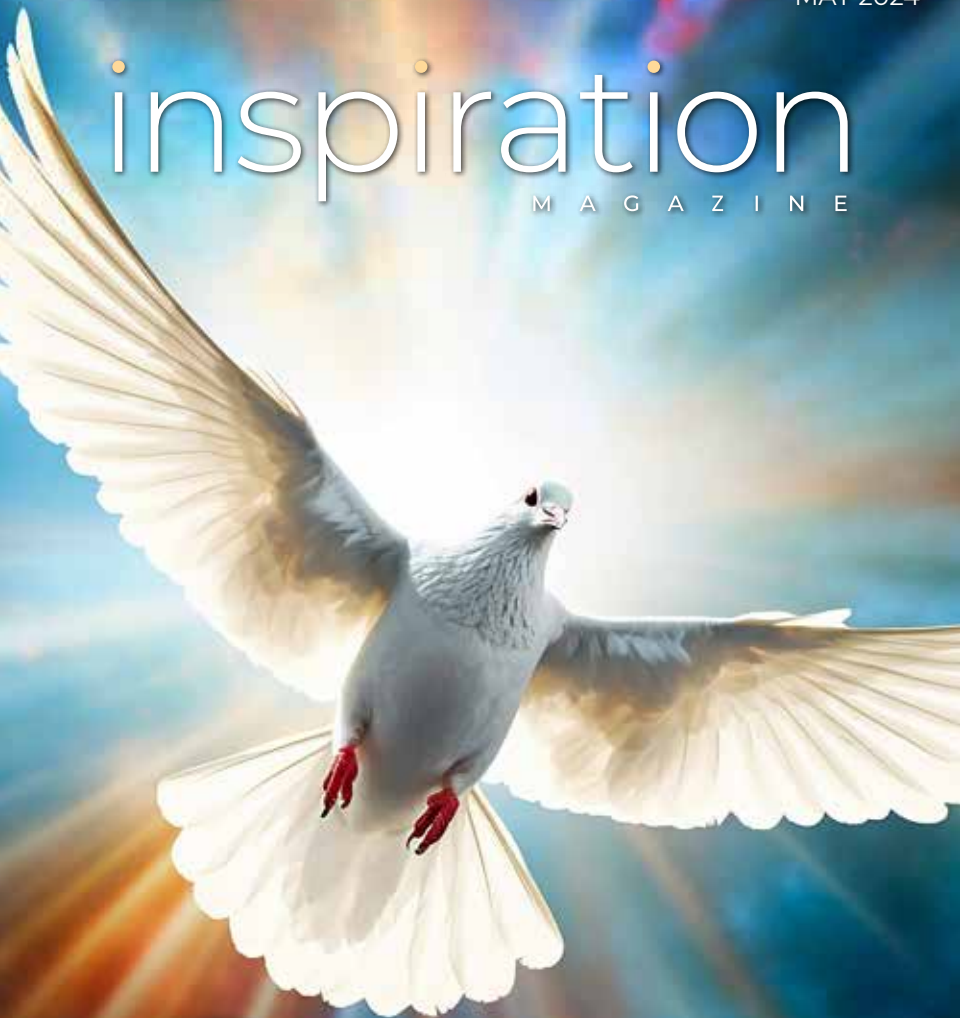


MAY 2024

# inspiration

M A G A Z I N E



# Pentecost Power

Ambitious Hustler  
or Faithful Servant?

Fall in Love with the  
Lover of Your Soul

A Renewed Mind



PAGE 10



PAGE 14

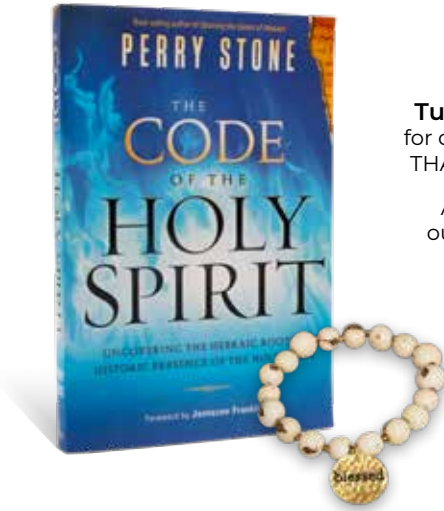


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### Pentecost Power!

As you observe the Feast of Pentecost this month, God offers you a fantastic opportunity to experience extraordinary breakthroughs. Turn to **page 5** where David Cerullo shows you how to activate your Pentecost harvest!



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

Act quickly—our supplies are limited.

### EDITOR'S CORNER



Roone Acree

In this special Pentecost issue, we want to share how God's amazing power can make you an overcomer. On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit broke through to those needing His power and presence. Today, that same supernatural power is available to you, but it takes your leap of faith. I encourage you this month...let this be an opportunity to believe what He said He would do. Trust Him today, and let His hope and blessings overtake your situation!

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*Keys to Abundant Life Series*

God offers everything you need for true transformation!



# Need Spiritual Direction?

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From our *Strengthen Your Walk*™ videos and devotions to our daily Scriptures and faith-boosting articles, we make it our goal to provide the most relevant, Spirit-led resources available anywhere!



## Activate Your Pentecost Harvest!

During this season of Pentecost, I want to encourage you to open yourself up to receive the power of the Holy Spirit in whatever area of your life you most need a touch from the Lord.

I believe God will speak to you through His Word and bring you a life-changing revelation of His wonder-working power in this important time on His prophetic calendar!

I love the story in Acts 2 about how the Spirit empowered the early church, and 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, God again told the Israelites to give an offering of their latter 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*



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*shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven. They are the firstfruits to the LORD (Leviticus 23:17).*

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 finally poured out in 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, an appointed time on God's calendar in which the church was born and filled with supernatural power to take the Gospel to "every tribe and tongue 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!

I encourage you to pause right now and thank the Lord for the power of His Spirit, poured out for YOU at Pentecost. There's no need to feel weak or powerless in your Christian life. God has sent you "power from on high," enabling you to be a fruitful witness for Christ.

But you might be thinking to yourself, "David, I'm not feeling full of God's power right now. I'm feeling weak. I'm struggling."

I understand completely. We've all been there. We've all faced those Red Sea moments where the enemy is barreling down on us, and we have no place to run.

Let me ask you a question: If you could ask God for any supernatural turnaround today, what would it be?

Do you need a breakthrough in your HEALTH? Your FINANCES? Your FAMILY?

I have good news...

**YOUR BREAKTHROUGH IS CLOSER THAN YOU THINK.**

## **YOUR SEVEN BLESSINGS**

God clearly instructed His children there is a BLESSING in store when they celebrate the Feast of Pentecost. God promises in Exodus 23

**God clearly instructed His children there is a BLESSING in store when they celebrate the Feast of Pentecost.**

**Pentecost still has powerful significance today!**

that if you bring a special offering, He will pour out SEVEN SPECIFIC BLESSINGS in your life:

- ◆ An angel of God will be assigned to protect you (v. 20).
- ◆ God will be an enemy to your enemies (v. 22).
- ◆ He will prosper you (v. 25).
- ◆ God will take sickness away from you (v. 25).
- ◆ You will not die before your appointed time (v. 26).
- ◆ Increase and an inheritance will be yours (v. 30).
- ◆ The Lord will return to you what was lost to the enemy (vs. 29–30).

Take a moment to read this list of blessings again. Think about how different your situation will be with these blessings pouring out on your life.

Are you going through a spiritual battle that you need the Lord to fight for you? Are you dealing with a sickness you need Him to heal? Has the devil stolen something you are praying for God to win back for you?

These blessings, and many more, are available as you unlock God's special harvest during His appointed times. According to Deuteronomy 16, part of our Feast of Pentecost celebration is to bring Him an offering. He is very specific about this:

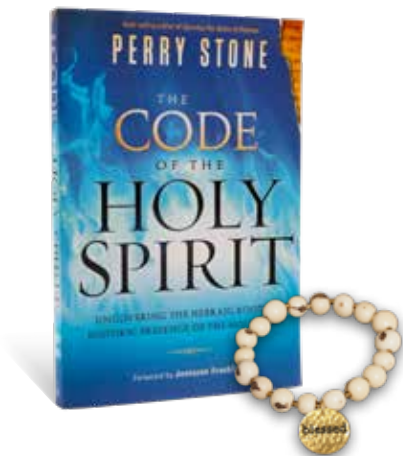
*They shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed. Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you (vs. 16–17).*

When you sow a Pentecost Seed with faith and expectation, God will release into your life abundant rewards!

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 together. 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 GIFTS I want to send you this month.



## His Miracles Are GROWING!

With YOUR support we can reach our goal of over **5 MILLION** souls receiving the miracle of salvation in 2024!



“I really see Jesus in my life because I was in the world of darkness and doing a lot of evil. Thanks for Inspiration’s good work.”

—WILLIAM, KENYA

“God has touched the lives of all my family members, friends, and myself tremendously. What a mighty God we serve. I am grateful He has restored us in all areas. Thank you, Jesus, for your miracles.”

