

JULY 2022

inspiration

M A G A Z I N E



The **POWER**
of **PRAYER**

Miracle
for Mike

Washington's
Prayers

Closer
to God

Your Prayers Can Transform America!



PAGE 12



PAGE 16



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Did you know **you** are America's hope? God gives mighty promises and power to those who are called by His name. On **page 5**, David reveals the magnificent possibilities of transformation that unfold when you turn to God for help.



Our THANK YOU GIFTS for your partnership this month!

(See page 28 for details.)

EDITOR'S CORNER



Sometimes a conversation with a friend is all you need to find your way out of a mess. That's why we all need Jesus, our best friend and Savior. When we spend time with Him in prayer, He gives us His loving comfort and pulls us closer to the Father's rich mercy and grace.

This month's magazine invites you into the wonder of prayer from the vantage point of children to the steadfast faith of America's first president, George Washington. Entering into prayer is walking into the presence of God – the place of love, miracles, and hope. Let's go there together.

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By Dr. David Jeremiah

Just like friends spend time together, God is waiting on you to come into His presence.



Connect to **Your Calling**



July 11-15 and **July 18-22**

Jump into July with two powerful new series by **Kim Crabill**. With her passion to equip believers to live with purpose, Kim brings fresh hope to those waiting for God's glory.




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YOUR PRAYERS

Can Transform America!



STRENGTHEN
your walk
with David Cerullo

Can a nation be transformed in 40 days?

Humanly this would be impossible, especially when a nation's moral trajectory has been on a downhill slide for many decades. Many in America are tempted to lose hope for our nation, and I've talked with people in other nations who've lost hope for their country as well. Nevertheless, the Bible gives us many illustrations of God's power to turn things around when His people turn to Him.

The book of Jonah tells the story of God's prophet being sent to the wicked Assyrian city of Nineveh. You've probably heard the story of Jonah's initial disobedience, which landed him in the belly of a huge fish for three days. Fortunately, God was merciful to Jonah, and he was given another chance to fulfill his mission. So if you feel like you're stuck in the belly of a whale today, take heart: *God wants to set you free and powerfully use you to transform lives!*

When Jonah finally got back on track and entered Nineveh, God gave him an ominous message to deliver: *"Forty days from now Nineveh will be destroyed!"* (Jonah 3:4 NLT). Can you

imagine being a Ninevite and hearing this sobering message?

Amazingly, Jonah's words brought about a stunning revival: *"The people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them"* (v. 5). Even the king and his nobles joined in the repentance and cried out to God for His mercy: *"Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?"* (v. 9).

My friend, the Lord was merciful to Nineveh when they repented, and He is willing to show mercy to your city and nation as well: *"Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it"* (v. 10).

Our nation deserves God's judgment because many of our citizens have abandoned God and rejected His righteousness. However, there's still time for mercy to triumph over judgment *if* we follow God's formula for forgiveness and healing.

GOD'S FORMULA

God wants to bring healing and restoration to America and the other nations of the world. Here's how His Word says that can happen:

If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land (2 Chronicles 7:14).

Each phrase of this beautiful promise is packed with meaning:

"If My people who are called by My name..."
Notice that the first step in national restoration is not that unbelievers repent. God addresses His own people first, for that is where both judgment

God wants to bring healing and restoration to America and other nations of the world.

and mercy must begin (1 Peter 4:17-18). We who are called by the Lord's name must accept our responsibility to be His ambassadors to our sin-sick world (2 Corinthians 5:20).

“Humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways...” Many preachers and many Christians today are experts on the “wicked ways” of our surrounding culture. We see all the ways our political leaders, celebrities, news organizations, and entertainment media need to repent. Yet that is not where God initially shines His spotlight. WE – those who claim to follow Jesus as our Savior and Lord – must first humble ourselves and turn from OUR wicked ways. We must go beyond “Now I lay me down to sleep” prayers and truly seek God's face.

