master of disguise and can seem like *"an angel of light."* He can sound reasonable and can picture all who oppose him as being irrational.

Who is your hero? Your role model? Model your life on the example set by Jesus. Serve others. Be committed to obeying the Father. Follow Jesus—the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Pick up your cross daily and follow Him.

PRAYER:

Father, I model my life after Jesus. He is my hero. Help me to apply biblical principles in my life. In Jesus' name, amen.

Describe your role model.

Committed to Prayer

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: EPHESIANS 6

Born in South Africa, Andrew Murray was raised in a Christian home where his father regularly led his family in prayer and Bible reading. As an adult, Murray pastored several churches. But his greatest impact might have come as a writer. Many of his books focused on teaching believers *how* to pray, explaining why the prayers of so many Christians were weak and ineffective.

He observed that many believers are content just going through the motions and repeating familiar phrases. But the Bible taught a *different* kind of prayer with *power*. It results in *real* change: "We must begin to believe that God, in the mystery of prayer, has entrusted us with a force that can move the heavenly world, and can bring its power down to earth."

Murray discovered that effective prayers emerge from an intimate *relationship* with God: "Prayer is the quiet, persistent living of our life of desire and faith in the *presence* of our God."

Prayer should focus on that relationship. Murray's thoughts? "Each time before you intercede, be quiet first and worship God in His glory." We should *marvel* at the privileges He has given us and "expect great things." This relationship grows as we put aside our personal interests and surrender to Him. Murray came to love these times with the Lord.

Renew your commitment to prayer. Seek to grow closer to your Father. Out of that relationship, pray expecting results, with faith and confidence.

Write a worship prayer asking the Father to reveal His glory to you.

Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.

Ephesians 6:18 NLT

PRAYER:

Father, I desire to have a deeper relationship with You. I commit these situations to You: _____. I believe You for answers! In Jesus' name, amen.

For our momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison.

2 Corinthians 4:17 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for caring for me and wanting to perfect me. Help me cooperate with You. Thank You for refining me. In Jesus' name, amen.

Are you cooperating with God as He works to sanctify you?

Refined

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 2 CORINTHIANS 4

In the 1940s, European immigrants fleeing Nazi persecution flooded the United States. One byproduct was enriching America's musical climate, particularly in Cleveland where many immigrant musicians settled.

At the time, Cleveland's orchestra lacked distinction. But then Hungarian-born George Szell became its new music director. Szell had lofty standards and was not satisfied with tolerable execution. He was dedicated to excellence, accomplishing what few thought possible, turning the Cleveland Orchestra into one of the world's great ensembles. Szell's high standards and training left a legacy that still is felt today.

In the spiritual realm, we need to realize that God has high standards for us. He knows how to shape our lives into vessels of excellence. To reach our potential, we need to cooperate with Him. Along the way, we might experience struggles or momentary troubles. We may face situations that stretch us.

At times like these, we need to realize that God is *perfecting* us. He wants to bring us to new dimensions and teach us more about Himself and His Word. He is helping us experience an eternal weight of glory that will make every difficulty worthwhile.

Remember that God is at work *refining* you! Commit the challenges of your life to Him. Trust Him and cooperate with Him. Have faith that He will bring you through every trial, meet every need, and help you emerge as a more victorious Christian.

Complete Commitment

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: MATTHEW 19

When Antony of Egypt turned 20, he inherited his parents' wealth. But these earthly riches left him unsatisfied. Real change only took place *after* he pondered the story from Matthew 19 where Jesus told a young man if he wanted to be perfect, he needed to give up everything and follow Him.

After reading those words, Antony knew he did not want an *ordinary* life; he wanted to be perfect. Making a radical commitment to follow Jesus, he sold *all* his possessions, laying everything aside to know Him more. He spent years dedicated to prayer. God rewarded him with great revelations and insights.

Recognizing that something powerful had happened in Antony's life, others began to study his secrets. He shared how *wonderful* it was to *experience* God's love. He urged others to pray continually, sing psalms, and stand on the Scriptures.