—NATASHA, NEW YORK

“You’ve touched my life and my heart through your ministry. May God bless you and your ministry so that you can continue saving lost souls and reaching people all across the world.”

—LAURIE, IDAHO

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# Ambitious Hustler or Faithful Servant?



Maybe faithfulness looks a little different than we think it does.

At barely 20 years old, I got on a plane for Honduras to spend a month on the Mercy Ships, a medical missions ship providing care to people in some of the poorest countries around the globe. I couldn't speak the language there and had never traveled that far without a family member with me. I had signed up as a month-long volunteer, and off I flew carrying a suitcase loaded with my journal, a Bible, and books along with some clothes. I also carried a heart bursting with idealism but woefully unprepared for what I would see...

A few days into the trip, I felt like I'd made a massive mistake.

Homesick and lonely and culture shocked, I called my mom, and with tears told her I was ready to come home. But something changed over the next few hours. I knew I needed to stay. And I'm so glad I did.

I spent the next weeks working in the ship's kitchen. I made hundreds of peanut butter sandwiches for the medical teams to take with them when they traveled to rural areas for health clinics. And the trips I made with them changed me. My goodness, the way poverty stretched its fingers into every aspect of the communities' lives was stark.

For the first time, I was seeing what I'd heard or read about. I'd grown up reading books about the work of Amy Carmichael, Elisabeth Elliot, Hudson Taylor, and Lottie Moon, but I hadn't truly seen what they had written about. Until now. And it wrecked me.

When I returned to the ship after one of those trips, I was supposed to start my shift in the kitchen. But I was having a hard time, and one of the other workers noticed. She was at least 40 years older than me and had lived on the Mercy Ships for over a year. She noticed my tears, and without hesitating, she said she'd take my shift, and I could go to her room to rest and regroup.

Her room was the tiniest one I've ever seen, tucked away in the middle of the ship with just enough space for a bed and a desk smaller than you could find at Ikea. I took a nap and enjoyed the quiet. Here's what I remember most, though: She didn't shame me for my tears or tell me to suck it up. She just let me be sad and confused in the moment.

After that, I watched this woman when she was serving food or eating meals in the giant dining room and noticed she seemed so happy and peaceful simply being herself. I was an ambitious 20-year-old, full of dreams of the future—big dreams—believing I could shoot for the stars and go for the gold and be anything and everything if I set my mind to it. All of this translated in my mind to being the best and a leader. Not because I had anything to prove or because I wanted to be the best. I just wanted to be faithful, and I thought that meant being at the top, making the best efforts toward the highest ambitions.

But what if faithfulness looked quieter? Perhaps it is day-in, day-out obedience in small ways too. Maybe it is spending more than a year of your life sleeping in a tiny room in the middle of a ship and making sandwiches for people and noticing the 20-year-olds who were struggling with their faith and telling them to go rest. I challenge you, like I learned that day, to be in faithful walking, not ambitious hustling. ❖



**Dr. Emily Smith** is an epidemiologist and assistant professor in the Department of Emergency Medicine/Surgery at Duke University and at the Duke Global Health Institute. Emily has been married to her pastor-husband for 20 years, and they have two children.

Excerpt taken from *The Science of the Good Samaritan* by Emily Smith. © 2023 by Zondervan. Used by permission. [www.zondervan.com](http://www.zondervan.com)



# Hoovey

There's strength in faith and family!

Hoovey is the inspiring true story of a family's unwavering trust in God as Eric battles a brain tumor to live out his dream.

Saturday, May 11 at 9:00 p.m. ET  
Sunday, May 12 at 5:30 p.m. ET  
Wednesday, May 15 at 9:00 p.m. ET

Program times subject to change.  
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Saturday, May 18 at 9:00 p.m. ET  
Sunday, May 19 at 5:30 p.m. ET

### **Miles Between Us**

God wants to prosper your relationships! You'll love this story of an estranged father and daughter who find healing and redemption on a road trip to college.



Saturday, May 11 at 3:00 p.m. ET

### **Russ Taff: I Still Believe**

What do you do when someone you love is slowly self-destructing? Russ's musical journey is an enduring testament to the power of love and grace.

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**More Americans are watching than ever!**  
Have you discovered Inspiration TV yet?

# Falling in Love with the Lover of Your Soul



by Ben Cerullo

I love the old hymn that says, “Trust and obey, for there’s no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey.” I’m convinced this is God’s objective for you today: to impact the world by being “happy in Jesus.”

But it’s crucial to understand that the Christian life is not meant to be lived by studying what Jesus did and trying to duplicate it in your own strength. Rather than just being a script to be read and acted out, the Christian life is Jesus living His life through you by the power of the Holy Spirit.

That’s why Paul makes the amazing statement, “When **Christ who is our life** appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory” (Colossians 3:4). Jesus doesn’t just give us life; He **IS** our life! In fact, Paul says, “It is no longer I who live, but **Christ lives in me**” (Galatians 2:20).

Jesus is the Lover of our souls, and He wants us to respond to that love by cultivating an intimate relationship with Him. We’re promised that He will draw near to us when we make a commitment to draw near to Him (James 4:8).

Although there’s no formula for having this kind of intimate personal relationship with Jesus, the Bible gives us patterns and examples to follow:

## 1. Regularly enter God’s presence.

Just as with any earthly relationship, you must spend time together with the Lord. The more you draw close to Him and hear His heartbeat, the deeper your love for Him will become. The Bible explains how to do this: “Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name” (Psalm 100:4 NIV). Make this a daily habit!

## 2. Develop a heart of devotion.

God-honoring, Christ-centered, Spirit-led worship always involves expressions of gratitude, awe, and devotion. Like the angels in Heaven, true worshipers will have lives that declare, “You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power” (Revelation 4:11). Worship from our lips is merely the outward evidence of our inward devotion and passionate love for Christ.

## 3. Honor the Lord 24/7.

For many people, worship is confined to singing praise songs or hymns during a church service. But it’s meant to be SO much more than that. The Bible tells us, “**Whatever you do, do ALL to the glory of God**” (1 Corinthians 10:31). This means our love for Jesus should be expressed through our entire life: home, work, church, friends, and community.

## 4. Hang out with others who are passionate for Jesus.

It’s important to fellowship with people who share our love for the Lord. Jesus promised us, “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20). And Hebrews 10:24 says, “Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds” (NIV). Do you have fellow believers in your life to spur you on to greater affection for the Lover of your soul? That’s a vital ingredient for your spiritual growth and effectiveness.

My friend, I pray that you are enjoying a close, personal relationship with Jesus today. Remember that He passionately loves you—shown by His death on the cross. Take time today to cultivate a passionate love for Him as well. ❖



# IT'S YOUR MOVE



No matter how simple or complex your Will and Estate Plan may be, our Planned Giving experts can help you accomplish the next move with a sound strategy that protects your family and leaves a lasting legacy. It's a FREE service offered by Inspiration Ministries to review your current Will and Estate Plan or help you create a new one.

Preparing a plan can seem overwhelming, and it's tempting to procrastinate. But the good news is this...

You don't have to be alone when making important decisions about your Christian Will and Estate Plan!

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## We Bought Our First Home



**Emeline received her breakthrough by sowing powerful financial seeds of faith.**

For over 10 years, Emeline dreamed of owning her own home. Several times, the dream felt close, but then it evaporated like wet footprints in the summer sun.

Emeline even received a small inheritance from her dad, but that wasn't enough. She felt her life, just like her dream, had to be put on the back burner. That's when she discovered Inspiration Ministries.

"I listened to the preacher say 'Raise your wallet and believe you will receive.' And I did, but when I had to lay out cash, I lost faith." She kept listening and signed up for daily devotions from the Inspiration website. As Emeline learned truth from the Word of God, her faith grew and she started sowing seeds.

But the years passed without the dream coming to fruition. Things got so bad, in fact, that Emeline and her family had to

move into a shelter. During that difficult time, Emeline continued learning, praying, trusting—and sowing seeds into Inspiration Ministries. She also felt an urgency to research home purchasing options and worked to repair her bad credit. Recently she wrote us:

"I have declared God's promises over my life and now, praise be to God, we have bought our first home at the county tax auction. I want others to see that God is able and willing—if we take action and believe!

"Thank you, Inspiration Ministries, for the endless guidance in materials—quoting straight from God's Living Word to bless and change many souls like you did for my family and me! The Holy Spirit is working in and through us because of your messages to deliver and save lives!" ❖

### **What God did for Emeline, He can do for YOU!**

When you sow financial seeds into His Kingdom, wrap them in faith and give them a specific assignment for the breakthrough you need!

# What's in YOUR Account?



The apostle Paul wrote to the believers in Philippi that they had an account in Heaven—and **SO DO YOU!**

Consider how this passage can be an encouragement to *you*, just as it was to those who faithfully sowed seeds into God's Kingdom in the first century:

*You Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities. Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account (Philippians 4:15–17).*

Paul was writing to people who had faithfully supported his outreach to the nations, and he knew that every life touched through his ministry was profiting **THEIR** account in Heaven.

