

MAY 2023

# inspiration

M A G A Z I N E



## *Holy Spirit* **Power**

Your Most  
Important Moment

Victory in  
Jesus' Name

Miracles Grow  
in Tough Times

## Holy Spirit Power



PAGE 10



Do you wonder why believers still celebrate Pentecost today? On **page 5**, David shares why the first Pentecost was significant and why it's still important today. Learn about some surprising parallels between Pentecost and the original giving of the

Law to Moses on Mt. Sinai. Remember to check out the dynamic THANK YOU GIFT we will send you this month in appreciation for your faithful partnership (**page 28**).



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## EDITOR'S CORNER



Roone Acree

Did you know that the same wonder-working power displayed in the life of Jesus now lives in YOU? Just as Jesus Himself was empowered by the Spirit (Acts 10:38), you and I are called to a supernatural life.

In this Pentecost issue, we want to share how God's amazing power can make you an overcomer. No matter your circumstances, I'm praying God will powerfully touch you and give you extraordinary blessings during this appointed time.

Have a Pentecost blessing you want to share? Please send me a note at [editor@inspiration.org](mailto:editor@inspiration.org).

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*By Joyce Meyer*

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# Access YOUR Pentecost Power

## May 1–May 19

If you long to live victoriously, overflowing with peace and joy, join David Cerullo as he explains the Holy Spirit's vital role in transforming lives. You'll learn how to be filled with the Spirit's power and why that's so critically important in today's world. Be enriched as this 15-day series unravels the mysterious third person of the Godhead.




## May 22–June 2

Ever wonder how to be an effective soul winner? Get excited for this brand-new, 10-day series *Fishing for Souls!* Jonathan Scott shows you how to love and lure those around you who need to hear the Gospel. He'll share sources and resources that will have you reeling in your catch in no time!



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# Why Celebrate Pentecost?



**STRENGTHEN**  
*your walk*  
with David Cerullo

When that mighty, rushing wind swept through Jerusalem on the Feast of Pentecost so many years ago, the disciples were overwhelmed by the power of the Holy Spirit. They couldn't even speak without pouring out praises to God for His goodness, power, and love.

Because God was pouring out His Spirit like never before...

They could barely contain it. They could hardly even stand up. In fact, some thought they were all drunk even though it was early in the morning!

The Feast of Pentecost has always carried specific promises for God's people, and as we celebrate it again this month, I am praying for you to experience supernatural breakthroughs like never before.

God's power can change EVERYTHING. And His power is working in YOU and through YOU even now...to change the world.

## ONE NEW MAN

Although I love the story in Acts 2 about how the Spirit empowered the early church, I believe people *should* know that it happened during one of God's appointed times. Pentecost literally means the 50th day because this feast falls exactly 50 days following the first Sabbath after Passover.

During this special day, the Israelites were again told by God to give an offering of their first fruits, and they also were to bring two loaves of leavened bread before the Lord:

*You shall bring from your dwellings two wave loaves of two-tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven. They are the firstfruits to the LORD (Leviticus 23:17).*

These two loaves foreshadowed the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 when Jews and Gentiles would be joined together as “*one new man*” (Ephesians 2:15).

Pentecost still has powerful significance today, extending far beyond the Israelites' celebration of the latter firstfruits of the Promised Land. But it's important for you to see the timeline for this.

Christ was crucified on the Feast of Passover, and He rose from the dead on the Feast of Firstfruits. For 40 days, the risen Jesus taught His disciples about His Kingdom (Acts 1:3). He also reaffirmed His promise that they soon would be “*endued with power from on high*” and “*baptized with the Holy Spirit*” (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:5). Through the outpouring of the Spirit, they would be empowered to be Jesus' witnesses throughout the world (Acts 1:8).

Forty days after His resurrection, Jesus ascended into Heaven (Acts 1:9). Then for 10 days, His followers waited and prayed until the Spirit was poured out in a very dramatic fashion:

*When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:1–4).*

This was the first Pentecost of the church age, exactly 50 days after Jesus' resurrection. On this appointed time on God's calendar, the church was born and filled with supernatural power to take the Gospel to “*every tribe and language and people and nation*” (Revelation 5:9).

The Feast of Pentecost is also the day when the Jewish people traditionally celebrate God's giving of the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai (Exodus 20), which is recognized as the birthday of the nation of Israel. Do you see how significant this is?

Israel and the church have the same birthday—the Day of Pentecost! From His people Israel and His church, the Lord took Jews and Gentiles and formed them together into “*one new man*” as a testimony of His glory and grace!

Look at these other parallels and contrasts between the giving of the Law and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit:

- At Mount Sinai, the Law was written on tablets of stone, but in the new covenant, the Holy Spirit writes the Law on our hearts (Jeremiah 31:33).
- Mount Sinai was topped with fire when the Law was given (Deuteronomy 5:23–25), but in Acts 2:3 the fire rested upon the believers.

**Israelites  
were told by  
God to give  
an offering  
of their first  
fruits and  
two loaves  
of leavened  
bread.**

**Israel and  
the church  
have the same  
birthday—  
the Day of  
Pentecost.**

- While the Law was given at Mount Sinai, the Holy Spirit was poured out on Mount Zion (Jerusalem).
- At Mount Sinai, 3,000 people were slain because of their idolatry and disobedience (Exodus 32:25–28), but on the Day of Pentecost in Acts, 3,000 people were saved when they heard Peter preach the Gospel (Acts 2:41).
- When Exodus 20 and Acts 2 are combined, we see a beautiful picture of the two primary ways that the Lord wants to guide His people: by His Word and by His Spirit!

## A NEW DAY OF PENTECOST

As we celebrate the Feast of Pentecost this month, I will be praying for you to experience an incredible breakthrough of God's power, much as the disciples did nearly 2,000 years ago. And just as Pentecost marked a day of destiny in the history of the church, I'm praying that Pentecost this year will mark a great turnaround in every problem you face.

On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit empowered the church for a great worldwide outreach to the nations. The believers were enabled to speak in languages they had never learned, a sign from God that He wanted to reach people

from every part of the world. This is the same vision we have for Inspiration Ministries—to be part of filling the earth with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea (Habakkuk 2:14).

I am so thankful for your partnership in winning souls in the nations of the world, and I'm convinced that great things are ahead for this ministry we share. As your financial seeds are blessing others with the knowledge of the Gospel, I know God will pour out His blessings in *your* life as well.

God bless you,



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



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

## 5.1 MILLION Souls in 2023

### All in the Family!

Have you ever heard about something so incredibly great that you just couldn't keep it to yourself?

Our outreaches at Inspiration Ministries exist to share the best news ever—salvation! But we could not share the Good News without your help.

Remember that old song “I’m So Glad I’m a Part of the Family of God”? Isn’t it amazing to be part of growing God’s family?

Your partnership with us has resulted in **2.3 MILLION** souls saying YES to Jesus so far this year! That means, every single day...more and more souls are becoming your brothers and sisters in Christ!

*See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are (1 John 3:1 ESV).*

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# Your Most Important Moment



Each day you are given 86,400 brand-new seconds to spend however you want. Isn't that amazing to consider? But here is the catch: None of that time carries over to the next day. It has to be lived in the present. Yesterday is over; tomorrow is not promised; you've got 86,400 seconds to spend today.

When I say that we can love and enjoy our lives, I realize that every day isn't summer vacation and parties. But the obligations of daily living don't have to steal your joy. Loving your life isn't something that happens by accident. It is a result of healthy, biblical choices that you make on a daily basis.

Let me show you three choices

that will help you maximize the moments God gives you.

## OBEY IN THE MOMENT

Obedience may not be the first thing that comes to your mind when talking about loving your life and maximizing the moment, but being obedient to God is one of the best ways to live a joyful, overcoming life.

One thing that helps us truly love our lives is when we let God work through us to help other people. All we need to do is be willing to obey God by following the gentle nudges from the Holy Spirit, and it adds a quality of enthusiasm to our life that is truly inspiring.

## LOVE IN THE MOMENT

For many people, their days are ruined because of the way someone treated them. An insult, a rumor, an unkind word from a friend or a coworker steals their joy and sends them into a downward spiral. I was like that for many years. If someone said or did something unkind toward me, I would wallow in misery for hours.

With God's help, I've learned over the years that I am responsible for my own attitude and happiness. I cannot control what other people do, but with God's help, I can control how I respond. God has often reminded me that what someone may do to me that is unjust or unkind isn't nearly as important as how I respond to their actions.

This is where *love in the moment* comes in. When we become people who love others around us on a daily basis, our lives are tremendously enriched.

## ENJOY THE MOMENT

So many people have the mentality that they will be really happy

at some time in the future. When the kids grow up, when they get a promotion, when their finances improve...when, when, when. I can certainly relate.

I really want you to get this: God wants you to enjoy your life *now*, not at some time in the future.

For some reason, we tend to think that as long as we have problems, it just wouldn't be right to not worry and instead enjoy life. But that is exactly what God wants us to do, and it is what the devil does not want us to do. One of God's greatest gifts to us is that He enables us by His grace to enjoy life even in the midst of trouble and difficulty.