“THEN I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” I love the fact that this phrase begins with “then.” God wants us to see that although He wants to heal our land, His promise requires us to fulfill the *conditions* He has laid out. When we confess and acknowledge our sins, He will show us mercy and forgiveness (1 John 1:9). As the Ninevites experienced, judgment will be averted, and abundant grace will be poured out.

THE NEXT 40 DAYS

I'm convinced that many Western nations are facing a tipping point. Will we turn to God or continue our descent into spiritual darkness? Will the Lord give us wise and caring national leaders, or will we select leaders who openly reject biblical precepts?

As the people of God, the answer to these questions is in our hands. There's still time to turn things around, but we can't afford to delay.

Instead of being destroyed in 40 days, the people of Nineveh repented and received God's

When we confess and acknowledge our sins, He will show us mercy and forgiveness.

– 1 John 1:9

mercy and healing. I can't help but wonder what would happen today if God's people took the next 40 days to cry out to Him as never before. What would happen if *you* made a personal commitment to share this message with your friends and loved ones during the next 40 days, challenging them to intercede for your nation?

Rather than reaping judgment and curses, this can be a day of great blessing when we turn to the Lord:

“Now, therefore,” says the LORD, “Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.” So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm. Who knows if He

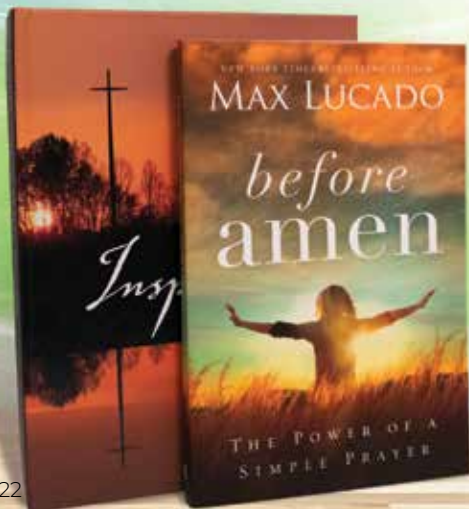
will turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind Him?
(Joel 2:12-14).

Please send a note to me this month, letting me know you'll be joining our ministry as we take the next 40 days to humble ourselves before the Lord, repent, and pray for Him to forgive our sins and heal our land. There's no time to lose.

God bless you,

David

P.S. We've prepared two very important resources to help you pray powerful prayers for your life, family, and nation. Turn to **page 28** for details on how you can receive these THANK YOU GIFTS for your partnership with Inspiration Ministries in winning souls for Christ in over 200 countries.



Turn to **page 28** to see the powerful THANK YOU GIFTS we want to send you for your partnership this month.



The Truth Will Set You Free

Just look at the **MILLIONS** who are
flourishing in God's freedom!

Jesus said that the way to know truth – and freedom – is obedience to His teachings (John 8:31-32)! Because you have faithfully honored His commands to take the Gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth, **MILLIONS** are flourishing in the freedom they've found in Christ.

We are more than half-way to our 2022 goal of **4.8 MILLION** people saved!

Help us finish strong and spread the truth to millions more in Jesus' Name!

More than **2.6 Million Souls** saved as of 6/30/22



2022 Salvation Goal
4,800,000

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A Miracle for Mike

After years of addiction and hopelessness, Mike met the God of breakthroughs!

As a child, Mike grew up going to church and saying his bedside prayers, but when he became hooked on alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs...he was suddenly left without hope.

He knew it would take a miracle to get his life back on track, and at age 40, that's exactly what he got!

After years of living for himself, he decided one day to go to church with a friend: "It was different than anything I had ever known. It touched my heart very much. First, I stopped drinking and began walking closer to God. Then, I quit cigarettes and finally drugs. My life became better as I learned to pray for others instead of focusing on my problems."

As Mike grew into a deeper relationship with God, he learned the power of prayer and faith: "It was so exciting to be part of praying for someone who was very sick and seeing them healed. I know it wasn't all my prayers, but it meant a lot

to me to be part of the team – and then seeing someone miraculously pull through."