Augustine of Hippo, an important figure in early church history, became a Christian shortly after learning about Antony. Although he was well-educated, Augustine recognized that *something* was lacking in his life. Antony provided the example Augustine needed. He wrote that Antony could "storm the gates of heaven while we, for all our learning, lie here groveling in this world of flesh and blood."

How committed are *you* to the Gospel? If you want to be perfect, follow Jesus. Don't compromise or be content with a mediocre faith. Seek first His Kingdom. And dedicate everything to Him.

What is Jesus calling you to give up to follow Him?

"If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

Matthew 19:21

PRAYER:

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

It came about in the days when the judges governed, that there was a famine in the land. And a man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the land of Moab with his wife and his two sons.

Ruth 1:1 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I commit these situations to You: _____ . I believe You can work through these situations to accomplish Your purposes. I trust You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Reflect on a time that God shed unexpected light into a dark situation.

Reversing Famines

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: RUTH 1

A famine was decimating Israel. Conditions were so bad that one Israelite, Elimelech, felt compelled to uproot his family and move to the land of Moab. He was leaving behind everything familiar, including their friends and family. They moved to Moab where the people historically had been hostile toward the Israelites.

At first, the change might have seemed successful as Elimelech's two sons married women from Moab and the family found the food they needed. But then Elimelech and both sons died. His wife, Naomi, and her two daughters-in-law were left in desperate conditions.

Yet, as the Bible tells the whole story, we see how God used these circumstances to accomplish great things. After Naomi and her daughter-in-law Ruth returned to Israel, the Bible describes how Ruth married Boaz and started a family that one day would include King David, Israel's greatest leader and the writer of many of the psalms. And it all started with a famine.

The Bible teaches that God can use challenging situations to accomplish His purposes. You may face situations that seem dark and hopeless. But God can use them to teach you greater things, refine you, and prepare you for greater blessings.

No matter what you face, do not give in to despair or fear. Regardless of how things seem, God can turn even the darkest situation into something great. Stay faithful, trusting Him.

God's Favor

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: RUTH 2

Ruth had married a son of Naomi, an Israelite. But when Naomi's husband and son died, Ruth moved with her to Israel where their situation seemed hopeless. They were widows with no income. Most seriously, Ruth was from Moab, Israel's historic enemy.

Looking for life's necessities, Ruth found herself gleaning in fields owned by Boaz, a man about whom she knew nothing. But because of her attitude, she found *favor* with Boaz and eventually became his wife. Her poverty was replaced by abundance—all because she received *favor*.

The Bible reminds us that favor comes from God. And His favor can change *any* situation!

Favor cannot be earned. However, this favor can be encouraged as our lives please God. The Bible tells us not to “*let kindness and truth*” leave us. We are to “*bind them around your neck*” and “*write them on the tablet of your heart*.” If we live this way, the Bible *promises* that we “*will find favor*” (Proverbs 3:3–4).

Ruth received favor even though she was not an Israelite. But she had pleased God and demonstrated godly principles.

Today, ask God to grant *you* His favor in every area of life—business, family, personal life, finances, and health. Seek to please Him and have the right attitude in everything you do. Have faith that He can open doors and change any situation you face.

Script a prayer asking for God's special favor this coming week.

Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground, and said to him, “Why have I found favor in your sight that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?”

Ruth 2:10 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I desire to please You. I seek Your favor. Thank You that Your mercy is new every morning. I depend on You! In Jesus' name. Amen.

“Wait, my daughter, until you know how the matter turns out; for the man will not rest until he has settled it today.”

Ruth 3:18 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, help me to be a person upon whom others can depend. I believe You can turn around any situation. I trust You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Are you dependable and trustworthy?

Dependable

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: RUTH 3

Naomi had left Israel and resettled in Moab along with her husband and two sons, even though that country had been a longstanding enemy of Israel. They were desperate because of their need to escape a drought.

At first, the plan seemed to have been successful when her sons married women from Moab. All their needs were met. Then, tragedy struck as her sons both died. Not sure what else she could do, Naomi returned to Israel. All she had was her daughter-in-law Ruth, a Moabite woman with no knowledge of Jewish laws and customs.