It is amazing to me that even in the midst of running the universe, God still has us on His mind. Jesus actually said that He wanted His own joy to be made full and complete in us (see John 17:13). Seeing this Scripture, and many others that are like it, settled the issue for me: God wants us to live a life that we love and enjoy! ❖



**Joyce Meyer** is a best-selling author of over 100 books and a sought-after conference speaker.

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Based on the New York Times Bestseller!

# LEFT BEHIND™

THE MOVIE

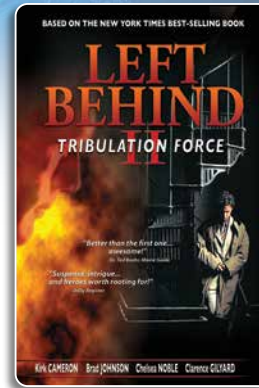
A left-behind reporter learns that biblical prophecy is real when millions of believers suddenly disappear. Watch all three parts of this action-packed saga!



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Saturday, May 6 at 9 p.m. ET  
Sunday, May 7 at 5:30 p.m. ET

## ARE YOU READY?



### *Left Behind II: Tribulation Force*

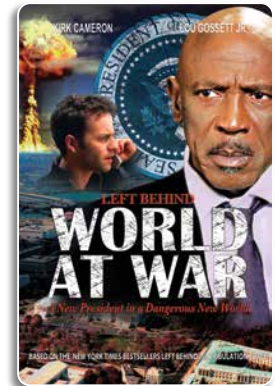
Chaos rules the world, and the antichrist is revealed as a seeming savior. But God is still working among those left behind.

Saturday, May 13 at 9 p.m. ET  
Sunday, May 14 at 5:30 p.m. ET

### *Left Behind III: World at War*

The Tribulation Force fights back against Carpathia's sinister plans. This absorbing conclusion will leave you breathless until the very end.

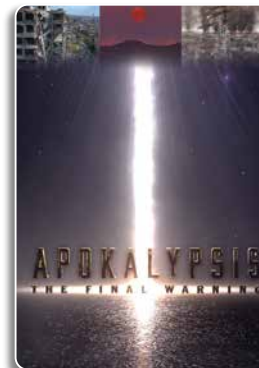
Saturday, May 20 at 9 p.m. ET  
Sunday, May 21 at 5:30 p.m. ET



### *Apokalypsis*

In this four-part docuseries, Bible experts explore coming events of the Last Days. Unlock mysteries every believer should know and understand.

Saturdays, May 6, 13, 20 at 3 p.m. ET



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## Jesus' Promised Helper

# The Holy Spirit

What's so significant about the Holy Spirit as a promise? He is the source of all other blessings and promises. Without the Spirit, we would not be able to enter our full inheritance as God's children.

Throughout Scripture, we find the Holy Spirit acting in various roles. As the third person of the Trinity, He was present at creation:

*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters (Genesis 1:1–2 ESV).*

The Holy Spirit is mentioned about 100 times throughout the Old Testament in different ways, especially in leadership, prophecy,

and power. In Ezekiel, a new Spirit is promised with the new covenant.

*And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you....And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules (36:26–27 ESV).*

The Holy Spirit played a special role in Jesus' life on earth, filling and anointing Him with power. When He was preparing His disciples for His departure, Jesus promised to send them a Helper.

The giving of the Law to Moses on Mt. Sinai instituted the beginning of the Mosaic Covenant. Likewise, the giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost confirmed the new covenant inaugurated by Jesus.

When the Holy Spirit fell like fire on the believers on the Day of Pentecost, Peter declared that it was the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy: "I will pour out my Spirit on all people" (2:28 NIV).

Because of the power poured out on the Day of Pentecost, all believers receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit the moment they accept Jesus as their Savior. This indwelling joins them to the body of Christ.

And what are the benefits the Helper provides for believers? The Spirit indwells and seals believers, which means He will never leave us, and we are secure until "the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30 ESV).

The Spirit gives all believers gifts, God-given abilities for service. The purpose of these gifts is to edify other Christians. Several passages in the New Testament list the various gifts: 1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12; Ephesians 4; and 1 Peter 4.

The Holy Spirit also fills believers, which enables them to walk daily in the Spirit and display His fruits.

Other important ministries of the Holy Spirit include teaching, guiding, assuring, and praying.

The promise of the Holy Spirit, then, is vital to all believers today. The best part is that as believers, we have *already* received this promise!

Read these verses about the Holy Spirit and tell us how focusing on Him changes your life! ❖

### Week One

*"I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive... You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you."*

John 14:16–17 ESV

### Week Two

*"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."*

Galatians 5:22–23 ESV

### Week Three

*"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

Acts 1:8 ESV

### Week Four

*"The Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words."*

Romans 8:26 ESV



# Leave a Family Legacy!



As we celebrate Mother's Day this month and Father's Day next month, it's a great time to consider the special legacy you want to leave for your children.

You can't just assume that because you have kids they'll magically inherit your beliefs. Allow your children to ask questions about why you believe certain things. Allow them to watch you walk the walk as well as talk the talk. Deuteronomy 6:5-7 reminds us to talk to our children regularly about the Lord and His Word:

*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall*

*be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise (ESV).*

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by Ben Cerullo

# VICTORY in Jesus' Name

If you are going through a difficult situation right now, I encourage you to call on the name of Jesus. Speak His powerful name over the circumstances you are facing. When you submit your life fully to God, you can resist the devil, and he **MUST** flee from you (James 4:7)!

You may be feeling desperate for a miracle today, but I have good news: Jesus is LORD! There is victory in His name. You can declare His name, and every work of darkness must leave you alone. Satan's evil forces **MUST** obey you. They have no choice!

## LIFT UP THE NAME OF THE LORD

One of your most powerful weapons of warfare against the enemy is to worship the Lord and give Him thanks—*before* you see the victory come to pass.

The Bible describes a time when this principle was utilized by King Jehoshaphat to defeat the enemy armies that came against the people of Judah. The worshippers were to go out in **FRONT** of

Jehoshaphat's army to praise the Lord. Even before they saw the victory, they proclaimed God's faithfulness:

***"Praise the LORD, for His mercy endures forever"***  
(2 Chronicles 20:21).

Do you remember what happened when they lifted up the name of the Lord? He set ambushes to defeat their enemies (2 Chronicles 20:22-23)!

What a great lesson for us. Yes, the enemies are real—but there is overwhelming victory when we magnify and praise the Lord.

I encourage you to take a few minutes right now to think about all the things God has done for you. If your testimony is anything like mine, He has rescued you from sin and broken the chains from your life. And I bet He's also touched your body, given you financial provision, and blessed you in countless other ways.

So go ahead and praise Him. Lift up the name of Jesus, and thank Him for all He has done. This can be *your* day of victory! ❖





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*Here’s what two partners recently shared about being a Monthly Partner:*

“I started a monthly gift of \$58 as God provided it. He has been so faithful and blessed me each month in abundance, way over the \$58. It has been amazing to be a part of it. Thank You, Jesus!!”—Bob B., PA

“About a week or so after I sowed my first \$58 seed, we got a check in the mail for the rest of my husband’s disability retirement. It was only for \$2,005, but it sure helped to catch things up when we desperately needed it! God is totally amazing and supernatural!”—Sharon, MI

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## Guard Against Deceit

**BIBLE READING: 2 CORINTHIANS 2**

Conditions seemed desperate. It was the fifth century BC, and China was plagued by wars and leadership struggles. Amid this dire situation, their general Sun Tzu developed a winning strategy, summarized in the book *The Art of War*. His insights worked so well that they have continued to be studied and employed worldwide—in military matters as well as in business and politics.

One key principle Sun Tzu stressed was the importance of *deception*. He wrote, “the spot where we intend to fight must not be made known.” He realized that if an enemy does not know where they will be attacked, the attackers have an advantage.

The Bible makes it clear that Satan understands the power of deception. Paul warned that Satan has plans and strategies for attacking God’s people. Sadly, many believers are ignorant of his schemes and experience defeat.

Satan has a plan designed to defeat *you*. He wants to *deceive* you and attack you where you are vulnerable. He wants to make you *feel* defeated and sow seeds of confusion, fear, and doubt.

Remember that God *already* has defeated Satan, but you need to trust God and employ the weapons He provides. First, fill your mind with His Word. Stand on His promises and reject Satan’s lies. Develop a strong prayer life; walk in the Spirit. Trust Him to help you recognize Satan’s schemes and equip you to be victorious.

What strategies can you use to defeat Satan’s lies?

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**MONDAY**

**May  
1**

*Whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ, lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.*

2 Corinthians 2:10–11

### **PRAYER:**

Father, help me be alert to Satan’s deceptions, sensitive to Your Spirit, and ready for battle. I believe You for victory. In Jesus’ name, amen.

*Thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us reveals the fragrance of the knowledge of Him in every place.*

2 Corinthians 2:14 NASB

### PRAYER:

Father, thank You for the victory I have in Christ. I rejoice in this victory. In Jesus' name, amen.

What battles are you currently facing?

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## The Battle Is Won!