Mike also found a powerful prayer partner in Inspiration Ministries. When his brother became sick, Mike reached out to us for faithful prayer support. "My baby brother was fighting cancer, and it was so hard to see him so sick. I called and made a prayer request: 'Take the cancer away.' I didn't tell anyone, not even my brother. Over the next year, his cancer receded month by month – from stage III to II to I to GONE! I don't have words for how I felt in my heart. My baby brother beat cancer!"

Believing God *can* work a miracle is different than *seeing* God work a miracle! Mike's joy in His loving, prayer-answering, miracle-working God cannot be contained. He wants the world to know the blessing of living in His presence and power. ❖

What is YOUR testimony of God's faithfulness or His miracles?

Share it with us and our Inspiration partners by visiting inspiration.org/praise TODAY!

faithful



['fāTHfəl]

Def: Full of faith;
true to one's word, promises,
vows; reliable, trusted, or believed.

Thanks to the faithfulness of our partners, Inspiration Ministries is now winning over 400,000 souls to Christ every month through our evangelistic outreaches.

Already this year, more than 2.4 million people will be in Heaven one day because of our partners' commitment in sowing miracle-working financial seeds!

“I am thanking God for being a partner in this ministry, which is reaching many souls in the world. God is really moving through this ministry, and I thank Him for His servant David Cerullo and for the wonderful and divine work God is using him to do!”
– Henry, Austria

Become an Inspiration Ministries Monthly Partner TODAY!

By sowing your seed monthly, you are fulfilling the Great Commission.

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Washington's Prayers

Pray the words that established America!

Some years ago, the personal prayer journal of America's first president was printed, and we get a glimpse of the man who was one of our nation's greatest leaders.

In his book *George Washington the Christian*, William J. Johnson shares his thoughts:

This gem is all in the handwriting of George Washington, when about twenty years old, and is, without exception, the most hallowed of all his writings. It is neatly written on twenty-four pages of a little book about the size of the ordinary pocket memorandum.

Professor S.F. Upham, professor of practical theology at Drew

Theological Seminary, wrote:

The "Daily Prayers" of George Washington... reveal to us the real life of the great patriot and attest his piety. None can read those petitions, which bore his desires to God and often brought answers of peace, without having a grander conception of Washington's character. The prayers are characterized by a deep consciousness of sin and by a need of forgiveness, and by a recognition of dependence upon the merits and mercies of our Lord.

President Washington's journal included daily prayers. The following are the words he offered up every Sunday evening:

Excerpted from George Washington, "Daily Sacrifices," *Prayer Journal* (1752), printed in William J. Johnson, *George Washington the Christian* (Abingdon Press, 1919), thefederalistpapers.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/George-Washington-the-Christian.pdf

Most Glorious God, in Jesus Christ my merciful and loving Father,

I acknowledge and confess my guilt, in the weak and imperfect performance of the duties of this day. I have called on Thee for pardon and forgiveness of sins, but so coldly and carelessly, that my prayers are become my sin and stand in need of pardon. I have heard Thy Holy Word, but – with such deadness of spirit that I have been an unprofitable and forgetful hearer, so that, Lord, though I have done Thy work, yet it hath been so negligently that I may rather expect a curse than a blessing from Thee.

But, O God, who art rich in mercy and plenteous in redemption, mark not, I beseech Thee, what I have done amiss. Remember that I am but dust, and remit my transgressions, negligences, and ignorances, and cover them all with the absolute obedience of Thy Dear Son, that those sacrifices which I have offered may be accepted by Thee, in and for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ offered upon the cross for me. For His sake, ease me of the burden of my sins, and give me grace that by the call of the Gospel, I may rise from the slumber of sin into the newness of life.