Desperate for food, Ruth went gleaning for grain in a field, which, providentially, belonged to Boaz, a wealthy man and a distant relative of Naomi. His workers were impressed with Ruth's attitude and actions and gave her special favor.

Ruth followed the customs of the time and acted with honor. Boaz came to realize her *reputation* as a woman of excellence. He made her his bride.

Their marriage demonstrated how quickly God can turn around any situation. They were *prepared* for God's blessings, being good *stewards* of the resources He had given them. They were *faithful* and *trustworthy* and kept their *promises*.

Seek to develop these disciplines. Be so *dependable* that others count on you. Be *honorable* and *trustworthy*. Keep your promises. Always remember that you can trust God to direct your steps and provide for your needs.

Unlikely Outcomes

TODAY'S BIBLE READING; RUTH 4

Of all the unlikely scenarios in the Bible, none is more unlikely than the marriage of Boaz and Ruth. He was a respected Israelite, a man of property and stature. On the other hand, Ruth not only was not from Israel but came from Moab, people who historically were Israel's enemies.

It was bad enough when Naomi and her husband, Elimelech, relocated to Moab. Then, when Elimelech and their two sons died, Naomi was left with nothing but Ruth and her other daughter-in-law. Arriving in Israel, they faced more impossible situations. They had nothing and no one to call on for help.

But they discovered they did have Boaz, *“a kinsman of her husband, a man of great wealth.”* Ruth was given permission by Naomi to go glean in his fields for the grain they needed (Ruth 2:1–2). She went on to win favor and a positive reputation. Then, miraculously, she was able to gain the attention of Boaz and became his wife.

Here she was, a woman without any connections, yet married to a man of prestige and influence in the country where she and her people had been considered enemies.

These are the kinds of miracles God can perform. Impossible mountains can be climbed. Problems that seem unsolvable can be solved. This story should inspire us to believe in the impossible. If Ruth could marry Boaz, what can God do in your life?

What insurmountable challenge do you need God's help with?

Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife, and he had relations with her. And the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son.

Ruth 4:13–14 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I commit these situations to You: _____ . Nothing is impossible with You. In Jesus' name, amen.

In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

Romans 8:37 ESV

PRAYER:

Father, thank You that I am more than a conqueror. I commit these situations to You: _____ . Thank You for victory. In Jesus' name, amen.

How have you seen God work in recent situations?

More Than Conquerors

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ROMANS 8

Amazingly, Paul's statement about being "*more than conquerors*" came in his letter to believers in Rome. This city had experienced tumultuous times and seen many conquerors.

In the century before Paul wrote his letter, Rome had experienced a bloody civil war. Then, their republican form of government was replaced by an empire ruled by an emperor. Throughout the city, there still were major divisions. Paul wrote this letter during Nero's turbulent reign when Christians would have had many reasons to worry and feel defeated.

From personal experience, he *knew* that, because he loved God and was called according to His purpose, *all things* were working together for good—every difficulty.

Paul had learned that, because of Jesus, believers can be more than conquerors in *every situation* we face. We still may endure circumstances that seem hostile. On the surface, it may seem that we are defeated. We still may face opposition and be outnumbered. We may feel afraid, anxious, and worried.

Because of our relationship with Jesus, we can be *confident* that God will work *everything* together for good. *Everything!*

Do not allow any situation to cause you to feel defeated. God can give you His peace in any situation and cause you to experience victory! No matter what difficulties you may face, have faith in God. Remember that, because of Jesus, you are *more* than a conqueror!

Moving Forward

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ACTS 25

Paul had been warned about what would happen if he went to Jerusalem. Friends begged him not to go, but he would not be dissuaded: "*For I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus*" (Acts 21:13).

As prophesied, Paul was handed over to the Gentiles in Jerusalem. Ironically after this arrest, he found himself back in Caesarea where he faced a series of Roman rulers. There, he had other opportunities to return to Jerusalem. But he knew that God had called him to move forward. He had learned to follow God and not to presume he could predict the next step in his journey. He needed to continue moving forward, letting God direct his path.