And this passage ends with a powerful promise to those who have sacrificially sown seeds for souls: *“My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”*

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## Anxious?

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JEREMIAH 17

Born in 1842, Nils Frykman gave his life to Christ at an early age. But he felt compelled to make a deeper commitment when revivals swept through Sweden during the latter 1800s. In 1883, he left his school teaching appointment and dedicated the rest of his life to full-time ministry, preaching, and writing hymns.

One afternoon, Frykman was on his way to preach when he became “overwhelmed by despair, both over my own and other people's sins.” He threw himself to the ground and “cried like a spanked child. Oh, how I prayed, and how the tears flowed!”

Gradually, as he grappled with sin, he became overwhelmed by God's grace. The burdens lifted, and he felt His peace. It was such an overwhelming moment that he wrote a hymn to capture the wonder of his discovery. He called the hymn “Why Should I Be Anxious?”

Frykman remembered, “I have such a friend, who bears in His heart all my woe; this friend is the Savior, on Him I depend—His love is eternal I know.” Frykman realized he had no reason to worry or fear as long as he trusted God.

You don't have to be anxious about world conditions or problems you face! You don't have to live in fear. Remember, Jesus is *your* Friend. God still is sovereign over all the earth. He has *promised* to protect you, provide for you, and make you fruitful! Trust in Him!

How are you making sure your soul is well watered this week?

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WEDNESDAY

May  
1

*Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD... he will be like a tree planted by the water... and does not fear when the heat comes; but its leaves will be green... it will not be anxious in a year of drought.*

Jeremiah 17:7–8 NASB

### PRAYER:

Father, take away my anxieties and cares. Thank You that You are my friend. I depend on You. I trust You! In Jesus' name, amen.

*Awake, you heavy drinkers, and weep; and wail...For a nation has invaded my land, mighty and without number...It has made my vine a waste and my fig tree a stump. It has stripped them bare and hurled them away.*

Joel 1:5–7 NASB

### PRAYER:

Father, forgive me and Your people for being complacent and tolerating sin. We need You. Pour out Your Spirit. In Jesus' name, amen.

Compose a prayer for your local, state, and national leaders.

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## Serious Prayer

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOEL 1

It was a time of trouble. Many faced financial problems. Crime and immorality swept throughout the land. There were wars and violence. Yet many were preoccupied with pleasures, tolerating sin.

As we consider the prophecy God gave Joel, what seems clear is that this was a world similar to our own. In many ways, conditions seemed hopeless. But God called on His people to *open their eyes* and realize how badly things had deteriorated. Instead of giving up, they could turn to Him.

Although conditions seemed bleak, God promised hope! As His people repented and called on Him, He promised to be zealous for His land and pour His Spirit on all flesh (Joel 2:18–29). He would intervene!

In the US, today is the National Day of Prayer. It's a time for all Christians to pray and be *serious* about prayer! It's a time to look at the problems we face as a people, humble ourselves, repent of our sins, seek God, and cry out for His help.

Right now, ask God to open *your* eyes. As in the time of Joel, this is a time to seek the Lord. Return to Him, pray, and confess your sins and the sins of our land. Pray for our leaders. Pray for elections. Ask God to forgive our sins and heal our land, send revival, and pour out His Spirit as He did on the Day of Pentecost.

## Your Shepherd

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PSALM 23

One weekend in March 1862, Rev. Joseph Gilmore turned to Psalm 23 for the text of his sermon at his church in Philadelphia. It was a dark time for his country, torn apart by the Civil War. Gilmore was burdened because his nation and its leaders needed God's help more than ever before.

As he preached that morning, he felt particularly moved when he read the words, "*He leadeth me.*" After the service, this phrase continued to stir his heart. He felt moved to write a poem inspired by that phrase.

It was a poem that expressed the joy and peace he felt as he realized that he could depend on God to guide him. He was confident that whatever he did and wherever he went, God's hand still would be present to lead him.

When his wife read this poem, she realized he had captured an important message and submitted the poem for publication. When composer William Bradbury read the poem, he was moved to write accompanying music. For many generations, the combination of Bradbury's music and Gilmore's words have reminded believers that the Lord is our Shepherd, and He will lead us.

Do you need God's leading? Are there decisions you need to make? Do not worry or doubt. Commit your needs to God. Trust Him to lead you and help you make the right decisions. In every situation, you can depend on Him!

In what area do you need God to lead and guide you currently?

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*The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.*

Psalm 23:1–3

### PRAYER:

Father, thank You for being my Shepherd. I commit these situations to You: \_\_\_\_\_. I know You will lead and guide me. In Jesus' name, amen.

*Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil [...] Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*

Psalm 23:4–6

### PRAYER:

Jesus, thank You for choosing me as Your sheep. My life belongs to You. Thank You for Your peace. In Jesus' name, amen.

In what area of your life do you need God's provision right now?

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## Peace

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PSALM 23

As a young girl, Catherine Marshall wanted to attend college, but this seemed impossible. The fact was that her family did not have enough money. She did not give up but turned to God, seeking His provision. She prayed. God answered and provided a way for her to go. There in college, she met Peter Marshall who would become her husband and, later, chaplain for the US Senate. She would go on to become a highly successful author.

After they were married, Catherine was diagnosed with tuberculosis. As she prayed about this illness, she sensed Jesus' presence. Knowing that He was smiling at her, she was reassured that He could take care of any problem. The unforgettable truth of David's Psalm 23 came alive in her experience. This psalm reassured her that she could trust God. Within six months, she was completely healed.

Later when her husband died suddenly, she turned again to this psalm. She realized that God's pledge to her was, "Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." He gave her hope and a peace that passed understanding.

This psalm is filled with promises that are true for you too. They are true if you feel worried or afraid or if you have financial problems or need healing. Call on God. He is ready to provide for you and give you peace. He is your Shepherd.

## Trusting in Jesus

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PSALM 22

Louisa Stead could have been bitter about the way her life developed. Born in England in 1850, she felt called to be a missionary, but her frail health prevented her from going to the field. She moved to America where she was married in 1875. But instead of the bliss she might have expected, she watched as her husband drowned while trying to rescue a boy who was swimming by a beach. After this tragedy, she finally was able to leave for the mission field in 1880, serving for years in both South Africa and Rhodesia.

It was a challenging life, but through every situation, Stead learned to trust in Jesus.

In 1882, she wrote a hymn about what Jesus meant to her in life's difficulties. It was *sweet* to trust Him—simply to take Him at His Word and rest upon His promises. He had proven Himself over and over again.

She knew that His blood had cleansed her from every sin. When she trusted Him, He gave her "life and rest, and joy and peace." She could rejoice because of what He had done for her. She knew He would be with her to the end.

Remember that *you* can trust Jesus. His promises are true. He loves you. He has a plan for your life. Do not resist Him. Take Him at His Word. Trust in Him for your needs!

How can you rest in Jesus today?

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*In You our fathers trusted; they trusted and You rescued them. To You they cried out and they fled to safety; in You they trusted and were not disappointed.*

Psalm 22:4–5 NASB

### PRAYER:

Jesus, give me the faith to trust You. I declare Your promises are true for me. Help me put Your Word into action. In Your name, amen.

*Do not fear...you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned.*

Isaiah 43:1–2 NIV

### PRAYER:

Father, thank You for being with me. Thank You for taking away any depression and giving me peace. In Jesus' name, amen.

What's weighing down your heart today?

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## Free from Depression

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ISAIAH 43

According to a recent study, nearly a tenth of American adults have suffered a serious bout of depression in the past 12 months. This depression has a wide and profound impact. We've seen that depression can be the cause of lost wages; it can result in violence, anger, worry, and many other maladies.

Christians are not immune from depression. We can become depressed as we face problems. We all face challenges and trials, and we can become discouraged or depressed about the problems we face. We can feel defeated by sin and the mistakes we have made. We can be burdened by unsaved loved ones and oppressed by demonic attacks.

But God has given us the power to be freed from this depression. He told Isaiah that we might go through waters, rivers, and fire, but He will be with us. He promised that we would not be swept over by the floods of life or burned.

If you feel overwhelmed by the weight of the world, turn your heart to God. Seek to be filled with the Spirit, remembering that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, and peace (Galatians 5:22–23). As Isaiah reminds us, we belong to God. He can take away our fears and worries.

Don't bottle up your feelings. Confess your needs and problems to God. Then confess His promises. Trust Him. Remember, He has redeemed you.

## Your Shepherd

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOHN 10

Dr. Gary Burge tells the story about a ten-year-old shepherd, whose family only had 12 sheep. As part of a military action, their sheep had been gathered in a pen with other sheep. His mother begged the soldiers to let her have her sheep, but this did not seem possible. How could her 12 be identified among so many hundreds?

Then her son began playing a simple tune on his flute. All the sheep heard the sound. But as soon as the boy started to walk away, their 12 sheep followed him. Clearly the boy knew his sheep, and his sheep knew him.