BIBLE READING: 2 CORINTHIANS 2

In 1861, Francis Pott was serving on a committee compiling hymns for a new hymnal for the Church of England. He came upon a hymn written in Latin in the 17th century, "*Finita Iam Sunt Proelia*." Impressed, Pott determined to translate this hymn into English. It became a hymn he called "The Strife Is O'er, the Battle Done." It was decided to set this hymn to music written in 1591 by the great Italian composer Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina.

This masterpiece describes the spiritual battle that took place when Jesus was crucified. His adversaries might have thought they won, but Jesus rose "glorious from the dead." In the end, He emerged *victorious*. We can rejoice in this victory, singing, "The strife is o'er, the battle done; the victory of life is won; the song of triumph has begun. Alleluia!"

Jesus faced the powers of death and conquered them all. They did "their worst," but He was victorious. Because of Him, we can rejoice: "Let shouts of holy joy outburst. Alleluia!" We can experience victory. The Bible tells us God *always* causes us to *triumph* in Christ.

Do not allow your life to be dominated by fear, worry, or doubt. Celebrate the victory Jesus won for you. Remember, the strife is over. The battle *already* has been won! Through faith, God always causes you to triumph in Christ in everything you do!

## Eyes Covered by a Veil

BIBLE READING: 2 CORINTHIANS 3

Despite all the evidence, why do some people simply reject the Gospel and refuse to believe? Why do some seem unmoved by the sincere testimony of believers? Why do some find it hard to respond, no matter how clearly the Gospel is presented?

One reason? Paul explained that a *veil* lies over their heart. He was writing about Jews, but this same principle applies to all unbelievers. Even if they hear inspiring sermons, read the Bible, and hear powerful testimonies, they seem closed and nonresponsive.

That is true for people all around us. Some reject the things of God and anything related to the Gospel. Others believe in God, go to church, and even participate in religious activities, yet still do not grasp the deeper things of God. For one reason or another, they reject the full Gospel.

They are spiritually *blind*. They cannot see God's ways or understand His words. We need to pray that God would send His Spirit to *liberate* them and that the veil will be removed so they can be free.

Think about people you know who do not believe or who need a spiritual spark. *Pray* that the spiritual veil will be lifted from their eyes. *Pray* that the spiritual blinders will be removed. *Pray* that the Spirit will set them free. *Pray* that the Spirit would move upon their hearts and minds that they might see. Pray and keep praying.

How can you share the Gospel with unbelievers you know?

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*To this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed... the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.*

2 Corinthians 3:15–17 ESV

### PRAYER:

Father, I commit these people to You: \_\_\_\_\_. Move by Your Spirit in their lives. Take away the veil. Help them see. In Jesus' name, amen.

*The LORD hears his people when they call to him for help. He rescues them from all their troubles...he rescues those whose spirits are crushed. The righteous person faces many troubles, but the LORD comes to the rescue each time.*

Psalm 34:17-19 NLT

**PRAYER:**

Father, I commit these needs to You: \_\_\_\_\_ . Thank You for hearing me. I believe You for the answers. I trust You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Write a prayer for your country's leaders as well as your local leaders.

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# Calling for Help

BIBLE READING: PSALM 34

How do we react when facing difficulties or when we don't see solutions? At times like these, many become discouraged, overwhelmed with anxiety and fear, or paralyzed by doubt and confusion. Instead of reactions like these, the Bible encourages us to *call* on God and *pray*!

We see this pattern in David's life. He faced many challenges, some brought on himself through bad choices. But there were times when he did everything right yet still faced difficulties. Ultimately through every situation, he realized he could call on God.

David knew that God "hears His people when they call to Him for help." In fact, the Bible promises He will rescue us "from all" problems. He always is by our side, ready to listen.

These principles apply to you as an individual and to nations. On this National Day of Prayer in the United States, we are reminded to pray for our *nation* and our leaders. Pray that they would have God's wisdom. Pray for an outpouring of the Spirit. Pray that we would experience His miracle-working power.

Remember God's promises. We can turn to Him in any situation. We can pray for ourselves as individuals, for our families, or our nation. In every situation, we can hope in Him. We can call on Him with confidence. The Bible promises that He will rescue us! He is faithful. We can count on Him.

# Light in the Darkness

BIBLE READING: 2 CORINTHIANS 4

Many were shocked when Malcolm Muggeridge declared that he had become a Christian. In the 1940s, he had become famous as a writer and personality noted for cynicism. His private life was characterized by drinking and womanizing. But later in life, he discovered the reality of faith in Jesus. As a result, *everything* changed.

Describing the transformation, he wrote about the reality of his sinful nature. He admitted his struggles with the flesh. He knew some had criticized Christianity because of things done in the name of the faith. He admitted he did not have every answer. He simply knew the *reality* that Jesus had changed his life.

From Jerusalem where he was taping a television program, Muggeridge described the miracle that "His light continues to shine in the dark jungle of the human will."

Muggeridge admitted that he still had "a skeptical mind" and that he struggled with a "sensual disposition." He didn't pretend to understand everything and knew with certainty that he was unworthy. But he knew with certainty that "Jesus' saving grace" was real and belief in Him could change a life.

Remember that people all around are looking at you to see if Jesus is real. Seek to be a pure vessel through whom God's light can shine. The world is full of people who need the light. Commit your life and resources to bring the Gospel to those living in darkness.

How can you practically be a beacon of light in this dark world?

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*For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.*

2 Corinthians 4:6 NASB

**PRAYER:**

Father, use me to shine Your light on my generation. I commit my time, talents, and treasures to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

*We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.*

2 Corinthians 4:7 NIV

### PRAYER:

Father, thank You that You are with me. I surrender my life to You. May my life point other people to Jesus. In His name, amen.

How do your daily habits point people to Jesus?

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## Treasure in Clay Jars

BIBLE READING: 2 CORINTHIANS 4

For Ludwig van Beethoven, conditions were difficult. His city of Vienna, Austria, had been invaded by French forces under Napoleon Bonaparte. Describing conditions, Beethoven wrote, “What a destructive, disorderly life I see and hear around me, nothing but drums, cannons, and human misery in every form.”

Beethoven also had reason to be discouraged about his health. He was nearly deaf and losing his hearing. Yet in 1809, amid this turmoil and despair, Beethoven was able to compose his fifth piano concerto. One writer called his masterpiece “the summit of all concerto music ever written.” Now often known as the *Emperor*, this triumph continues to stir audiences worldwide.

How easily each of us can become discouraged by the conditions we face. But the Bible describes how God can work through any situation. He can use circumstances to transform our lives and even produce masterpieces.

We might feel pressed by troubles or perplexed (vs. 7–10). But, as Paul learned, these are conditions in which we should turn to God. He can shape us, refine us, teach us, and do amazing things *through* us. As we go through life’s challenges, we may realize we simply are “*jars of clay*,” but God can give us a “*treasure*.”

In every situation, you can be confident that God is with you. Submit your life to Him. Let Him use circumstances to refine you. He can do amazing things *through* you.

## Focus on Serving God

BIBLE READING: 2 CORINTHIANS 6

Not everyone was convinced by Paul’s ministry and the messages he delivered. Some, in fact, were critical of him and made accusations so strong that he felt forced to defend himself.

Writing to believers in Corinth, he described the difficulties he had experienced. He made it clear that he was not motivated by self-interest. He was not being defensive or worried about receiving rewards for his efforts. His goal was to *serve* God, advance *His* Kingdom, and follow Jesus.

Moreover, he was careful not to do anything that might tarnish the Gospel. This was true even if he had been wronged and even if he did not receive honors or recognition.

Demonstrating these principles, he described the tribulations he had faced. He sought to be *faithful* no matter what others said or did. The Holy Spirit motivated him, with sincere love, by the power of God, and a desire to do what was right (vs. 4–10).

As the Bible makes clear, God wants us to seek first His Kingdom (Matthew 6:33), be ready to leave all to follow Jesus (Mark 10:21), and avoid anything that might tarnish the Gospel message.

Ask yourself if you are more concerned for the Gospel or your own comfort, rewards, or reputation. In everything you do, selflessly seek to serve God. Ask Him to use you in the lives of others so that He might receive the glory.

Are you more focused on serving God or gaining recognition for yourself?

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*We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed. But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God.*

2 Corinthians 6:3–4

### PRAYER:

Father, I dedicate myself to serving You. I offer myself as a living sacrifice. Purify me. Change me. Draw me closer to You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

*But God, who comforts the discouraged, comforted us by the arrival of Titus.*

2 Corinthians 7:6 NASB

### PRAYER:

Father, thank You that You are with me. I place my trust in You. Help me to encourage others. In Jesus' name, amen.

How can you encourage yourself and others to keep spreading the Gospel?

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## Discouraged

BIBLE READING: 2 CORINTHIANS 7

Hudson Taylor left for China full of confidence. When only 16, he declared that Jesus was Lord of everything in his life. Driven by this dedication, he felt God's call to be a medical missionary to China. In preparation, he committed to prayer. He wanted to be sure Jesus' promises were true, specifically that he could ask *anything* in His name, and He would do it (John 14:13).

Preparing for the mission field, he sought to practice living by faith. But after arriving in China in 1854, Hudson became discouraged and lonely. He faced financial needs and was struggling to learn Chinese.