Let me live according to those holy rules which Thou hast this day prescribed in Thy Holy Word. Make me to know what is acceptable in Thy sight, and therein to delight. Open the eyes of my understanding, and help me thoroughly to examine myself concerning my knowledge, faith and repentance, increase my faith, and direct me to the true object Jesus Christ: the Way, the Truth and the Life. Bless, Lord, all the people of this land, from the highest to the lowest, particularly those whom Thou hast appointed to rule over us in church and state. Continue Thy goodness to me this night. These weak petitions I humbly implore Thee to hear, accept, and answer for the sake of Thy Dear Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, amen.

SARAH
LANCASTER

BARRY
CORBIN

ALAN
POWELL

JILL
WAGNER

GREG ALAN
WILLIAMS

REBECCA
KOON



Christmas IN THE Smokies



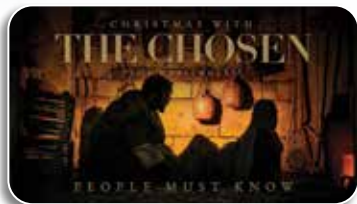
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CHRISTMAS

in July is Here!



Christmas with The Chosen

Worship the King of Kings with your favorite musicians as you enjoy *The Chosen's* latest Christmas episode, "The Messengers."



The Least of These

A Salvation Army Santa, a homeless waitress, and her little girl reveal how faith and forgiveness bring true Christmas joy and hope.



Lucy Shimmers and the Prince of Peace

When a precocious little girl and a hardened convict cross paths in a hospital during the holiday season, an unusual angel helps to change hearts with miracles and second chances.

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Closer to God

Your soul's best friend is asking you to quiet your spirit and spend quality time in His presence.



by Ben Cerullo

“Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”

– Hebrews 4:16 NIV

If you’ve ever wondered how to keep your spiritual life fired up, the answer is found in Jesus’ example. Stepping away from the busy chaos of the crowds, the Master climbed a mountain to pray alone.

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

As a busy dad juggling ministry, business and family responsibilities, and hobbies, I know there never seems to be enough time, money, or breaks from life’s pressures. Yet in the middle of all the turmoil and

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

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

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

SOLITUDE

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

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

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

GAINING NEW STRENGTH

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

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

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

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

Jehovah Rapha

The God who heals.

We all desperately need to know God as **Jehovah Rapha** – the God who heals. If we seek to grow in intimacy with Him, we can trust Him to heal and restore our lives, no matter the circumstances we face.

Have you ever been trapped in a remote place where there was nothing but polluted water? It was just such a setting where God first revealed Himself as **Jehovah Rapha**.

The Israelites' miraculous deliverance through the Red Sea disintegrated into three days of desert trekking that led to an undrinkable spring of water. As the people grumbled, Moses cried out to God for help. One simple instruction – obeyed by Moses – made the bitter water sweet.

Their trial of faith led to a fresh revelation of God and an eternal principle we need to know.

If you will listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in his sight,

obeying his commands and keeping all his decrees, then I will not make you suffer any of the diseases I sent on the Egyptians; for I am the LORD who heals you (Exodus 15:26 NLT).

Only God can heal the poison in our lives – whether it's in our bodies, hearts, relationships, or finances, **Jehovah Rapha** is the prescription. But we have a role to play too. We must step out in faith, trusting Him to be who He claims to be: **the God Who Heals**.

Sometimes we will need to cry out like the father of the demon-possessed child, “*Lord, I believe; help my unbelief*” (Mark 9:29). And Jesus, **our Healer**, will meet us at our need and transform the bitter trials of life into testimonies of His glory.

Do you need someone to pray with you for healing? Our prayer ministers would love to pray in agreement with you. ❖

Perfecting Process

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PSALM 138

It can seem natural to have our own ideas, to make decisions we think will be best, to form opinions, and to assume we understand God's purposes.

Approaching issues like these, at times, David made decisions based on his subjective understanding. Eventually, he realized that he needed to trust God, that He always knows what's best. God was always shaping David's life, often in ways David might not understand.

The Bible makes it clear: God sees beyond our temporary situations. He constantly chisels away at our character, like an expert sculptor refining his creations to eliminate impurities, to achieve the best results, and to direct us in ways that would be best.