This story demonstrates the connection between a good shepherd and his sheep. This is the connection that Jesus described for His followers. He described Himself as “*the good shepherd*” (v. 11). He was a Shepherd so concerned about His sheep that He would give up His life for them.

The good Shepherd knows His sheep, and they know Him. He is their “*door*,” providing the way to safety. All around are “*thieves and robbers*” who try to deceive the sheep, coming only to steal, kill, and destroy. But Jesus came that we may have life and have it “*abundantly*” (John 10:7–10). This is the kind of relationship that He wants to have with each of us.

Seek to develop a more intimate relationship with Jesus. Trust Him as your Shepherd to provide for you, protect you, and guide you.

Do you know your Shepherd's voice?

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*My sheep listen to My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.*

John 10:27 NASB

### PRAYER:

Jesus, thank You for being my Shepherd. Help me hear You more clearly. I long to have a more intimate relationship with You. In Your name, amen.

*This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.*

John 15:12–13

### PRAYER:

Father, I seek first Your Kingdom. Nothing is more important than serving You. Give me the boldness to stand for You without compromise. In Jesus' name, amen.

Reflect on your commitment level to bringing God glory every day.

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## Lay Down Your Life

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOHN 15

Paul Carlson arrived in the Congo in 1961 shortly after that nation gained independence. He was there as a missionary doctor. Though there was widespread turmoil throughout the region, he realized these unsettled conditions provided great opportunities to help people and share the Gospel.

After his first tour of six months was completed, he returned to the US. His wife, Lois, saw that he was a new person. His attitude had changed. He was more committed to the Gospel. He and Lois decided to return to the Congo in 1963 even though the situation remained dangerous.

Soon after his return, Carlson was captured by rebels and tortured during his three months in captivity. When Belgian paratroopers landed on a rescue mission, he and others tried to escape, but Carlson was killed.

His martyrdom became front-page news across the world. People throughout the Congo were moved by his commitment. At his funeral, many pastors told of the impact of his life. On his grave marker, these words were written in the Lingala language: "Greater love has no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Paul Carlson laid down his life. As a result, the Gospel impacted thousands of people!

How serious is *your* commitment to God? Is Jesus your Lord? Are you seeking first His Kingdom? Today, commit your life to Him anew and allow God's love to flow through you.

## The Rocks Cry Out

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: LUKE 19

Hector Berlioz was a freethinker. Born in 1803 in southeastern France, he was by nature skeptical. Yet, as an innovative composer, he knew church music was important and wrote several pieces around Christian themes. Most were commissioned works. There was one notable exception: his *Te Deum* (which means to God).

Berlioz seems to have written his *Te Deum* hoping the emperor would order a performance. When there was no order, Berlioz decided to debut the work for the inauguration of a new organ in a church near Paris. He hoped, in vain, that the emperor would attend. *Te Deum* debuted in April 1855, the only performance in Berlioz's lifetime.

This magnificent composition requires enormous forces, including an organ, three choirs, and a huge orchestra. Listeners are rewarded with an overwhelming experience, with words focusing on God's glory, declaring, "We praise Thee, O God; we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord...Day by day we magnify Thee."

Listening to this towering music, it is hard not to think of Jesus' comment when the Pharisees tried to silence the crowds: "*If these stop speaking, the stones will cry out.*"

Paul wrote, "*God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise*" (1 Corinthians 1:27). He can inspire even a skeptic like Berlioz. He can make the rocks cry out. But God delights when people praise Him of their own free will.

Lift your voice and praise Him!

Write your own praise to God for His wonderful works in your life.

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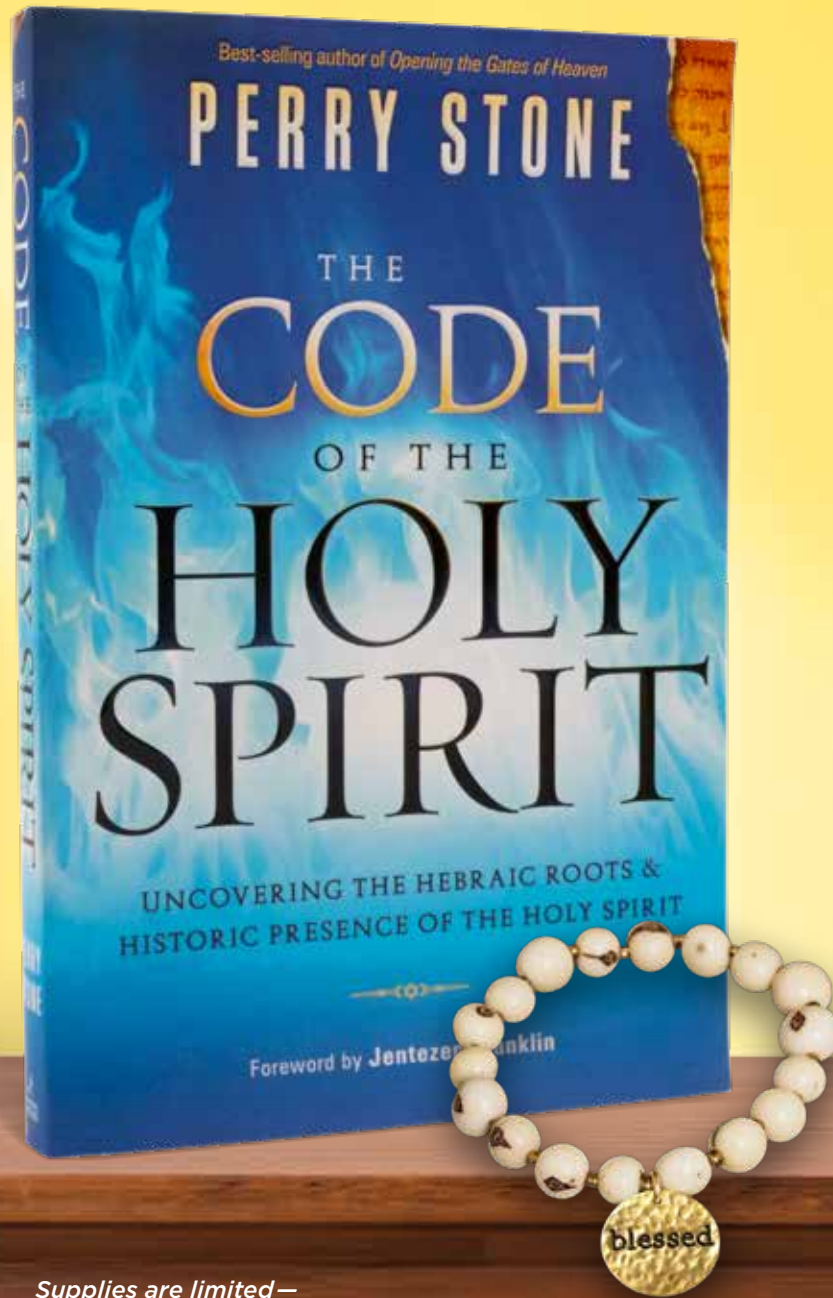
*The whole crowd of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice [...] Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, rebuke Your disciples"... "I tell you, if these stop speaking, the stones will cry out!"*

Luke 19:37–40 NASB

### PRAYER:

Father, I praise Your name! You are my Lord. I worship You! May my life bring You glory. In Jesus' name, amen.

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Matthew 10:29–31 NIV

### PRAYER:

Father, thank You for taking my worries away. I know You are watching over me. I commit every situation I face to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Compose a prayer asking God for His guidance and provision.

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## The Sparrow

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: MATTHEW 10

W. Stillman Martin had a distinguished career. In addition to pastoring several churches, he also was a college professor and conducted Bible conferences and evangelistic meetings. Together with his wife, Civilla, he wrote many Gospel songs.

In 1905, while staying in Elmira, New York, the Martins became friends with another couple. The wife had been bedridden for 20 years, and the husband was incurably crippled. Even though facing these problems, they had a joy everyone could see. They brought inspiration and comfort to all who knew them.

When asked the secret of their happiness, the wife replied, "His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me." Inspired by this comment, the Martins wrote a hymn called "His Eye Is on the Sparrow."

They wrote, "Why should I feel discouraged, why should the shadows come, why should my heart be lonely." They knew, "Jesus is my portion." He is "my constant friend." For "His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me."

Confident in God's care, they wrote words that overflowed with joy. They could sing because they were happy and free. They knew what Jesus taught was true: They could trust in God completely.

Don't let your life be weighed down by worry and fear. Trust in God no matter what *you* face. Commit your needs to Him. You can sing and be at peace. He is watching over you.

## Spreading the Gospel

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: MARK 16

As the American Plains were being settled, homes often were separated by vast distances. Without modern means of communication, these distances created enormous obstacles for social interaction, protection, and other practical needs. They also presented challenges in ministering to the spiritual needs of these people.