He knew Jewish leaders wanted him to return to Jerusalem where they would have more opportunities to attack him. But to Paul, going to Jerusalem also would have meant going backward. He sensed that God was calling him onward.

He had learned to trust God. This meant facing unknowns, trusting Him, and having more opportunities to witness in new ways. In fact, by appealing to Caesar, Paul was opening the door to new initiatives for the Gospel.

God calls each of us onward to learn from our past, embrace His plans, and move forward as He directs. Trust Him each step of the way.

Where do you sense God is calling you to go in this season?

I am standing before Caesar's tribunal, where I ought to be tried... if there is nothing to the accusations which these men are bringing against me, no one can hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar.

Acts 25:10–11 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I am ready to follow Your call wherever You lead. Direct my life. Help me serve You. In Jesus' name, amen.

There is none like You, LORD; You are great, and Your name is great in might... For among all the wise men of the nations and in all their kingdoms, there is none like You.

Jeremiah 10:6–7 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for giving me peace. I place my hope and trust in You. I worship You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

What do you do when you are enticed by the things of this world?

King of the Nations

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JEREMIAH 10

God's people had been captured by their neighbors. They had been forced to learn their ways and accept their worldview and beliefs. In this environment, God gave Jeremiah a powerful word that reminded them of His truths. He warned them not to learn the way of the nations. They were not to be "terrified by the signs of the heavens, although the nations are terrified by them" (v. 1).

The lifestyle of these neighbors might have been attractive. But God reminded them that their customs were futile. Their gods were nothing but their own creations.

God's people may have been reluctant to resist these neighbors. But He declared, "Do not fear them, for they can do no harm, nor can they do any good" (v. 5).

As is clear from the original Hebrew text, God was reminding them that the things of the world are like a vapor, here for a brief time and then gone forever. Its customs quickly change. In this context, we can see why it is so important that we depend upon Him and trust in Him.

Immediately after this prophecy, Jeremiah spoke a mighty anthem of praise, focusing on God's greatness. There is *none* like Him! He is the "King of the nations" (v. 7). The true God. The everlasting King.

If you focus on the things of this world, you, too, can be intimidated. But everything changes if you focus on God. Worship Him! Praise Him. Serve Him! Trust Him.

God's Words Forever

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JEREMIAH 36

Jeremiah carefully declared every word God had given him, even though King Jehoiakim did not want to hear this message. Jehoiakim tried to silence the prophet and eliminate the message he declared.

Jehoiakim took the scroll that contained the message, cut it into small pieces, and cast it into a fire until *nothing* was left. By burning the scroll, he thought he was eliminating God's words and making them disappear as if they had never been written.

But he was to discover that God's Word cannot be destroyed! His Word is settled in Heaven forever (Psalm 119:89).

Jeremiah simply dictated the words once again. But this time, even more words were added. Jehoiakim had learned powerful lessons: No person can silence God. His Word *will* go forth. And His Word stands forever!

This demonstrates important truths. God's Word is not merely a scroll, piece of paper, or message on a computer screen. And the Bible is not just a book. It is eternally true and packed with spiritual power. As Jesus said, His words are spirit and life (John 6:63). They cannot be destroyed or erased.

You should take God's Word seriously. You should immerse yourself in His Word. It teaches you His thoughts. It opens the door to His power. It provides perfect guidance and timely correction. It is eternally true and stands forever.

What is your plan to ensure more of God's Word fills your mind?

Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to Baruch... who wrote on it at the instruction of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire.

Jeremiah 36:32

PRAYER:

Father, I seek to fill my life with Your insights. Teach me Your ways and help me live according to Your eternal truths. In Jesus' name, amen.

We know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ.

1 John 5:20 ESV

PRAYER:

Father, I desire to know You more intimately. Deliver me from false assumptions. Open my mind to understand more of Your truth. In Jesus' name, amen.

What happens when you make assumptions without facts?

What We Know

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 1 JOHN 5

Recently, a writer was assigned to review a concert. It seemed like a normal event. But the night became filled with distractions. Needing to watch her children, she brought them to the event. Then while the music was being performed, her son fell off a chair, and her daughter became sick.