We might be content with good enough, but God knows our potential and what would be best. He knows that no matter how much we improve, we can still improve more. No matter how much we know, we can learn much more. No matter what we have done, we can do more. No matter what successes we have achieved, even greater successes are possible.

No matter what we think we understand, the Bible reminds us that we see everything “*imperfectly*,” that all we know now is “*partial and incomplete*.” But God knows us “*completely*” (1 Corinthians 13:12 NLT).

Realize that God is working to perfect you even when you don't understand His purposes. Have confidence in Him.

How is God currently working to perfect you?

FRIDAY

July

1

The LORD will accomplish that which concerns me.

Psalms 138:8 AMP

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for Your plans for me. I trust in You to perfect me. Guide me. Help me. In Jesus' name, amen.

SATURDAY

July

2

I lift my hands to you in prayer. I thirst for you as parched land thirsts for rain. Come quickly, LORD, and answer me, for my depression deepens. Don't turn away from me, or I will die.

Psalm 143:6-7 NLT

PRAYER:

Father, I thirst for Your presence. Take away my fears. I seek to have a more intimate relationship with You. I trust in You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Thirsting for God

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PSALM 143

David was a mighty warrior who fearlessly faced lions, powerful armies, and the giant Goliath. Yet at other times, this same man experienced problems so serious that he became “*paralyzed with fear*” (v. 4) and suffered from deep depression. He was so discouraged and overwhelmed that he was “*losing all hope*.”

He likened his situation to being alone in a desert. His strength was failing, and his resources were running out. At that point of desperation, he reached out to God, whom he realized was his only hope. David focused all his energy on Him. As he cried out to Him, David knew that only God could quench his thirst.

All of us, at some time in our lives, have felt hopeless and depressed, alone, and vulnerable. These are times for serious prayer, to seek God with a sense of urgency. At times like these, we cannot be concerned about the opinions of others. Following the example set by David, we need to seek the Lord with fervor and intensity, realizing that He is our only hope.

Today, you may face crises or trials. You may feel hopeless or discouraged, worried or afraid. It may feel you are in a desert with nowhere to turn. Regardless of the situation, turn your focus toward God. Cry out for His help. Hunger and thirst for His presence. Be honest with Him. Remember His promise that if you thirst for Him, He will satisfy you.

Write a prayer seeking a closer relationship with God.

Happiness

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PSALM 144

According to a recent report, only a third of adults in the United States said they were happy. Some think they would be happier if they had more money or experienced more pleasures. Others think they would be happy if the problems they faced were solved or world conditions improved.

Levels of dissatisfaction have been consistent over many years. The fact remains that most people simply are not happy no matter what is going on in the world.

Research reports that there are exceptions to these patterns. People who attend religious services at least once a week are happier. Why? They focus on God. They think about God. They worship and trust God. They benefit from having Him at the center of their lives.

This research confirms the Bible's conclusion that "*happy are the people whose God is the LORD!*" If He is Lord, we trust Him. We know that He will protect and guide us. We are sure He will provide for us and meet our needs. We can be free from worry and pressure. We can be happy.

Don't be deceived by the pursuit of the things of the world or assume they will provide happiness. Trust in God. Worship and praise Him. Spend time in His Word. And commit your life to serve Him. Trust Him to take away your burdens and fill you with happiness the world cannot match.

SUNDAY

July

3

*Happy are the people
who are in such a state;
happy are the people
whose God is the LORD!*

Psalm 144:15

PRAYER:

Father, I declare Jesus is my Lord. I commit my life to You. Thank You for taking away my burdens and giving me happiness. In Jesus' name, amen.

Write a reflection on one meaningful aspect of God's character.

MONDAY

July

4

These things I have spoken to you so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.

John 16:33 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for Your promises. I trust You to guide and protect me. Bless me that I might bless others. In Jesus' name, amen.

Peace

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOHN 16

Kansas had become a battleground. The conflict began after the United States Congress passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854. This determined that Kansas would become an official territory, but gave its people the right to determine if slavery would be banned or allowed.