He wrote to the Chinese Evangelization Society in England, "Pray for me." He felt "almost pressed beyond measure." He clung to the Bible, finding God's Word "increasingly precious." If he did not feel God's presence, "I do not know what I should do."

Gradually, his circumstances changed. God's promises proved true. He began journeying into the interior of China where he developed strategies that made him an effective soul winner.

In some ways, all of us face some kind of struggle. Even Paul struggled, admitting he battled discouragement and was grateful for the visit by Titus.

If you ever feel discouraged, don't give up. Instead, seek God in prayer. Confess the promises in His Word. As God blesses you, seek to be a source of encouragement for others. Pray for them.

## Eager to Give

BIBLE READING: 2 CORINTHIANS 8

Imagine a group of Christians so eager to support the Gospel that they *begged* to have the opportunity to give! That was the testimony of the churches of Macedonia.

Others might have focused on themselves and thought first about their own interests. They faced many trials and "a great ordeal of affliction" (v. 2). Yet these Macedonians were consumed with the love of God, so committed to His Kingdom that they couldn't wait to give!

They were so generous that they *exceeded* what might have been expected. They gave in abundance, even "beyond their ability."

What was so special was that their giving was completely *voluntary*. They were so generous that even Paul seemed surprised. He was blessed and encouraged.

What had been their motive? Paul described how they were dedicated to the Lord, and He was the most important thing in their lives. They did not hold back. They committed their entire lives to Him and were willing to trust Him for everything.

Today, let the example of these Macedonians inspire you. Don't be a reluctant giver or let the problems of this world keep you from investing your resources in God's Kingdom. Don't be stingy or give reluctantly, but be *generous*. Give an *abundance* of your time, talents, and treasures. Be so eager that you seek every opportunity to give, remembering that God "loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7).

What can you tangibly give this week to support the work of missionaries?

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*They gave voluntarily, begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints... not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God.*

2 Corinthians 8:3-5 NASB

### PRAYER:

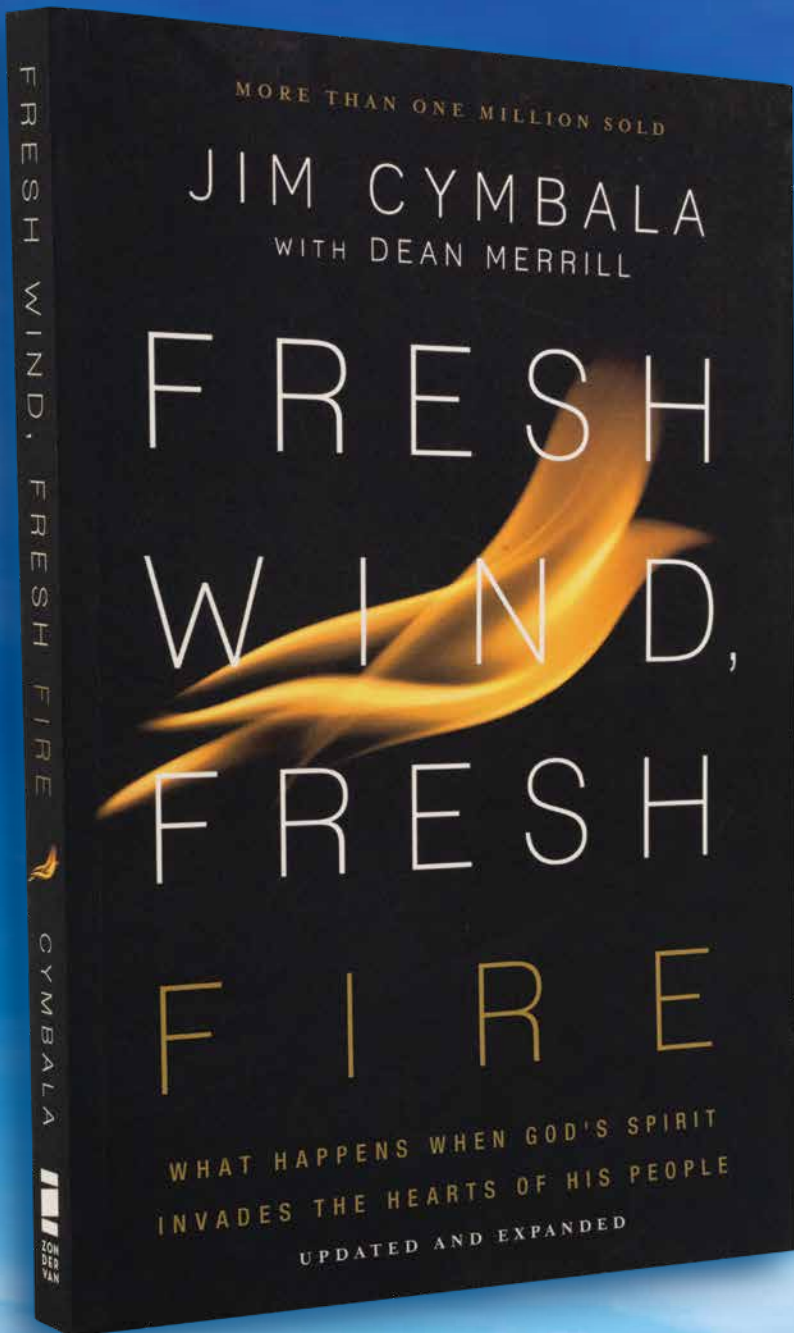
Father, give me an eagerness to support the work of Your Kingdom. I dedicate my life to You. Use me to save souls! In Jesus' name, amen.

# Need a Fresh Filling of the Spirit?

A classic must-read for those looking for hope and transformation in the church today, *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire* shows what the Holy Spirit can do when believers get serious about prayer and the Gospel. God calls us back from spiritual dead ends, apathy, and lukewarm religion when we set aside our own agendas, take Him at His word, and listen for His voice.

Pastor Jim Cymbala knows from personal experience. In the early 1970s, his church, the Brooklyn Tabernacle, was a struggling congregation of 20. Then they began to pray, God began to move, and street-hardened lives by the hundreds were changed with the love of Christ. Today, they are nearly ten thousand strong.

In this twentieth anniversary edition, Cymbala updates the classic stories, including that of his own daughter, and continues the message of supernatural hope and transformation.



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*We are destroying arguments and all arrogance raised against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.*

2 Corinthians 10:5 NASB

**PRAYER:**

Father, I surrender to You. I need Your wisdom and guidance. Help me bring all my thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ. In His name, amen.

Have you taken every thought captive to the will of Christ?

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## Capture Every Thought

BIBLE READING: 2 CORINTHIANS 10

Born in Switzerland in 1712, Jean-Jacques Rousseau embraced a lifestyle that challenged the norms of society. Writing his confessions, Rousseau exposed his “inmost self” with unprecedented honesty.

Rousseau believed that God would welcome his honesty. When he faced God on the Day of Judgment, he would take his confessions and “say boldly: ‘This is what I have done, what I have thought, what I was.’” He wondered if others would be so bold or honest.

Some applauded Rousseau’s honesty. But, over time, it became clear he was celebrating his flawed human nature and charting a path that led away from God. He flaunted himself and his will, placing himself and his own subjective experiences above God.

Today, the world honors many who celebrate independence, reject the truths of the Bible, and live for themselves. Many of these people feel that it is dishonest to submit to God. But the Bible urges us to realize why, like Paul, we need to destroy “arguments and all arrogance raised against the knowledge of God” and take “every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.”

The Bible promises that God wants us to have overwhelming victory and receive abundant blessings. But these riches come to those who surrender their lives *completely* to Him. Remember, true freedom comes when you take every thought “captive to the obedience of Christ” and put everything else aside to serve Him.

## Being Critical

BIBLE READING: 2 CORINTHIANS 10

It can be easy to criticize others. Even people in the Bible faced criticism for what they said and did or for their style and appearance. Some even were critical of the apostle Paul.

Yes, he was a great intellect and brilliant thinker, a man with extraordinary commitment and faith. He was a man whose ministry clearly was anointed, to whom God had given great insights. God used him to establish churches and write much of the New Testament. But some found ways to *criticize* him.

Paul told the Corinthians that some people said his speech was “contemptible.” The Greek word here suggests that some despised what Paul said and how he said it.

The reality is that it can be easy to be critical. But before criticizing others, we should remember the warning of Jesus, “Judge not, that you be not judged” (Matthew 7:1). Remember that none of us is perfect. We will be judged based on the way we judge others.

Before judging others, we first are to “remove the plank from [y]our own eye,” so we can see clearly to be able to “remove the speck from [y]our brother’s eye” (Matthew 7:5).

Remember the words of Paul, that we are to seek “to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3), love others (1 Corinthians 13:2), and be careful before being critical.

When have you been critical and judgmental, and how can you correct it?

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*For his letters, they say, are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.*

2 Corinthians 10:10

**PRAYER:**

Father, I commit these people to You: \_\_\_\_\_. Forgive me for being judgmental. Help me to be an encourager. In Jesus’ name, amen.



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

2 Corinthians 11:14 NASB

## Deceptive Role Model

BIBLE READING: 2 CORINTHIANS 11

To many, Satan represents an attitude they admire. They applaud his independent spirit. In the process, he has become a kind of role model—a hero to those who reject God’s Word and desire to go their own way.