Burdened by parental responsibilities, the writer left the concert. But she did not want anyone to know she missed some of the event, so she *assumed* what must have been performed, and wrote about the concert as she imagined it must have taken place. She even wrote about songs that *were never* performed.

When reading her review, concert attendees knew she wrote about events that did not happen. When confronted, she admitted to making a wrong decision. She had drawn conclusions based on *false assumptions*.

In the spiritual realm, many people make similar mistakes. They draw conclusions based on what they *think* might have happened or what other people say. Many become distracted and don't take the time to *investigate* the truth. Rather than digging into subjects for themselves, they make *assumptions*.

The Bible reminds us why it is important to know the truth for ourselves. Don't depend on rumors or the opinions of others. Examine the Word, and know Jesus *personally*!

Make sure you aren't basing your life on assumptions or what others have told you. Be sure about what you *really* know.

Paul's Four Pillars

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 2 CORINTHIANS 13

As Paul closed his second letter to the church in Corinth, he focused on four summary truths. First, he urged believers to become complete, to be spiritually equipped and adjusted. Paul knew that it was not enough just to believe and have spiritual gifts. It is our assignment to become better equipped.

Second, Paul encouraged them to be of "*good comfort*." The Greek word here is central to this letter. Paul emphasized this word because we all need this kind of comfort. And we are to be people who show care for and comfort others.

Third, Paul reminded them of the importance of unity of the Spirit. No one is to have an attitude of superiority. For there is only one body, not many (1 Corinthians 12:14).

Paul's final admonition was for believers to live in peace with each other. This peace reflects the presence of the Spirit. It comes when we are surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus, when no one is seeking to build their own kingdom but all serve each other, and when we all realize that all of us are members of the same body, all related to each other, all needing each other.

Remember the importance of these principles. Seek to be complete in your faith. Be committed to becoming mature. Seek to encourage and comfort others. And make it your goal to live in harmony and peace. If you do these things, the Bible promises that the God of love and peace will be with you.

Where do you most need God's peace in your life right now?

Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.

2 Corinthians 13:11

PRAYER:

Dear Jesus, I thank and praise You for being my Prince of Peace. Please allow Your peace to flow through me to others. In Your name, amen.

The LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD gives grace and glory; He withholds no good thing from those who walk with integrity. LORD of armies, how blessed is the person who trusts in You!

Psalm 84:11–12 NASB

Trust and Obey

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PSALM 84

John Sammis observed that many believers seemed bogged down, unable to achieve victory or even make progress in their Christian lives. Part of the problem was they made their faith complicated. They were so focused on this complexity that they had a hard time living in victory.

Pondering this issue, a friend told Sammis about a young man he had met who seemed unusually joyful, unusually victorious. The secret? He admitted he did not understand every complicated theological doctrine. But what made a difference was the simplicity of his faith. His comment: "I'm going to trust, and I'm going to obey."

Inspired by this insight, Sammis wrote a hymn called "Trust and Obey." He described how just walking with God sheds clarifying light on our way. He discovered how our lives change as we simply "do His good will." God abides with us and with all who trust and obey. The message was simple: "There's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey."

We may encounter problems, but His smile drives away every doubt and fear. Trusting and obeying Him leads us to focus on Jesus and helps us give all our burdens to Him. As we trust Him, He gives us peace.

Are you carrying burdens? Do you have worries or doubts? Commit every problem, every challenge, every question to Jesus. Simply trust Him, and obey His Word. Don't make it complicated.

PRAYER:

Father, I trust in You today. I will obey Your Word. Thank You for taking away my burdens. Help me please and serve You. In Jesus' name, amen.

In what ways will you specifically be obedient to God's Word?

FROM OUR MAILBOX

Encouragement for YOU from a young man in Kenya

Dear Inspiration Ministries,

I thank our Lord Jesus Christ for having given me this chance to get more information of His glory through you people of God. I have been encouraged through your devotions since the time I started getting messages of inspiration from you. May God bless you so much in Jesus Christ's name.