But God began to raise men who were willing to dedicate themselves to this often thankless assignment. One of these brave prairie pastors was J.A. Mattern. In the 1870s, he was assigned to Medicine Lodge, an isolated community in southern Kansas. There, Mattern found only a few Christians. The people were poor. But he felt they needed a church building in which to meet, so Mattern threw himself into the task.

It was tough work. Mattern worked a brick kiln, helping to keep up the fires at night. Though he had another full-time job, he continued to preach on Sunday and minister to the spiritual needs of the people. Because of his dedication, the Gospel was proclaimed, a church was built, and many lives were impacted.

Today, there are still many obstacles to be overcome in bringing the Gospel to the world. God looks for people who commit themselves and their resources to this task—people who, like J.A. Mattern, are committed to spreading the Gospel.

Ask God to show you what you can do to minister to the needs of people. Dedicate yourself and your resources to serve God and His Kingdom.

How can you meet someone's needs this week?

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*They went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed.*

Mark 16:20 NASB

### PRAYER:

Father, I commit my time, talents, and treasures to You. Use me to help spread the Gospel. In Jesus' name, amen.



*When the child was weaned, Hannah took him to the Tabernacle [...] “I asked the LORD to give me this boy, and he has granted my request. Now I am giving him to the LORD, and he will belong to the LORD.”*

1 Samuel 1:24–28 NLT

### PRAYER:

Father, thank You for all those who shared the Gospel with me. Use me to impact others. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Reflect on your mother’s influence on your life.

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## I’ll Be There

TODAY’S BIBLE READING: 1 SAMUEL 1

William McKinley, the 25th president of the United States, was raised in a Christian home where he particularly was influenced by his mother. She remained close to McKinley even after he became president.

In 1897, she became seriously ill. Reflecting his concerns, McKinley had a special telegraph line installed in the White House, so he could write to her. As she approached death, he wired this message: “Tell Mother I’ll be there!” And he went to her side.

McKinley’s words became an inspiration for Charles Filmore, a music teacher and pastor who also wrote many Gospel songs. He was moved to realize that for McKinley’s mother, it was more important that her son spend eternity with Jesus than be president.

Thinking of his own life, Filmore wrote of how he used to grieve his mother “with my folly and neglect.” But “now that she has gone to Heav’n, I miss her tender care: O Savior, tell my mother, I’ll be there!” He remembered how she prayed for him and always was “kind and good,” even when he was wayward.

The mothers of McKinley and Filmore were like many women who have sacrificed and prayed so that their children would know about God. Think of all that your mother has done for you. Remember, the most important thing in life is not the riches, rewards, and pleasures of this world, but spending eternity with Jesus.

## Walking with God

TODAY’S BIBLE READING: GENESIS 3

C. Austin Miles was moved by the story of Mary Magdalene’s encounter with Jesus after the resurrection. As he imagined the scene, Miles envisioned Mary coming down a gently winding path through the garden to approach the empty tomb. As she wept, she turned and saw Jesus standing there.

Responding to this story, Miles wrote “In the Garden,” a hymn that described an intimate relationship with God. He wrote, “He walks with me, and He talks with me, and He tells me I am His own. And the joys we share as we tarry there, none other has ever known.” What a wonderful picture of the kind of fellowship God wants to have with each of us.

This is the kind of relationship God had with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. We picture them in unbroken fellowship as He walked and talked with them—until their sin caused them to hide from Him and avoid the fellowship He desired.

Sin and the cares of this world can keep us from fellowship with God. But He desires to have truly intimate fellowship with us. He does not want us merely going to church, rushing through Bible reading, or praying shallow, superficial prayers. He wants us to *know* Him as a person and spend quality time with Him.

Remember, God wants an intimate relationship with *you*. Walk and talk with Him throughout this day. Share your burdens with Him.

What can you do today to foster a closer relationship with Jesus?

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*They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.*

Genesis 3:8 NASB

### PRAYER:

Father, I desire a more intimate relationship with You. Speak to me. Help me draw closer to You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

*By the rivers of  
Babylon, there we sat  
down and wept, when  
we remembered Zion.*

Psalms 137:1 NASB

## Interpreting Events

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PSALM 137

Founded in 1877 by Swedish immigrants, the Lanyon Covenant Church provided the center of spiritual life for hundreds of families in central Iowa for more than 100 years. It was a meeting place and a place to pray and worship, fellowship and study.

Rising from the endless farmland in central Iowa, it reminded everyone about God's presence—that He was with them, and they could turn to Him, no matter what the weather, no matter what they faced.

The church was a constant reminder of the faith that sustained believers and the spiritual life of the community. The sermons heard here arose from the soil of men's souls and provided practical, Bible-based counsel.

But gradually things changed. Many in younger generations abandoned the farming life. Advances in transportation made travel easier, reducing the need for a community-centered church. Attendance dwindled until church leaders made the tough decision to tear down the building.

This was a sober reminder for us to be grateful for the places and people who have been special to us, to cherish memories, to take nothing for granted, and to remember that everything in this world is passing away. Ultimately, we're reminded to place our faith in God, who is timeless and beyond trends.

Buildings may be built and torn down, but God stands forever. And Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8).

How does your church remind you of God's unchanging nature?

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## Prospering

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 3 JOHN 1

The apostle John prays for Gaius to “*prosper and be in good health*” because Gaius “*walk[ed] in truth*” (v. 3). Many people read this prayer and wonder if it could be true for them too. How can we experience this kind of life?

John's letter commends Gaius for his generosity, which is a byproduct of living in a way that is pleasing to God. It flows out of a commitment to walk in truth, motivated by love. Those who recognize that His blessings follow obedience will also be generous.

We see how spiritual growth is associated with those who commit to sharing the Gospel. These people have a desire to help others and seek to use their gifts to fulfill their role in the body of Christ, fostering the health and growth of the entire body (Ephesians 4:15–16).

If we want to experience prosperity and health, we will be faithful with our time, talents, and treasures. We will be good stewards of God's blessings and invest these resources in His Kingdom. We will believe in Him.

How about you? If *you* want to experience spiritual growth, seek to follow God's principles. Obey His Word. Be filled with the Spirit and motivated by love. Cultivate relationships with godly people, and be faithful to fulfill your role in the body of Christ. Humble yourself before God, and seek to be free of any pride. Remember, He has blessed you so that you might bless others.

To whom can you be generous today?

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*Beloved, I pray that in  
all respects you may  
prosper and be in good  
health, just as your soul  
prosper.*

3 John 1:2 NASB

### PRAYER:

Father, thank You for wanting me to prosper and be in health. I commit my time, talents, and treasures to You and Your Kingdom. In Jesus' name, amen.

*Jesus went about all Galilee...healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease... they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments... and He healed them.*

Matthew 4:23–24

### PRAYER:

Father, I bring these needs before You: \_\_\_\_\_ . I believe You can heal every disease and solve every problem. In Jesus' name, amen.

What diseases, torments, or problems are you taking to Jesus today?

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## Every Disease

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: MATTHEW 4

As Jesus traveled throughout Galilee, people brought the sick to Him. It did not matter what their condition was or what problem they faced. These people suffered from “*various diseases and torments*.” Some were demon possessed. Some were epileptics. Some were paralytics. But no matter what their problem, when they were brought to Jesus, He healed *all* of them.

He healed “*all kinds of sicknesses*” and diseases. *Nothing* was too difficult.

Remember that Jesus is the same today as He was that day in Galilee. There is no limit to what He can do. No matter what you face, you can come to Him with faith and hope. You may feel that no one can help you with your problems. You may be discouraged, ready to give up, depressed, or afraid. You may be facing something that seems incurable.

But Jesus is “*the same yesterday, today, and forever*” (Hebrews 13:8). He is the same Savior who walked throughout Galilee healing every disease and torment. There are no diseases He cannot cure. There are no problems He cannot solve. There are no torments He cannot eliminate.

Right now, no matter what you face, commit your needs to Him. Trust in God and our risen Savior, Jesus Christ. He can heal your diseases, deliver you from torments, and provide for your needs. Do not give up or be discouraged. Have faith in Jesus! Call upon Him today!

## A Balm in Gilead

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JEREMIAH 8

Gilead is a mountainous region east of the Jordan River, a source of spices and herbs containing healing powers.

When God warned of coming judgment, Jeremiah referred to Gilead. His people needed to be healed and relieved from the pain they experienced. He mourned because there did not seem to be any physicians or medicine that could help heal their wounds or comfort them during this time of suffering.

Many slaves in nineteenth-century America identified with these circumstances. But, instead of mourning, they proclaimed an *answer* they had found. The words have come down to us in a spiritual: “There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole.” This is a balm to heal the sin-sick soul and make the wounded whole.

Even though they faced horrible conditions, these slaves learned to depend on God. They admitted to being discouraged at times and even thought their work was in vain. “But then the Holy Spirit revives my soul again.”

They knew people might abuse them, but Jesus was faithful: “If you can't preach like Peter, if you can't pray like Paul, just tell the love of Jesus, and say He died for all.”