Satan approaches us in the same way he approached Adam and Eve, whom he urged to reject God’s direction and live by their own rules (Genesis 3:1–7). To them, he positioned God as the enemy of freedom and pleasure.

We see these characteristics in Satan’s interaction with Jesus as he tried to tempt Him (Matthew 4:1–11). We see this in the way he “*incited*” David to ignore God and count the Israelites (1 Chronicles 21:1). And his example provides a model for people throughout history.

Satan seeks to make the darkness seem like light. A master of disguise, he tries to make God sound like the villain. He wants us to believe that he is on our side.

Paul knew that Satan seeks to *deceive* and take advantage of people, to *trick* them into believing his propaganda. He knew that we need to be on guard so “*no advantage would be taken of us by Satan.*” He made sure that “*we are not ignorant of his schemes*” (2 Corinthians 2:11).

Make sure you are alert to deception. Fill your mind with God’s Word. Don’t believe Satan’s lies even if they sound believable. Trust God completely.

How can you learn to spot Satan’s lies?

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## Power

BIBLE READING: PSALM 2

Klemens Metternich had such a dominant personality that some called the 19th century the Age of Metternich. He expressed his genius by developing the concept of a balance of power among nations.

Born in Germany in 1773, he served in important diplomatic positions before becoming Austria’s minister of foreign affairs. His shrewd policies helped bring Austria victory against Napoleon. In the Congress of Vienna that followed this victory, Metternich’s leadership inspired a balance that helped keep Europe out of major wars for almost 100 years.

Yet as nations became so obsessed with maintaining a balance, Europe became tangled with complex alliances that eventually exploded into violent wars.

Psalm 2 takes on significance here. Nations have plotted and planned. Kings have taken stands. Rulers have sought to gain power and control. Ultimately, they don’t realize they are fighting against God Himself, who has an eternal perspective and plans that will succeed.

Today, the forces of darkness seem to have the advantage while Christians are outnumbered and overwhelmed. But the psalmist reminds us that *God is not worried!* He sits in the heavens and laughs. He knows their limits.

You can trust God! Your opposition may seem powerful. Your problems may seem impossible to solve. But you serve the God of all Creation. He is the God of miracles! Stay faithful. Serve Him. Trust Him.

Today’s world powers seem unbalanced. Write a prayer to restore peace.

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*Why are the nations restless and the peoples plotting in vain?...The rulers conspire together against the LORD and against His Anointed... He who sits in the heavens laughs, the LORD scoffs at them.*

Psalm 2:1–4 NASB

### PRAYER:

Father, thank You that You have the world situation under control. Help me to be faithful and spread the Gospel. In Jesus’ name, amen.

*Whenever the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge... whenever the judge died, they turned back and were more corrupt than their fathers... They did not drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways.*

Judges 2:18–19 ESV

### PRAYER:

Father, help me to learn the lessons You taught previous generations. In Jesus' name, amen.

## Generations

BIBLE READING: JUDGES 2

It is a pattern repeated throughout the Bible and throughout history, generation after generation. There seems to be something about us that craves independence. We desire to do things our own way. It seems natural to resist the advice of earlier generations, particularly our parents.

We see this when the Israelites were conquering the land. God had given them clear directions. They were not to tolerate the presence of people who occupied the land, for they would corrupt their faith and lead them away from God.

The path to success was clear. They were to serve God, focus on Him, keep His commandments, and not follow the corrupt influences of the people in the land. If they did these things, He promised to protect them, provide for them, and bless their efforts. But if they failed to do these things, they would experience the consequences, including struggle, failure, and opposition.

The Israelites tried to teach these principles to the next generation. But instead of learning from these experiences, they seemed determined to do what they wanted. In fact, they *“were more corrupt than their fathers.”*

The Bible is filled with warnings to learn from earlier generations. God designed each of us to be blessed as we apply His principles.

Ask God to help you evaluate your attitude, particularly toward your parents. Seek to be a good listener. Be humble and submissive. Learn from previous generations.

What have you learned from your parents and grandparents?

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## Listening and Learning

BIBLE READING: PROVERBS 15

From the beginning, God made clear the importance of our attitude toward our parents. A foundational principle was found in the ten commandments that direct us, *“Honor your father and your mother”* (Exodus 20:12). Honoring them was so important that God *promised* blessings for those who keep this command (Ephesians 6:1–3).

Honoring parents means having an attitude of *humility* toward them, showing *appreciation*, being eager to receive their insights, *listening* to them, *learning* from them, and being ready to apply those lessons in our own lives. We can learn much from the experiences of older generations.

Throughout the Bible, we see examples of those who honored their parents, listened to them, and applied the lessons they learned. We see how God blesses and rewards these people.

We are encouraged to respect and honor parents even when they are critical. We read, *“A wise son heeds his father’s instruction, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke”* (Proverbs 13:1).

Parents feel special when their children show appreciation. We read, *“A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is the grief of his mother”* (Proverbs 10:1). We are encouraged to *hear* what they recommend (Proverbs 1:8).

Seek to remember these principles. Learn from the insights given by your mother and father, whether they are still alive or not. Pay attention to the lessons they shared. Stay humble and teachable.

If your parents are still alive, how can you practically show them honor?

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*A wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish man despises his mother.*

Proverbs 15:20

### PRAYER:

Father, help me honor my parents and learn from older generations. Help me to be a better listener. Give me a teachable spirit. In Jesus' name, amen.

*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:

Father, help my faith to be complete. Help me comfort others, seek the unity of the Spirit, and be at peace with other believers. In Jesus' name, amen.

What can you do today to ensure you are at peace with other believers?

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## Paul's Pillars

BIBLE READING: 2 CORINTHIANS 13

Closing this letter to the Corinthians, Paul focused on important, fundamental truths. He urged believers to become “*complete*” and “*grow to maturity*” (NLT). They weren't just to gain experiences or accumulate resources, but they were to use the *gifts* God gave them to grow, learn, and study.

Second, Paul encouraged them to be of “*good comfort*.” This theme was particularly important to Paul, who used the Greek word 18 times in this letter. He knew everyone needed comfort and recognized the importance of showing care for others. Third, Paul reminded them of the importance of *unity* in the Spirit. No one was to feel superior. Every believer had an important part to play (1 Corinthians 12:12).

Paul's final admonition was for believers to *live in peace* with each other. This is the peace of God that is present as believers are unified, their lives are surrendered to Jesus, everyone has a *servant* attitude, they all realize each of them is a member of the same body, and they need each other.

Seek to apply these principles. Seek to be complete, putting into practice the gifts God has given you. Look for opportunities to provide *comfort* to people weighed down with burdens. Seek to live in peace with other believers, committed to the unity of the Spirit. If you do these things, the Bible *promises* that God will be with you.

## Facing the Impossible

BIBLE READING: MATTHEW 17

In the third century BC, the people of Carthage (northern Africa) faced the growing power of Rome. They had one key advantage. They had a dynamic leader: Hannibal. This military genius developed a bold strategy to attack Rome. But his plan was revolutionary—he proposed a route that would take the Carthaginian army over the Alps, approaching Rome from the west.

Some were astonished by this plan. Others thought Hannibal was crazy. Lead an army (including elephants) over those inhospitable, almost impassable mountains?

But Hannibal had the audacity to believe that the impossible was possible. When he successfully led his forces across these mountains, the Romans were stunned and experienced defeat after defeat. They faced forces led by a man who believed that *anything* was possible, a man filled with courage and boldness.

Facing challenges, many Christians expect defeat and fail to believe in God for victory. He looks for people with faith to believe all things are possible, who seek Him, allow Him to direct their lives, and are not paralyzed by worry or doubt. God is looking for people with boldness and courage, people with faith.

Do not allow your life to be overwhelmed by doubts and worries or be consumed with negative thinking. Realize that *nothing* is impossible with God. Commit every situation you face to Him. Believe that He can do all things for you.

In which situation are you praying for victory right now?

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

Matthew 17:20 NASB

### PRAYER:

Father, I commit these situations to You: \_\_\_\_\_. I have faith that You can give me victory. I believe nothing is impossible. In Jesus' name, amen.

*I was not appointed by...any human authority, but by Jesus Christ himself [...] I'm not trying to win the approval of people, but of God. If pleasing people were my goal, I would not be Christ's servant.*

Galatians 1:1, 10 NLT

### PRAYER:

Father, I seek to please You with my life and my choices. Give me the confidence to trust You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Do you have enough confidence in Christ to follow His calling?

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## Pleasing People or God?

BIBLE READING: GALATIANS 1

Some must have questioned the content of Paul's ministry and his authority. This becomes clear when we realize he began his letter to the Galatians by stressing he was not appointed by any person or speaking on behalf of any group. His authority was from Jesus Himself.

He made it clear that he was "Christ's servant." This gave him confidence and clarity. He was not biased by popular opinions and did not allow the standards and beliefs of the world to influence his message. His goal was to serve Jesus and please God.

Many Christians fail to have this kind of focus. They allow themselves to be distracted because they try to be people pleasers.