Praise God. I'm Yusra from Kenya...a born again Christian, a Muslim converted to Christianity. What led my whole family and me to convert was because I was sick—tormented by demons. I used to faint for hours. I was bedridden for two years—I couldn't talk or even walk—kind of paralyzed. I was taken to so many hospitals and witch doctors. None of them could help. But when I was taken to church, I got healed and went back to normal just like others. I thank the Lord Jesus for saving and healing me!

This is to encourage anyone who is reading this who may be in a critical situation. Maybe you are sick and have been in bed for many days, and you feel like God doesn't see you. Just hold on there—Jesus knows! He is watching...He has greater plans for you, and you will be healed.

In Jesus' name, trust Him and don't give up! You are loved.
— Yusra, Kenya



The Great Exchange



Our sin on Christ. His righteousness on us.

We can always be grateful for the wonderful exchange that takes place when we give our lives to our Savior and King. As we receive Him into our hearts, we offer God what we have...and He gives us what He has.

Instead of disease and sickness, He gives us healing and health. In place of our faults and weaknesses, He gives us His power, righteousness, and strength. Instead of a sinful, failure-filled past, He gives us the hope of an incredible destiny in Him.

Isn't that powerful? By ourselves we can do nothing; our own righteousness is like filthy rags or a polluted garment (Isaiah 64:6). But in Christ, we have the glory of

His Spirit in us—transforming and renewing our hearts and minds.

In Him, we can surrender everything in our lives to His trust and grab hold of every covenant promise. We may not understand His plans perfectly, but He makes a way in the wilderness and provides His resurrection power to strengthen us when we need it most. Hallelujah!

What needs do you have in your life today? The apostle Paul describes a time when he and his team were *“burdened excessively, beyond [their] strength, so that [they] despaired even of life.”* But his turnaround came when he realized that instead of trusting in his own strength, he could rely upon

the *“God who raises the dead”* (2 Corinthians 1:8–9 NASB). That same resurrection power is available to you today: *“The Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in YOU”* (Romans 8:11).

Because of this resurrection power in your life, *“He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world”* (1 John 4:4). The devil no longer has power to bully you! You can overcome him by the power of the Holy Spirit and the mighty name of Jesus!

Satan has no right to steal your health, finances, peace of mind, or standing with God. Nor does he have any right to your children, grandchildren, and loved ones. You can take dominion over the enemy in Jesus' name, and he must flee from you (James 4:7).

Friend, because of the Great Exchange won by Jesus for you, every area of your life can be transformed. Paul's words in Ephesians 1:3 say: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.”* That means God doesn't just want to provide you with SOME spiritual blessings, but rather He offers to give you EVERY spiritual blessing through your relationship with Jesus. What a joy to walk in God's favor instead of His judgment!

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



Week One

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

2 Corinthians 5:21



Week Two

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

John 3:16



Week Three

But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Galatians 6:14



Week Four

He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.

Isaiah 53:7

JESUS SAID 2,000 YEARS AGO:

**“Go into all the world,
and preach the Gospel
to all creation.”**

(Mark 16:15 NIV)

Being faithful to those words is as important today as it was to the first disciples who heard them!

You may not be able to go to a mission field personally to bring the life-changing message of Jesus Christ to the lost and hurting around the world, but through your partnership, you are there! By becoming an *Inspiration Ministries Monthly Partner*, you are sowing life-changing seeds of the Gospel, helping to win souls through a monthly cycle of sowing and reaping.

An *Inspiration Ministries Monthly Partner* is someone who joins hands with us and commits to sowing monthly seeds into God’s Kingdom through the Good Ground of Inspiration Ministries.

Each month, you’ll be IMPACTING PEOPLE WORLDWIDE through Inspiration Ministries’ media outreaches!

**Contact us today
to become an Inspiration Ministries Monthly Partner!**

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A Merry Heart...