The message is still true for people of all backgrounds. It is true for you! No matter what you need, cry out to God. Have faith. He can comfort and heal. He can revive your soul and fill you with peace, hope, and joy.

For what kind of wounds do you need to receive a balm?

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*Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then has not the health of the daughter of my people been restored?*

Jeremiah 8:22 NASB

### PRAYER:

Father, thank You for sending Jesus to die for me. Take away my burdens. Give me Your peace. I depend on You. In Jesus' name, amen.

*Have mercy on me, O LORD, for I am weak; O LORD, heal me, for my bones are troubled. My soul also is greatly troubled...Return, O LORD, deliver me! Oh, save me for Your mercies' sake!*

Psalm 6:2–4

### PRAYER:

Father, I commit these needs to You: \_\_\_\_\_. Thank You for healing me, giving me Your peace, and restoring my soul. In Jesus' name, amen.

Compose your own psalm expressing your feelings to God.

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## Promise of Health

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PSALM 6

As the Bible makes clear, David was troubled by a range of real-life problems: opposition from armies and even his own son, issues with his health, various pressures, and anxieties. His body at times needed healing. He was so disturbed that his mind was troubled and upset. He desperately needed restoration. Facing these needs, he called out to God to provide the help he needed.

His cry? *"My body is sick, and I am upset and disturbed, my mind is filled with apprehension and with gloom"* (Living Bible). These words sound so relatable that we might assume that they were written by someone living in our time. We might say things like this ourselves.

There are many options when we are faced with problems. We can complain or become worried or depressed. We can try to escape through pleasure, drugs, or alcohol, or simply wallow in our problems. But David had discovered a godly alternative.

If we follow David's example, we will turn to God. He is with us and ready to help us, just as He helped David when he cried out. God is our true source of deliverance and hope from generation to generation.

We need to cry out if we are upset, disturbed, or sick, or if our hearts are apprehensive. We need to have faith that God will hear us, answer our prayers, deliver us, heal our bodies, and give us His peace.

## Guidance

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PSALM 48

Georg Neumark could not find a job. Finally, Neumark, who was born in 1621 in central Germany, was hired as a tutor in the family of a prominent judge.

As he thought about the worry he had faced, Neumark realized God was with him every step of the way. To describe what he had learned, he wrote a hymn, "If You Will Only Let God Guide You."

Neumark realized that God *always* is with us. We can hope in Him through all our ways, whatever may come. He stands beside us as we go through challenges and difficulties. As we trust in His "unchanging love," our lives are built "on the Rock that cannot move."

To have this confidence and peace, we need to trust Him, be still, and rest in Him. We need to realize that He knows "our inmost wants." Instead of worrying, we should "sing, pray, and swerve not from His ways." We should stay faithful, never give up, but trust "His rich promises of grace."

Neumark went on to have a successful career as a poet and gained important political positions. He also experienced additional tragedies. A fire consumed all his possessions. Then late in life, he became blind. Yet he knew that God was with him, guiding him in every situation.

No matter what *you* face, remember that God is with you. Trust Him. Stay faithful.

Write a prayer asking God to guide you this week.

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*For such is God, our God forever and ever; He will lead us until death.*

Psalm 48:14 NASB

### PRAYER:

Father, I trust my life to You. Thank You for Your guidance in the past. I believe You will continue to lead me. In Jesus' name, amen.

*Jesus...laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.*

John 13:3–5

### PRAYER:

Father, wash me by Your Spirit. Cleanse me of every sin. Help me to be pure in Your sight. In Jesus' name, amen.

Write a prayer of confession asking God for forgiveness.

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## Clean

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOHN 13

Dirt provided challenges for people throughout the first century. It created problems for food preparation, health, and human interaction. Wells helped, but they existed largely for drinking.

One solution was to turn to public baths. Some cities had more than twenty baths, but places like Capernaum had no baths. Because of its proximity to the Sea of Galilee, they depended on that source for cleanliness.

Wearing sandals and walking on dirt, people often needed their feet washed when they entered a dwelling. We can be sure the feet of Jesus and His disciples were dirty the night they gathered to celebrate the Passover. But it shocked the disciples when Jesus took the initiative and washed *their* feet.

He did this to set an example. If Jesus, who was their Lord, washed their feet, they also should wash one another's feet. He was teaching them the importance of being a servant. Jesus also was giving them a visual image of the importance of being clean—not just clean on the outside, but also the inside.

There have been advances in sanitation in the past centuries, but outward cleanliness has not changed the needs of the human heart. All around us, we see words and images that can pollute our souls. Just as in the first century, we need to be cleansed, washed through repentance, and purified from sin. We're to be humble and ready to serve.

## Life Stories

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: MATTHEW 13

The Bible says Jesus *didn't* speak to the crowds without using parables. He speaks to us today in similar ways. What are parables in our lives?

In many ways, these are our experiences, the things we see, feel, think about, and hear. They are what we share with others, and what others share with us. They are books we read and films we see. They are paintings, photographs, memories, and images.

If we live only on the surface and are not sensitive to the Spirit of God, these may seem to have little significance. But God wants us to be sensitive to His Spirit and recognize that He wants to speak to us, just as Jesus spoke to people through parables.

God desires to use our experiences to teach us and give us discernment and understanding. He wants to reveal deep things to us, things that are not apparent to those who live merely on the surface of life.

Jesus explained this in private. For us, this can mean that He will speak to us when we spend time alone with Him in prayer and Bible reading.

We can be sure that God wants to lead us into deeper truths, reveal more of Himself to us, and give us greater understanding. Seek to be more sensitive to God's leading. Listen to His voice. Learn to recognize the lessons and guidance He gives you.

How has God spoken to you recently?

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*Jesus always used stories and illustrations like these when speaking to the crowds. In fact, he never spoke to them without using such parables.*

Matthew 13:34 NLT

### PRAYER:

Father, help me recognize when You are speaking to me. Open my eyes. Help me be sensitive to receive Your understanding. In Jesus' name, amen.

*Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

Matthew 5:48 NIV

### PRAYER:

Father, help me know Your will for my life and live in a way that fulfills the purposes for which You created me. In Jesus' name, amen.

How are you living out your purpose to glorify God?

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## Being Perfect

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: MATTHEW 5

This verse seems to set standards that no one can achieve. Many people try to achieve perfection and become frustrated and discouraged when they make mistakes and fall short of this goal.

The dictionary defines perfect as “complete or correct in every way, conforming to a standard or ideal with no mistakes.” If this is our definition, how can we help but be frustrated? It simply is impossible to live perfect lives without mistakes or flaws.

But it is important to understand what Jesus really meant. The Greek word translated perfect describes a person who has attained the goal for which he was designed. In other words, Jesus was not saying that we need to live without flaws. Rather, He desires that we accomplish the purposes for which we were created.

God wants us to take advantage of the opportunities He has given us. He wants us to develop our gifts and abilities. He does not want us to stop and be sidetracked or give up when we make mistakes. He does not want us to be discouraged, afraid, or frustrated. Instead, He wants us to press on toward our calling in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:12–14).

Ask God to help you live in a way that you will become more like Jesus and more obedient to His call on your life. Seek to attain the goals for which you were created.

## Digging Deeper

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: DANIEL 9

Clifford Curzon was one of the twentieth century's greatest pianists. His skills were the byproduct of a commitment to probe for deeper meaning in every piece of music he played. He never was content with the superficial.

Curzon spent hours in practice, examining phrases others passed over with little thought. He experienced joy at discovering new insights and finding hidden treasures. His dedication resulted in playing marked by fresh insights.

This is the kind of attitude that God rewards in spiritual things. He knows how easily we can be content with a shallow understanding or a good enough faith. But we have a choice: We can stay on the surface and live a lukewarm Christian life, or we can seek the deeper things of God.

Each day, we have opportunities to dig deeper or remain on the surface. When we face problems, do we call out to God for answers? Do we crave His insights and seek spiritual depths? Are we like Daniel? When Daniel was faced with situations he did not understand, he set his face to seek the Lord, praying with determination. As a result, God gave him deeper revelations.

Remember that God rewards those with this kind of commitment. Be one who diligently studies the Word. Pray with determination. Don't be content to stay on the surface, but seek the deeper things of God.

How will you take your Bible study to the next level today?

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*I set my face unto the LORD God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession.*

Daniel 9:3–4 KJV

### PRAYER:

Father, I want to move to new levels in my spiritual walk. Open my eyes to see Your truth, insights, and wisdom. In Jesus' name, amen.

*He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end.*

Ecclesiastes 3:11

### PRAYER:

Father, I commit these situations to You: \_\_\_\_\_ . I believe You for answers. I will not give up but will trust in You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Reflect on your current season of life.

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## God's Timetable

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ECCLESIASTES 3

The Bible encourages us to trust God, stand on His promises, and believe all things are possible. But an important part of this truth is that God acts in His own time. He has His own timetable. And His time may not be the same as ours.

The Bible teaches us to remember God's sovereignty and design: *"He has made everything beautiful in its time."* We may experience difficulties and delays, but the Bible promises, *"all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose"* (Romans 8:28).