Think about *your* life. Is your primary goal to please God or other people? The Bible urges us to be sure that God is pleased with our choices. Focus on Him, regardless of what others think. Remember that in every situation, we are His servants, called by Him. We need to trust God and get our direction from Him.

This attitude will give you confidence and freedom. Make Him your source and guide. Remember that you get *everything* from Him. Look to God as your judge and defender. He is your King, Lord, and Master. If you focus on the world, you will discover that standards change. But God never changes. His Word is always true.

## Which Message?

BIBLE READING: GALATIANS 1

Paul faced skepticism. Formerly a man who persecuted believers, he claimed to have been converted and become a believer himself. He claimed he even had a calling from God. At a time when others had different messages, Paul claimed he had been given the *correct* interpretation, the right message received by "revelation."

His challenge was to convince others that these statements were true. His letter to the Galatians is full of attempts to do that. He described visiting Jerusalem, where he met with Peter and other leaders. He visited other churches, meeting with other believers.

After several years, he returned to Jerusalem, again meeting with church leaders. He explained the message he preached among the Gentiles. He wanted to be sure other believers *knew* what he taught and recognized the authority for his interpretations.

Not everyone agreed with him. He acknowledged that "false brethren" were spreading deceitful interpretations. But Paul *knew* his message was right. He knew God had called him. Jesus had spoken to him. He received the endorsement of Peter, James, and other leaders (Galatians 2:2-9). Paul was confident. He would need this confidence on his missionary journeys.

Many people *claim* to have a correct understanding, and many are spreading their doctrines. You must be *confident* and *know* what you believe. You must *know* the truth. Stand on God's Word. Make it your authority. Pray and seek the discernment of the Spirit.

How can you increase your confidence in your knowledge of the Word?

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*I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

Galatians 1:11-12

### PRAYER:

Father, give me discernment to know the truth. Help me to be alert to deception. In Jesus' name, amen.

*I did not immediately... go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter.*

Galatians 1:16–18

### PRAYER:

Father, I seek You with my whole heart. Help me hear from You. Teach me Your ways. Fill me anew with Your Spirit. In Jesus' name, amen.

Do you need to retreat to get a clearer vision of what God wants for you?

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## A Deeper Faith

BIBLE READING: GALATIANS 1

Even as a young man, Vladimir Horowitz distinguished himself as an extraordinary pianist, dazzling audiences with his technique. But to everyone's surprise, he retired in 1953. He was only 50 years old.

When he returned to the concert platform in 1965, it was clear he had changed. He still had the same technique. But, as another master pianist observed, "everything had been re-thought, re-felt, relived." Horowitz emerged with new depth and maturity. Thanks to his time of study and withdrawal, his performances seemed fresher and filled with more insight.

Christians need to consider the importance of withdrawing for a time. After Paul's conversion, he "went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus." After several years, he went to Jerusalem. Later he described a break of 14 years after which he returned to Jerusalem again (Galatians 2:1).

During these times, Paul studied and prayed. The depth of his ministry reflected this time of withdrawal and renewal.

The Bible urges us to realize how easy it can be to fall into ruts. We need time alone with God—time for prayer and study, reflection and renewal. Without these times, we can become cold and stale.

God has prepared abundant blessings for you. There are life-changing revelations and deeper insights yet to be discovered. Spend quality time alone with Him, withdrawn from the world.

## Learning to Wait

BIBLE READING: GALATIANS 2

The Bible is filled with the fruit of Paul's ministry—his sermons and letters, his travels, and the churches he founded. But we must not forget the years he spent *waiting* when it might have seemed he wasn't doing anything.

He knew God had called him for ministry, but instead of being sent directly into the mission field, he received revelations from Jesus Himself of the Gospel for three years (Galatians 1:18). Then came a revelation. God spoke and pointed him toward Jerusalem. His ministry flourished because he waited for God to open the door at the right time, and he was obedient.

We must also wait at times. We may need to wait for the fulfillment of a dream or for a door to open. Even in times of waiting, we should continue being faithful to do the things He has given us. We need to be ready for Him to speak with further directions in His time and His way.

Ask God to help you be a faithful servant. Always do what He has called you to do. Be a good steward of the resources you have been given, always ready, always faithful, always trustworthy, and always available.

If that means waiting, do not give up hope. Instead, remain faithful. Commit your way to Him and seek to be sensitive to His leadership, confident that He will bless and direct you at just the right time.

How can you make the most of your seasons of waiting?

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*After fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem...and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest...I might run, or had run, in vain.*

Galatians 2:1–2

### PRAYER:

Father, I believe You have a plan for my life and You will guide me. Help me to be faithful to Your call. In Jesus' name, amen.

*I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God.*

Galatians 2:20 NASB

**PRAYER:**

Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for sacrificing Your life for me. Thank You for saving me. I worship You. In Your name, amen.

What place does worship music play in your times with God?

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## Coming to the Cross

BIBLE READING: GALATIANS 2

William McDonald saw many people come to the altar crying out for God, broken by their sins, and needing forgiveness. In his heart, McDonald felt the need for music to minister to these people.

One day in 1870, McDonald sat in his study at his church in Brooklyn, New York. As a melody written by William Fischer captured his imagination, suddenly words “came rushing into [his] mind.” Within a few minutes, he wrote the words to the hymn “I Am Coming to the Cross.”

Feeling the burden of sinners, McDonald described how he came to Jesus feeling “poor and weak and blind,” knowing that he found salvation only by “coming to the cross.” At that moment, he cried out, “Save me, Jesus, save me now.” McDonald heard Him speak “sweetly” to him, “I will cleanse you from all sin.”

McDonald knew that the cross was a place of surrender to give his all to Him. Everything became His “forevermore.” He received God’s grace. He learned to trust His Word. Because of the cross, he was made whole. Those who have been transformed can cry out, “Glory to the Lamb!”

Jesus still saves souls and changes lives. Humble yourself before Him! In your heart, kneel at the cross where He died for you. Accept His salvation, forgiveness, and healing. Dedicate your life to bringing salvation to lost souls around the world.

## The Gospel for All

BIBLE READING: GALATIANS 3

Life was rough for Sojourner Truth. Born into a family of slaves in a Dutch settlement in upstate New York, she was sold several times. After she was whipped with rods by one master, she started seriously seeking God for help. This was a turning point. In 1827, she escaped to a nearby abolitionist family. After New York abolished slavery, she moved to New York City and felt a call to preach.

Her name at birth was Isabella Baumfree, but she felt everything was new when she became a Christian. She “left everything behind” when she “left the house of bondage” and asked the Lord, “give me a new name.” She became Sojourner Truth. She had a real burden to evangelize. She once described how her singing attracted crowds then she would tell them about Jesus.

Although unable to read or write, she gave speeches that dazzled audiences. In her most famous speech given in 1851, “Ain’t I a Woman?” she told of crying as her children were sold into slavery. “None but Jesus heard me.”

She used her influence to help former and current slaves and bring attention to the plight of women. She stressed that God loves everyone and wants *everyone* to be saved. Jesus died to save people of all races.

Remember that *everyone* needs the Gospel—every race, every country. Ask God to give you a hunger to share the Gospel. Be an ambassador for truth.

How can you be an ambassador for truth in your sphere of influence?

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*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

Galatians 3:28 NASB

**PRAYER:**

Father, give me a burden for souls. Let me impact lives with the Gospel. I dedicate my time, talents, and treasures to You. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

*This is speaking allegorically, for these women are two covenants: one coming from Mount Sinai giving birth to children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar [...] the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother.*

Galatians 4:24, 26 NASB

## Picture Deeper Truths

BIBLE READING: GALATIANS 4

Paul said that when the Old Testament referred to two covenants, it was speaking “*allegorically*.” The Greek word, used here for the only time in the Bible, is the root of the English word allegory.

Allegories are like word paintings, ways to use symbols to portray truths that can be hard to define. This word reminds us that there are many levels within God’s Word. Truths that may be apparent on the surface also can reveal deeper things through study, prayer, and revelation.

As you read and study the Bible, remember that God can speak to you in many ways. Remember that Jesus Himself often used parables, speaking in “*things hidden*.” He even said the Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure that has been *buried* (Matthew 13:35, 44) with insights that can be revealed to those who ask and dig.

Thinking about these principles, we need to study the Bible *prayerfully* and ask God for insights. It is so rewarding to read the Bible and realize that there are depths behind the depths. There always is more to understand, a deeper meaning ready to be revealed.

As you read the Bible, approach the Word *carefully* and *reverently*. Be careful not to interject your own interpretations of the text. Stay sensitive to the leading of the Spirit, alert to truths that can come alive as you study and He leads you.

How can you ensure that you are interpreting Scripture correctly?

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## Set Free!

BIBLE READING: GALATIANS 5

In 1906 when Oswald Smith was 16, he gave his life to Christ. This led to a lifetime of service, including founding the People’s Church in Toronto. Although he had no special musical training, God used him to write more than 1,000 hymns. He once said that melody and rhythm naturally flowed from within him.

In 1933, Smith was sent some music written by A.H. Ackley, who wondered if Smith could find appropriate words. Smith found that “the theme sang itself into my heart.”