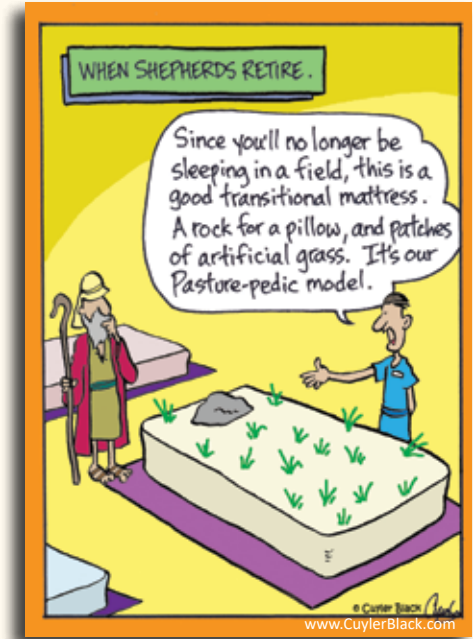
does good, like medicine. – Proverbs 17:22

The Sin of Lying...

A minister told his congregation, “Next week I plan to preach about the sin of lying. To help you understand my sermon, I would like you all to read the seventeenth chapter of Mark.”

The following Sunday, the minister asked for a show of hands. He wanted to know how many people had read Mark 17. Every hand went up.

The minister smiled and said, “Before I begin my sermon about the sin of lying, I would like to remind everyone that Mark only has 16 chapters.”



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



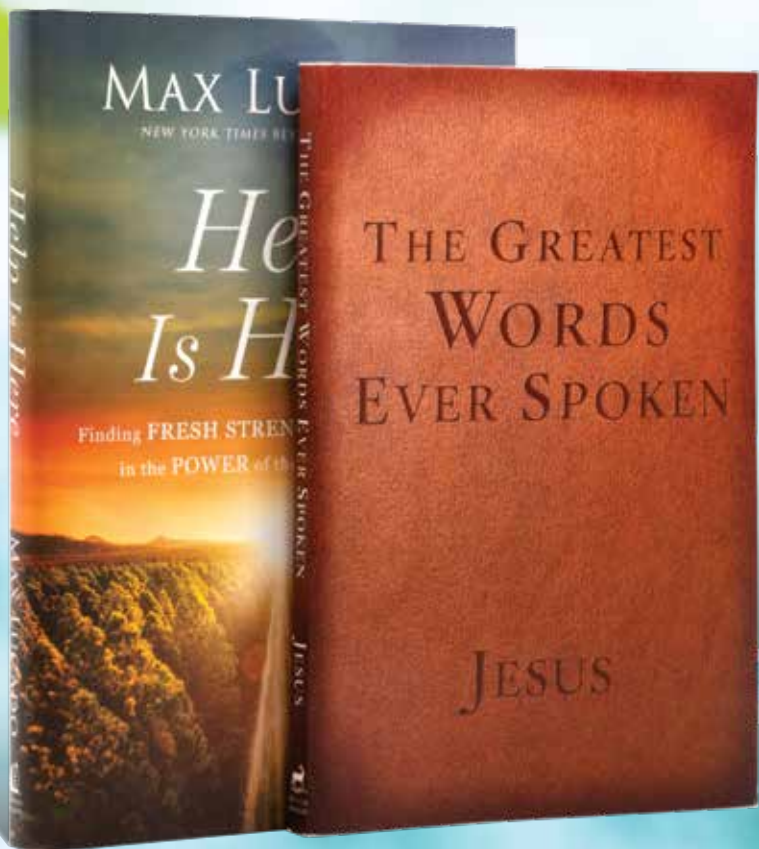
Lord, so far today, I've not been grumpy, selfish, greedy, envious, proud, or angry. I'm really pleased about that. But in a few minutes, I'm going to get out of bed, and then I'll need Your help!



Need Some Spiritual Oomph?

In *Help Is Here*, Max Lucado gives you the tools and encouragement you need to find fresh strength and purpose in the power of the Holy Spirit. Far from being an impersonal force, He's always close, always active, and always at work in our lives. God keeps us on track—and best of all, He's commissioned the Holy Spirit to guide us down the winding roads of life, wherever they may lead.

PLUS, we'll send you our special edition book *The Greatest Words Ever Spoken* compiled by Steven K. Scott. Packed with every word that Jesus spoke in the Bible and grouped by topic, this book will give you a better understanding of the truth of God and the power it can have in your life.



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