In the following years, both antislavery and proslavery forces flooded Kansas. These forces clashed so often that the state became known as Bloody Kansas.

During these uncertain times, many pioneers moved into Kansas simply looking for a home. Many of these settlers realized how much they needed God's help.

Christine Hokanson was one of those settlers. She expressed the sentiment of many when she wrote, "How grateful we are to God." To her, this was a "wonderful country." Like many others, she knew that God "helped and guided us through the struggles and vicissitudes of the pioneer days." She knew that they were receiving His "rich blessings."

Pioneers like Hokanson testified that God was faithful, that He guided and provided for them, and that He protected them and gave them peace amid unsettled circumstances.

God's promises did not just apply to those pioneers. For God gave His incredible promises to all who seek and trust Him.

These promises are true for you. Call on Him. Trust Him. He can give you peace amid any storm. He is the key to blessing for you, your family, your country, and the world.

Compose a prayer for protection for those in war-torn countries.

Foundation of Faith

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: GENESIS 12

Pioneers settling in the American plains faced constant peril. The needs were great. Many had few possessions.

In her book about these settlers, Joanna Stratton described how faith helped many families survive often hostile conditions. Trusting in God, they looked to Him for protection and to provide all they needed.

One of these was the family of Nutter and Nancy Murphy. Their daughter Lydia recalled how in 1859, they arrived in Shawnee, Kansas, a town with just 1,000 residents. They needed a home, but none was available. Their best option was to rent the front rooms of a large, ramshackle place with rooms filled with whiskey barrels.

On their first day in this new home, they dedicated the place to God. As the family sat in the center of the room, they gathered around a table, seated on boxes and improvised chairs. They read the Bible and prayed together. They continued this tradition for years as they read and prayed together every morning and evening. Like Abram, these people knew they depended upon God for everything, and He continued to meet every need.

Today in our sophisticated world, many trust in governments and their resources. As people like the Murphys learned, the key is having faith in God and placing Him first. This is true for families and whole nations.

Commit your life to God. Depend on His Word. Have faith in Him. Trust Him.

Write a personal prayer for our country and our religious freedoms.

TUESDAY

July

5

Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you."

Genesis 12:1 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I trust You. Bless and guide my country and its leaders. Give us as a people the faith to trust in You. In Jesus' name, amen.

WEDNESDAY

July

6

How lonely sits the city that once had many people! She has become like a widow who was once great among the nations! She who was a princess among the provinces has become a forced laborer...Judah has gone into exile.

Lamentations 1:1, 3 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, help me to be in the center of Your will. Guide me. Teach me Your ways. I commit my life to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

How?

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: LAMENTATIONS 1

The Hebrew title of the book of Lamentations is a word that means how. This same word begins its first, second, and fourth chapters. Even as Jeremiah, the author of this book, reflected on the plight of his people, his overriding question remained, "How did this happen?"

Jerusalem had been full of people but now sat lonely. Israel was "once great among the nations" but had become nothing but a "forced laborer" and "like a widow." How had a people who had been chosen by God and given all His promises found themselves so forsaken?

God reminded Jeremiah, "the LORD is righteous," but His people had "rebelled against His command" (v. 18). They turned their back on God. Consequently, they experienced rejection. He was no longer there to rescue them.

Yet God remained merciful. If they repented and confessed their sins, He was ready to forgive and restore them. But they still had to experience the consequences of their decisions and reap what they had sown.

You may wonder at times what has happened to you and ask why. Do you wonder how you have come to a particular point? Have things happened that you don't understand?

If you find yourself asking how or why, commit your questions to God. Submit yourself to Him anew and commit your life to serve Him. Let Him reveal His truth to you and guide you.

Write out your unanswered questions as a prayer for understanding.

What Friends?

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: LAMENTATIONS 1

God's people thought they had much to offer. They considered themselves to be wealthy, beautiful, attractive, and desirable. They felt confident in their relationships.