We see that God has an eternal purpose for our lives. As Ecclesiastes says, *"He has put eternity in their hearts."* But He has made it impossible for us to know exactly what is going to happen in the future: *"No one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end."*

None of us knows how our problems will be resolved, when God will act, or what He will do. But the Bible assures us that God knows the future and that we can trust Him.

Commit your problems to God. Believe Him. If you don't receive immediate answers, don't give up. Continue to trust Him. Remember, He has made everything beautiful in its time. If you trust Him, He will take care of you and work everything together for good.

## God's Timing

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: EXODUS 5

Moses seemed like a *failure*. He had returned to Egypt at God's direction, announcing that God had sent him on a mission to lead the Israelites to freedom. But when Moses approached Pharaoh, Pharaoh did not let the Israelites go. Instead, he imposed even greater hardships.

The Israelites were angry. They asked God to judge Moses, for he had made them *"repulsive in Pharaoh's sight"* (v. 21). Understandably, Moses was confused and even angry. The people blamed him, but he blamed God.

God responded, *"Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh"* (Exodus 6:1). He reminded Moses that He still was the Lord. He still was sovereign. He kept His promises. But He reminded Moses that He had His own timetable.

God told Moses to repeat His commitment to the Israelites: He was the Lord and would deliver them from bondage. But the people would not listen. In the days to come, they would learn that God keeps His promises...in His own timing. What appeared to be a failure, simply was part of His timetable.

You may face situations that seem disappointing or confusing. It may seem that God has forgotten you. If this happens, like Moses, cry out to God. Let Him speak to you. Renew your trust in Him. Believe that He will fulfill His promises. Don't place your faith in circumstances, but have faith in God. Remember that He has His own timetable.

What's something for which you've been asking the Lord for a long time?

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*Why have You brought harm to this people? Why did You ever send me? Ever since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done harm to this people, and You have not rescued Your people at all.*

Exodus 5:22–23 NASB

### PRAYER:

Father, I commit these situations to You: \_\_\_\_\_. Thank You that Your promises are true. I trust You. In Jesus' name, amen.

*Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.*

John 3:5–6 NIV

### PRAYER:

Father, I surrender myself to You. Fill me with Your Spirit. Change me. Use me. In Jesus' name, amen.

In what area of your life do you most need the Holy Spirit's touch?

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## Utopia

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOHN 3

Imagine a world without problems—a perfect world. Many have dreamed of such a world. Thomas More was one of those people.

Born in 1478, More became a leader in the government of England. As lord chancellor, he resigned because he opposed King Henry VIII's plan to annul his marriage to Queen Catherine of Aragon. In 1535, More was beheaded after refusing to acknowledge Henry as head of the Church of England (which Henry established).

More demonstrated his interest in an ideal world in 1516 by writing a treatise called *Utopia*. The title was a word he invented, which meant nonexistent place. For him, utopia was an ideal society, where there was justice and equality for all.

More never found that utopia; neither has anyone else. The Bible says that there is no perfect place here on earth. None of our human efforts can make us right with God or bring us perfect joy, peace, and fulfillment. We all need God in our lives.

Jesus said we cannot depend on our flesh, because *"flesh gives birth to flesh."* We cannot enter God's Kingdom until we are *"born of water and the Spirit."* We need the Spirit of God, for only *"the Spirit gives birth to spirit."*

Remember to place your faith in God. Focus on His Kingdom. Surrender to His Spirit. Seek to be His servant. Seek first His Kingdom.

## A Day to Remember

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOSHUA 4

When the children of Israel crossed into the Promised Land, Joshua called a representative from each tribe and told each of them to take up a stone and form a memorial.

Joshua said that the purpose was simple: He knew future generations would not know the story of their journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. He wanted them to have a memorial that would serve as a sign among them, an object to help them remember.

He knew that this memorial would stimulate questions. In the future, people would ask, *"What do these stones mean?"* (v. 6). The presence of the memorial would provide an opportunity to tell the story of the way God miraculously delivered His people and brought them into the Promised Land.

Memorials can play a similar role in our lives. Holidays like Memorial Day encourage us to ask questions: How has God helped us? What sacrifices have been made by previous generations? What do we owe to those in past generations? Are there things we do not know about our heritage, our faith, and the history of our spiritual freedoms?

Today, pause and ask God to show you all the things you have for which you can be grateful! Seek to have a thankful heart, and remember what others have done for you. Take the time to be grateful to God and to people in past generations who have done so much for us.

Reflect on the real meaning of Memorial Day.

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*These stones shall be for a memorial to the children of Israel forever.*

Joshua 4:7

### PRAYER:

Father, thank You for those who lived and died that I might know and serve You. Let me be a witness for others. In Jesus' name, amen.



*But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.*

Isaiah 64:8 KJV

### PRAYER:

Father, You are the potter; I am the clay. Mold me and make me after Your will. I surrender my life to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Compose a prayer of surrender.

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## Have Thine Own Way

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ISAIAH 64

Adelaide Pollard spent most of her life serving God. She felt called to missionary work in Africa. But as a 40-year-old in 1902, despite her prayers and efforts, she was unable to raise the necessary support. Frustrated, she attended a prayer meeting where she heard an elderly woman pray, "It really doesn't matter what You do with us, Lord—just have Your way with our lives." It was a message that put her life in perspective. Suddenly, Adelaide had peace.

Returning home, she studied the Scriptures and saw how God was the potter, and she was the clay. She read in Jeremiah 18 how the potter shaped the clay as seemed best to him.

She then wrote a poem that was published as a hymn in 1907. It was a prayer, asking God to have His way with her life. "I am the clay. Mold me and make me after Thy will, While I am waiting, yielded and still."

She asked God to search and try her. She confessed her weakness: "Wounded and weary, help me, I pray!" She cried, "Touch me and heal me, Savior divine." She surrendered her life to God, praying, "Fill with Thy Spirit 'till all shall see Christ only, always, living in me."

No matter what you go through, remember that God is the potter. He is shaping you. Surrender your life to Him. Allow Him to make you more like Jesus.

## Shaping Our Lives

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JEREMIAH 18

God told Jeremiah to go to a potter's house. There he saw a man working at his wheel, shaping clay that had been marred. The potter worked until the pot was formed to his satisfaction. Then the Lord spoke: "O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter?" (v. 6).

We need to remember that God Himself works like a potter in our lives. We may feel we are in control and know what is best for us. We may feel that we already have the proper shape, personality, and character, and have been sufficiently molded.

But we need to remember that we are God's vessels. He sees our potential and knows why we were created. He knows how we can function best, what we should avoid, and what is best for us. He will shape us until we are the vessels He wants us to be and He is satisfied with our shape, character, personality, and habits.

Realize that God is at work in your life just like that potter. Even if you think He is finished, He may see more work that needs to be done. When this happens, understand that He is not punishing you. He is your Creator. He loves you and desires to mold you until He is satisfied.

Trust Him to shape you. Submit to His molding process. Cooperate as He perfects you.

Write a prayer thanking God for all He's done to make you more like Him.

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*And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to make.*

Jeremiah 18:4

### PRAYER:

Father, thank You for having a plan for my life and molding me into a vessel that pleases You. I submit to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

*Jesus was going about in all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every sickness among the people.*

Matthew 4:23 NASB

**PRAYER:**

Jesus, thank You for being the Great Physician. Heal our diseases, sicknesses, and moral corruption. Forgive our sins. Use me to change lives. In Your name, amen.

What do you need the Great Physician to heal this week?

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# Spiritual Sickness

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: MATTHEW 4

John Armstrong experienced the highs and lows of political life. His father, born in Ireland, emigrated to America, where Armstrong was born in 1758. A young soldier in America's revolutionary army, he eventually became a leading politician. During the War of 1812, when American forces proved unable to stop British forces, Armstrong was held responsible and resigned from his position in 1814.

During times of struggle, he reminded himself that society needs to be based on God's Law and that He is the Judge who will call every person and nation to account for their actions.

Not denying his own mistakes, he sensed that life's larger problems really were *spiritual* and that problems could not be solved through politics or war but only by returning to God and obeying His Word. He once wrote that a country's problems could not be "healed by a better education, a few external, transient thoughts. It requires the hand of the Great Physician, the Lord Jesus Christ, by His Holy Spirit."

Today, our world is filled with spiritual and moral diseases. As Armstrong realized, the real solutions are spiritual—returning to God and obeying His Word.

Seek God's solutions to *your* problems. He also has the solutions to our world's problems! Jesus heals every kind of disease and sickness—emotional, physical, political, and economic. Stand boldly for God's Word. Don't compromise. Point people to Jesus!

# Watch and Be Ready

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: MATTHEW 25

It is among the biggest challenges faced by soldiers—how to be ready for events on the battlefield and how to recover—mentally, physically, and emotionally.