In this hymn, called “The Song of the Soul Set Free,” Smith wrote about his love for Jesus, who was the “fairest of ten thousand.” He was “my Savior, the Lily of the Valley, the Bright and Morning Star.”

Reflecting on his experience, Smith described how his heart had been burdened, “but now I am *forgiven*.” He had “a song of gladness,” and “joy bells” rang in his heart. He could sing, “for Christ has ransomed me.” He remembered how he had lived in darkness and could not see the light. “But now I sing His praises,” for Jesus set him free.

Many believers still seem burdened and fail to experience the joy of the Lord. But, as Oswald Smith realized, our souls can be *set free* in Jesus. Are you burdened? Do you have a heavy heart? Turn to Him today. Trust in Him. Let Him set your soul free!

What burdens do you need to give to God, so you can be free?

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*It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.*

Galatians 5:1 NASB

### PRAYER:

Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for saving me and setting my soul free! Thank You for taking away my burdens. In Your name, amen.

*A man's harvest in life...If he sows for his own lower nature his harvest will be the decay and death of his own nature. But if he sows for the Spirit he will reap the harvest of everlasting life.*

Galatians 6:7-8 Phillips

### PRAYER:

Father, help me sow seeds into Your Kingdom with my time, treasures, and resources. Thank You for the harvest You will grant me. In Jesus' name, amen.

Are you sowing the right kind of seeds to reap the harvest you want?

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## Sowing Seeds

BIBLE READING: GALATIANS 6

The truth is so simple we can take it for granted: *We always* reap what we sow. Farmers never would argue this fact. They know that if they want corn, they must plant seeds of corn. If they want wheat, they need to plant seeds of wheat. And so on. They also know they will not reap *any* crops if they do not plant seeds.

Paul wrote that this same principle applies to every phase of life. Our harvests depend on what we sow. This means that what we receive in our lives (our harvest) depends on what we do or say (what we sow). These are our investments.

In spiritual terms, we can determine what kind of fruit we will receive. If we spend our lives pursuing pleasure, popularity, or other earthly rewards, we only will reap these kinds of returns. We may not receive spiritual riches.

God's blessings, both in this life and in the life to come, are for those who sow to the Spirit. These are people who first seek His Kingdom. They separate themselves from the corruption in this world. They fill their minds with His Word and are consumed with a desire to please Him.

If you want to reap spiritual riches, seek to sow in the Spirit. Sow abundantly into His Kingdom so that you may be blessed with a bountiful harvest.

What seeds are you sowing today?

## Never Forget

BIBLE READING: PSALM 103

Hermann Ebbinghaus developed a tireless quest to understand memory. Born in Germany in 1850, he was among the first to study this subject scientifically.

One series of experiments was based on testing three-letter syllables, or trigrams, he developed. He conducted experiments to determine what the mind retained and how quickly we forgot what had been learned.

Ebbinghaus proved just how *quickly* we can forget even the things that we *think* we will always remember. He found that, within 20 minutes, we can forget as much as 40% of what we have learned! After two days, as much as 80% is forgotten!

He also recognized that all of us are different. Some people have a better capacity to remember than others. There are techniques to improve memory, yet most of us forget all too easily—even information we know is important and things we *want* to remember.

This is a reason Memorial Day was established in the United States. It's a day set aside to *remember* those who have given their lives in service to our country.

The Bible also encourages us to remember our parents and forebears, those who have been part of our spiritual heritage, who have taught us, prayed for us, counseled us, and helped us grow in our faith.

We are to *remember God*. Never forget all that He has done for you, and always remember His Word.

Who taught you the most significant things, and what were they?

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*Let all that I am praise the LORD; may I never forget the good things he does for me.*

Psalm 103:2 NLT

### PRAYER:

Father, I gratefully remember You. Help me today to be grateful for those who have given their lives in service to my country. In Jesus' name, amen.



*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*

Galatians 5:22–23 ESV

**PRAYER:**

Father, I seek a genuine change in my life. Fill me with Your Spirit. May the fruit of the Spirit flow from me. In Jesus' name, amen.

Which fruit of the Spirit do you struggle with and how can you improve it?

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## Impact of the Spirit

BIBLE READING: GALATIANS 5

Today is Pentecost Sunday, the day we remember how the disciples were first filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4). It was the birth of the church. They would be amazed by how the Spirit would change their lives.

His presence was so powerful they could preach life-changing messages (Acts 4:8–12). Their prayers could shake buildings (Acts 4:31). They could perform mighty miracles (Acts 1:8). They could speak with supernatural boldness (Acts 4:13), not because of their skills but because of the Spirit's presence.

The Bible describes how the Spirit changes our *character*. His presence enables us to bear His fruit and be filled with otherworldly *love* and *joy*. We can be overwhelmed with *peace*. Because of the Spirit, we can be *patient* even when this seems unnatural. We can be *faithful* in our relationships and *trustworthy* in our assignments. We are *kind* and *gentle* even when others seem unpleasant.

How do we experience these characteristics? They are a byproduct of His presence. When we are filled with the Spirit, we think His thoughts and feel His emotions. Consider the difference made by the Spirit; He can make the same impact in *your* life. Don't strive, but *wait* on Him.

Surrender your life anew to the Lordship of Jesus. Seek to be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). Wait on Him. Trust Him to change you, empower you, and produce His fruit in you.

## Remembering

BIBLE READING: JOSHUA 24

As he approached the end of his life, Joshua knew it was important to remind the Israelites of their history, and how God had kept His promises by protecting and blessing them. Joshua reminded them that their ancestors had served other gods, but God still chose them. He delivered them from Egypt and gave them “a land for which [they] did not labor, and cities which [they] did not build” (v. 13).

The people acknowledged all that God had done and said they would not forsake Him. But Joshua knew that they might be forgetful. To help them remember their commitment, he set up a stone. Every time they saw that monument, the Israelites would be reminded of all God had done for them and all their promises to Him. Yet in the years to come, they surely would forget these promises. They *still* needed to be reminded.

In the midst of our busy schedules, it can be easy to forget our history and what God has done for us. We, too, need to realize how important it is to recall His goodness, protection, and blessing.

*Think* about what God has done for *you*. Spend time with Him so you never deny Him or forget His blessings. Read His Word and seek Him in prayer. Think about His promises and your commitments. Then *remember* to put your commitment into practice, and look for ways to serve Him.

How has God shown you His faithfulness in the past few weeks?

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*Joshua...took a large stone, and set it up there under the oak... “Behold, this stone... has heard all the words of the LORD which He spoke to us. It shall therefore be a witness to you, lest you deny your God.”*

Joshua 24:26–27

**PRAYER:**

Father, I am thankful for these things: \_\_\_\_\_. Thank You for all You have done for me. Thank You for being faithful. In Jesus' name, amen.

*Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.*

Galatians 6:7

## Reaping What We Sow

BIBLE READING: GALATIANS 6

A recent study examined the lives of more than a thousand college students to see what happened to them after their school experiences. Not realizing the impact of their actions, many had done as little as possible while they were in school. They took easy courses and were lax in their studies. A considerable number “spent almost three-quarters of their time sleeping or socializing.”

Many did not realize the consequences of their actions until they entered the job market. Two years after college, many were unemployed. Some had landed jobs, but they were low paying. Reflecting their lack of prospects, a quarter were living with their parents.

These students were discovering a biblical principle: We reap *whatever* we sow. This is true in every area of life—in school and work, our health and finances, our relationships, and even spiritual matters.

In practical terms, the Bible teaches that each of us is given unique resources, abilities, and opportunities. Some take advantage of those opportunities and invest their time and resources while others fail to invest what God has given them. They are like the students who did as little as possible. They are like the prodigal son who “wasted his possessions” and squandered his opportunities (Luke 15:13).

Remember that you will reap *whatever* you sow. God looks to see what you will do. What will you sow? The choice is up to you.

Are you taking advantage of the opportunities God gives you to sow?

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## Prophetic Promises

BIBLE READING: MATTHEW 24

The disciples were proud of the temple. It was the center of the life of their people. It seemed like this magnificent building would stand forever. But even though the temple appeared permanent and imposing, Jesus warned that the temple would be destroyed—not one stone would be left.

This prophecy must have seemed impossible to the disciples. Yet, within just a few years, the temple was indeed destroyed. It was on this day in 70 AD when the Roman armies captured the first wall of the city of Jerusalem. Within days, the temple was demolished, just as Jesus had foretold.

Many biblical prophecies can be hard for our natural minds to comprehend. It can be easy to be like the disciples and place our confidence in the things of this world. These things can seem permanent, but the Bible urges us to remember that all things on earth are *temporary*. In contrast, God’s Word is *always* true and permanent.

God’s Word is more sure than today’s news or the opinions of scholars and so-called experts. As the Bible reminds us, “*The things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever*” (2 Corinthians 4:18 NLT).

You can place your absolute faith and trust in God’s Word. His prophecies are true, and His promises never fail. Put your confidence and hope in Him.

Are you trusting more in God’s Word than in the things of this world?

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*His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said to them, “Do you not see all these things? Assuredly...not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”*

Matthew 24:1–2

### PRAYER:

Father, give me discernment about these times. Deliver me from dependence on the world’s wisdom. I seek a deeper revelation of Your promises. In Jesus’ name, amen.