Military historian John Keegan told the story of Allied military psychiatrists in World War II. After reviewing thousands of cases, they learned that the first hours of combat disabled 10% of a fighting force. Facing battle was such an overwhelming experience that many were broken. Once the battle began, it was too late to prepare. Many panicked or gave up.

Preparation also is imperative for our spiritual lives. Jesus told of ten virgins who "*went out to meet the bridegroom*" (v. 1). Five were wise and took oil with their lamps; they were ready for the bridegroom. The other five were foolish, had no oil for their lamps, and were unready when the bridegroom arrived (vs. 1–13).

Jesus told this story because He wants us ready for His return. This world is passing away. Our focus should be on His Kingdom. We need to be ready to give a testimony, pray for those with needs, and commit our time and resources to God and His work.

Are you ready for Jesus' return? One day it may be too late. Have you completed your assignments? Is serving Him your top priority? Don't delay or wait. Don't leave anything undone. Make sure you have been faithful. Make sure you are right with God!

Are you ready for Jesus' Second Coming?

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*Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.*

Matthew 25:13

**PRAYER:**

Father, I want to be ready when Jesus comes again. Show me what I should be doing for You and Your Kingdom. In Jesus' name, amen.



# A Renewed Mind

**GOD offers everything you need for true transformation!**



Whether you're a new believer or a seasoned, mature Christian, you know that no area in your life can change overnight. There are no quick fixes or microwave remedies to your life or your problems.

Transformation is a process, sometimes slow and steady, and it takes passionate dedication as you seek to experience true spiritual growth. For example, in Romans 12:2, Paul says you are *“transformed by the renewing of your mind.”* As a result, you *“have the mind of Christ”* (1 Corinthians 2:16).

This process begins when you first repent and are born again, but Paul is addressing his statement to many believers who have already walked with the Lord for quite a

while. The message is clear: Your mind will steadily be renewed as you make a daily commitment to study and obey God's Word and as you allow His Holy Spirit to shape your thoughts and actions.

Think of it this way: When babies are born, they don't come into the world walking and talking. Their memory is a blank slate. They have to learn to walk and learn to talk. But over time, babies develop mentally, physically, and emotionally. Maturity takes place. New skills are learned.

It's the same with the new birth (John 3:1–8). When a person surrenders their life to Christ and asks Him to be the Lord of their life, old things are supposed to

pass away and all things are supposed to become new. Spiritual growth occurs at a steady rate, but it often requires perseverance, growth, and self-discipline:

*Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation* (1 Peter 2:2 NASB).

*Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ* (2 Peter 3:18 NASB).

*Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness* (1 Timothy 4:7 NASB).

*Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith* (Hebrews 12:1–2).

*Imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises* (Hebrews 6:12).

Many other verses could be cited to show that spiritual growth and transformation involve a process rather than a one-time event.

Take a look at the promise from Proverbs 4:18: *“The path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day.”* Once your new life in Him begins, God wants the light of your testimony to grow brighter and brighter until all can see the incredible transformation He has brought about in your life!

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



## Week One

*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

Romans 12:2



## Week Two

*Casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ...*

2 Corinthians 10:5



## Week Three

*Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.*

Philippians 4:8



## Week Four

*For “who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?” But we have the mind of Christ.*

1 Corinthians 2:16

# Thank You for Praying with Me!

The mass on Maria's bladder disappeared after our prayer ministers agreed with her for a breakthrough.

Dear Inspiration Ministries,

During my prenatal ultrasound two weeks ago, the doctor saw a mass on my bladder, and I immediately turned to the prayer ministers in your International Prayer Center to intercede for me.

I was referred to a urologist, and he did a cystoscopy to look inside my bladder. To his amazement, there was no mass! I don't even need a follow-up exam for this.

Thank you for praying with me over this worrisome situation. I believe this was a miracle in answer to our prayers as God removed the mass from my bladder. To Him be the glory!

—MARIA, California

## What breakthrough do YOU need from God?

Contact our International Prayer Center to agree with you in prayer today!

US / CAN / CAR:  
+1 (803) 578-1800

UK / Intl:  
+44 (0) 84 5683 0584

[inspiration.org/prayer](http://inspiration.org/prayer)



# A Merry Heart...

does good, like medicine. – Proverbs 17:22

After church, Johnny told his parents he had to talk to the minister right away. They agreed, and the pastor greeted the family.

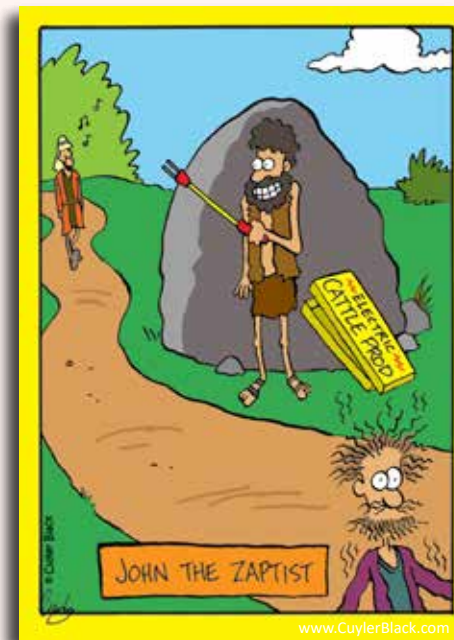
"Pastor," Johnny said, "I heard you say today that our bodies came from the dust."

"That's right, Johnny, I did," he said.

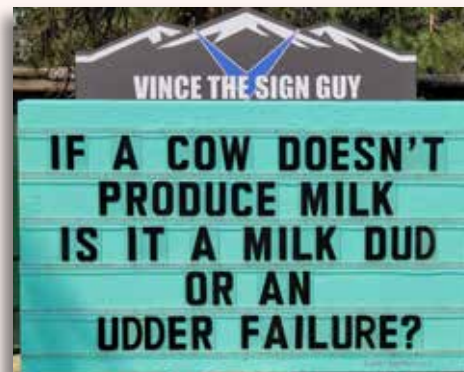
"And I heard you say that when we die, our bodies go back to dust."

"Yes, I'm glad you were listening," the pastor replied. "Why do you ask?"

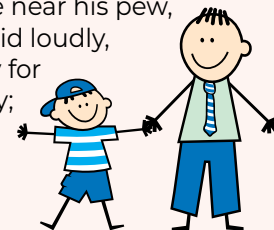
"Well, you better come over to our house right away and look under my bed 'cause there's someone either comin' or goin'!"



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



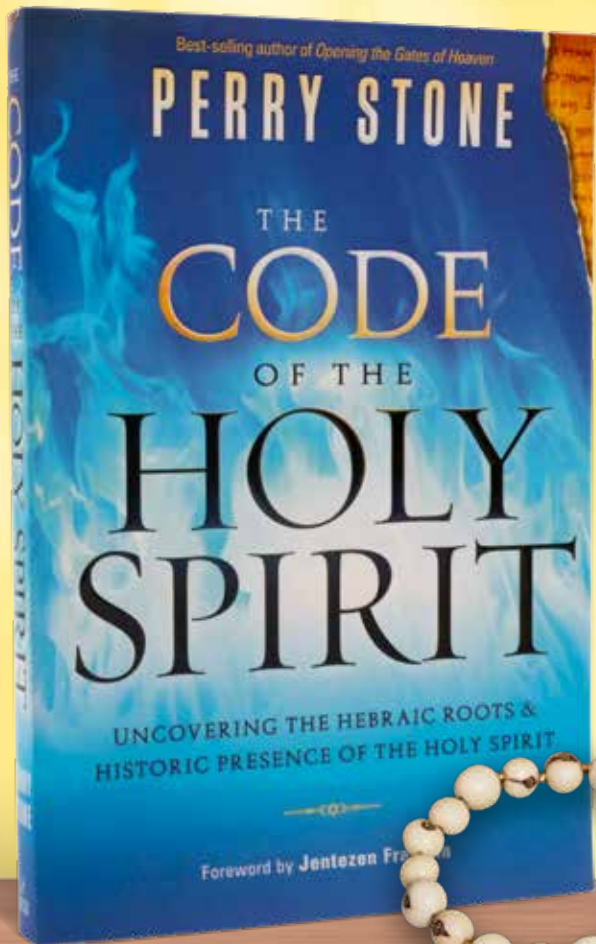
A little boy in church watched as the ushers passed around the offering plates. When they came near his pew, the boy said loudly, "Don't pay for me, Daddy; I'm under five."



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# READY TO SEE Behind the Veil?

If so, then you need to read *The Code of the Holy Spirit* by Perry Stone! In this book, Stone takes a deep dive into the Old Testament and Jewish traditions to reveal the hidden truths about the Holy Spirit. He explains how the Holy Spirit was present throughout the Old Testament and how His presence still powerfully touches us today...



**PLUS, for your gift of \$75 or more, we'll also send you this unique, handmade Ecuadorian Blessed Bracelet.** The proceeds from these bracelets give hope to women escaping sex trafficking or other harmful situations. It is a perfect reminder to keep your faith in God as He keeps His promises to care for even the least of these.



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