# Are You SPIRITUALLY Homeless?

## Let Christ be your dwelling place.

As the cold, dark rain poured down, the line of drenched, bedraggled homeless men and women moved slowly. Hot coffee and a warm sandwich were at least a small comfort. We feel pity for them, but God's heart aches for those trapped in homelessness.

One of the unfortunate ones, Elizabeth, knew that there were no easy answers. Tormented emotionally, she fled her family, medication, and home for the brutal independence of the street. At times, she was able to accept and receive kindness, but often, she literally growled at those who tried to help.

Like Elizabeth, many believers choose independence over living in Christ. Spiritually *homeless* Christians—those who accept Jesus but hold onto their

independence—hurt themselves, others, and their Father.

Are you one of them? Sometimes I am. But look at what Paul says is the solution:

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!* (2 Corinthians 5:17 NIV).

The "IF" in this verse is huge! Every Christian has the critical need to dwell in Christ—you can't live in the flesh *and* in Christ. Believers who choose to live in their flesh are *not* living like new creations.

You must leave the sin-scarred life behind and embrace the image of Christ He designed you to bear, so the life of Jesus will grow in you. Colossians 3:12–14 describes the beauty of life in Christ. You will:

- Have a heart of compassion
- Do kind acts for others
- Put *all* others before yourself
- Treat others gently
- Suffer for others without complaint
- Forgive without limit
- Love unselfishly

If you've been a Christian for a while, you know that many of us don't look like that as often as we should. Many believers cling to the old instead of allowing Christ to make them NEW.

It doesn't have to be that way. It *shouldn't* be that way. Jesus paid too high a price for us to ignore His wide-open arms. So what is it that keeps us living in our flesh instead of living IN CHRIST?

Often, like Elizabeth, we have hurts from the past that drive us away from the Savior. We need to run to Jesus for healing: "*But I will restore you to health and heal your wounds,' declares the LORD*" (Jeremiah 30:17 NIV).

Fear, guilt, and shame drive God's precious creations—you and me—to flee from Him. But Jesus

is the Way back home to a life of safety and significance. How?

*Surely he [Jesus] took up our pain and bore our suffering... he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed* (Isaiah 53:4–5 NIV).

Everything that tries to block us from living IN CHRIST—the wrongs done to us and the wrongs we have done—was paid for by Jesus Christ's death on the cross. His greatest desire is for us to enter into the abundant spiritual life He offers us!

Don't waste another minute living in your flesh! Jesus is the door to enter His healing and life. All you need to do is take these steps to be transformed:

1. Accept and celebrate Jesus' work on your behalf.
2. Walk confidently in peace, trusting in God's love.
3. Encourage others along the way to do the same! ❖

## Has living IN CHRIST changed your life?

Call +1 (803) 578-1802, or visit our website [inspiration.org/my-story](https://inspiration.org/my-story) to share your story.

# Miracles Grow in Tough Times



## The seedtime and harvest principle works!

Over a decade ago, Ozetta tuned into an Inspiration Ministries broadcast. Since then, God's seedtime principles have enriched her world dramatically, prompting her to share her story.

While God's Word is Ozetta's foundation, she found that His directives were not always easy.

"I heard Him tell me, 'Your job is in the home.' But as an IT professional, I made more than my husband, so I kept working."

Ozetta knew she needed to obey the Lord and leave her job, but she also knew the financial impact on her family would be traumatic.

God gave her this promise:

*You let people ride over our heads; we went through fire and water, but you brought us to a place of abundance (Psalm 66:12 NIV).*

"We lost our car and had to file bankruptcy to keep our home. It was

hard on our marriage, but God was so present and clear on what to do."

During this time, God led Ozetta to an Inspiration Ministries' broadcast. She sowed a seed, and God miraculously provided a new house and full-tuition college scholarships for both their children. God also resolved an issue of back taxes when Ozetta's mother passed away.

As she continues living her life for God, she wants others to know three principles the Lord revealed to her during her journey:

- Be a good steward of the things God entrusts to you.
- Use His Words as your personal prayers.
- Speak words of victory in the midst of the trial—your testimony is what overcomes!

Ozetta counts her blessings as harvests from God. What God did for her, He will do for you.

Visit [inspiration.org/souls](https://www.inspiration.org/souls) today to sow a seed for souls.



# A Merry Heart...

does good, like medicine. – Proverbs 17:22

You don't need a parachute to go skydiving.

You need a parachute to go skydiving **twice**.

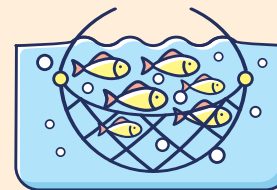


Got some clean, Christian humor you'd like to share?

Email it to:  
[MerryHeart@inspiration.org](mailto:MerryHeart@inspiration.org)

## Why didn't they play cards on the Ark?

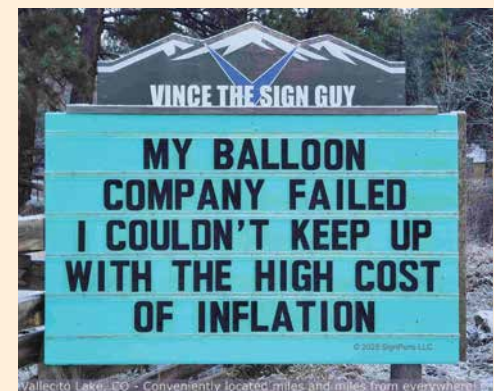
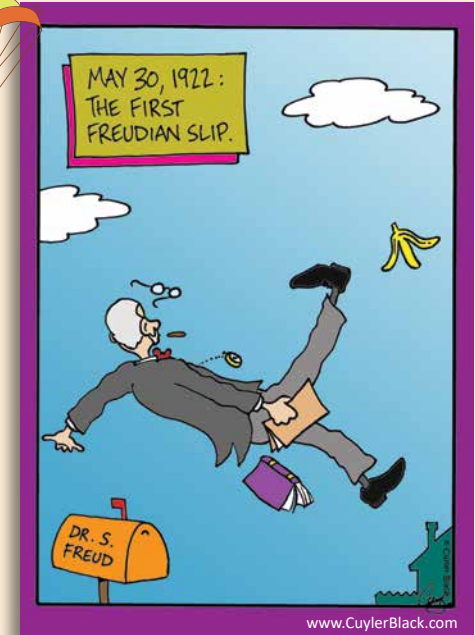
Because Noah was standing on the deck.



## How do we know Peter was a rich fisherman?

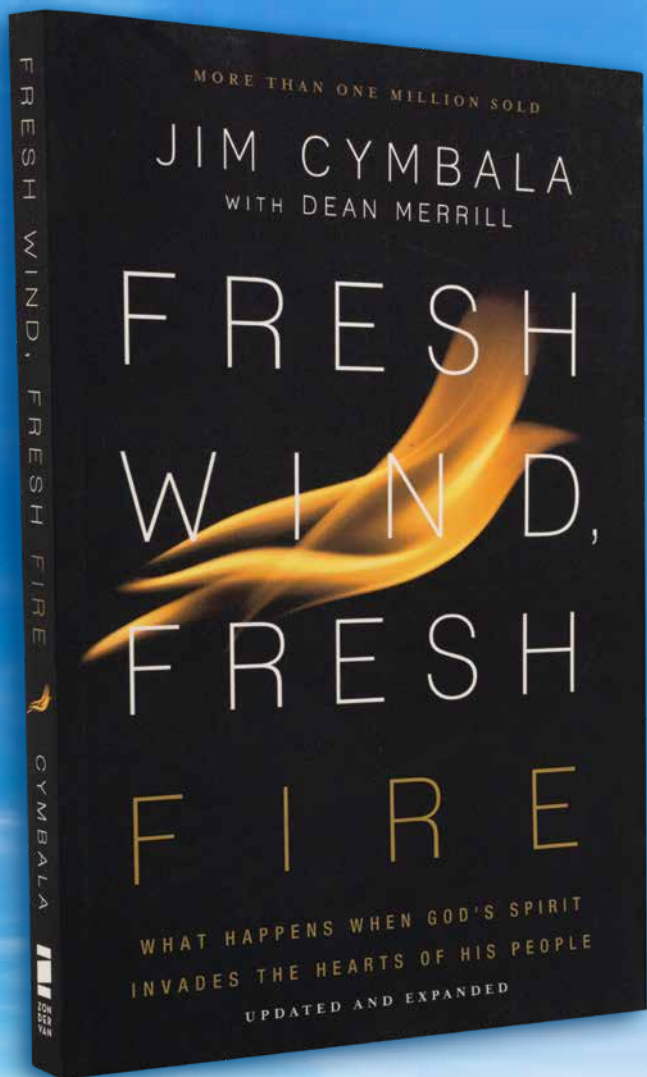
By his net income.

Thank you, Rachel T.!



# Praying Power

How does a tiny congregation of 20 in the bad part of town grow to a well-known church of over 10,000 people? Prayer! You'll be blessed by the life-changing stories in this classic book!



*Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire: What Happens When God's Spirit Invades the Hearts of His People* by Jim Cymbala with Dean Merrill explores the possibilities of powerful prayer.

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