Then everything changed. Their wealth and assets diminished. Their beauty faded. They became weak and vulnerable. No longer so attractive, they were abandoned by those whom they thought had loved them. The promises that had been made were broken or forgotten.

Too late, they realized they had been fooled. Instead of having a genuine concern, their friends revealed they only were interested in what they could gain from the relationship. When convenient, they were willing to take advantage of God's people, who were abandoned in their hour of need.

This is the kind of price we pay for the wrong kinds of relationships, for trusting the wrong people when we don't have discernment. Others may make promises that sound attractive, but what is in their heart? What are their true intentions?

The Bible urges us to be careful about the people we trust and not to be committed to the wrong kind of people (2 Corinthians 6:14).

Today, examine the people you have allowed into your life. What friendships have you formed? Whom are you trusting? Make sure you commit your life to God and love Him and His Word. Ask Him to give you discernment about your relationships and associations. Seek the things that matter. And seek first His Kingdom.

Reflect on the people and things you trust. Do you need a mind shift?

She weeps bitterly in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks; she has no one to comfort her among all her lovers. All her friends have dealt treacherously with her; they have become her enemies.

Lamentations 1:2 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, search my heart. Give me discernment. Show me if I have placed my affections with the wrong people or things. In Jesus' name, amen.

FRIDAY

July

8

Your prophets have seen for you worthless and deceptive visions; and they have not exposed your wrongdoing so as to restore you from captivity, but they have seen for you worthless and misleading pronouncements.

Lamentations 2:14 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I pray for my country. Give us godly leaders, people who submit their lives to You. Help me to have Your wisdom. In Jesus' name, amen.

Misleading Leaders

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: LAMENTATIONS 2

Why had God's people experienced judgment? Why had He removed His blessing? Why were they experiencing so many problems? One reason was the "worthless and deceptive visions" given by their prophets, ideas that encouraged people to drift away from God.

These leaders had misled the people with false ideas. They failed to set a godly standard and did not live according to His Word. Instead of being in tune with Him, they allowed corruption to spread. They failed to keep His ways. They read the wrong things, listened to the wrong messages, believed the wrong ideas.

Our world is filled with misleading leaders, people who may have political power but whose lives are not pleasing to God. They may be popular but aren't concerned with eternal truths. They may be masters at manipulation but allow people to pursue wrong paths. They do not recognize God's standards. They ignore His Word.

Some may be well intentioned. But that is not enough. More than ever, we need leaders who seek God, who seek to please Him, and who are committed to living according to His principles.

Be alert to deception. Pray for the leaders of your country, your city, your church, and your business. Pray that they would submit their lives to God. Pray that they would please and serve Him. Pray that He would grant them His wisdom. Don't give in to compromise. Stand firmly on the truths of His Word.

Write a prayer for your country's leaders to lead with godly wisdom.

Waiting Quietly

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: LAMENTATIONS 3

It takes time for seeds to grow. All farmers wish this were not true. They would love to plant seeds one day and reap a harvest the next. But through experience, they learn they must wait for a harvest.

This principle applies to every area of life even for spiritual things. Our human desire is to see quick results, that God's help would appear instantly, but the waiting process seems inevitable, just as it is for the farmer. Through life experiences, we learn that there is a time to sow and a time to reap (Ecclesiastes 3:2), separated by a time of waiting.

Yet many give up or become discouraged when they do not see immediate results. They want to sow today and reap tomorrow, but that does not happen. The Bible even promises that God will be *"good to those who depend on Him."*

Yes, reaping a harvest takes time. We must be persistent to plant seeds and then learn to wait patiently. Have faith in God, fully expecting that He will produce results in His time!

Make sure that you are sowing seeds into God's Kingdom. Always remember the importance of waiting and trusting in Him. He has promised that if you sow faithfully, you will reap a harvest in due season. Continue to have faith, and don't give up! And remember that God is good to *"those who depend on him, to those who search for him."*

The LORD is good to those who depend on him, to those who search for him. So it is good to wait quietly for salvation from the LORD.

Lamentations 3:25-26 NLT

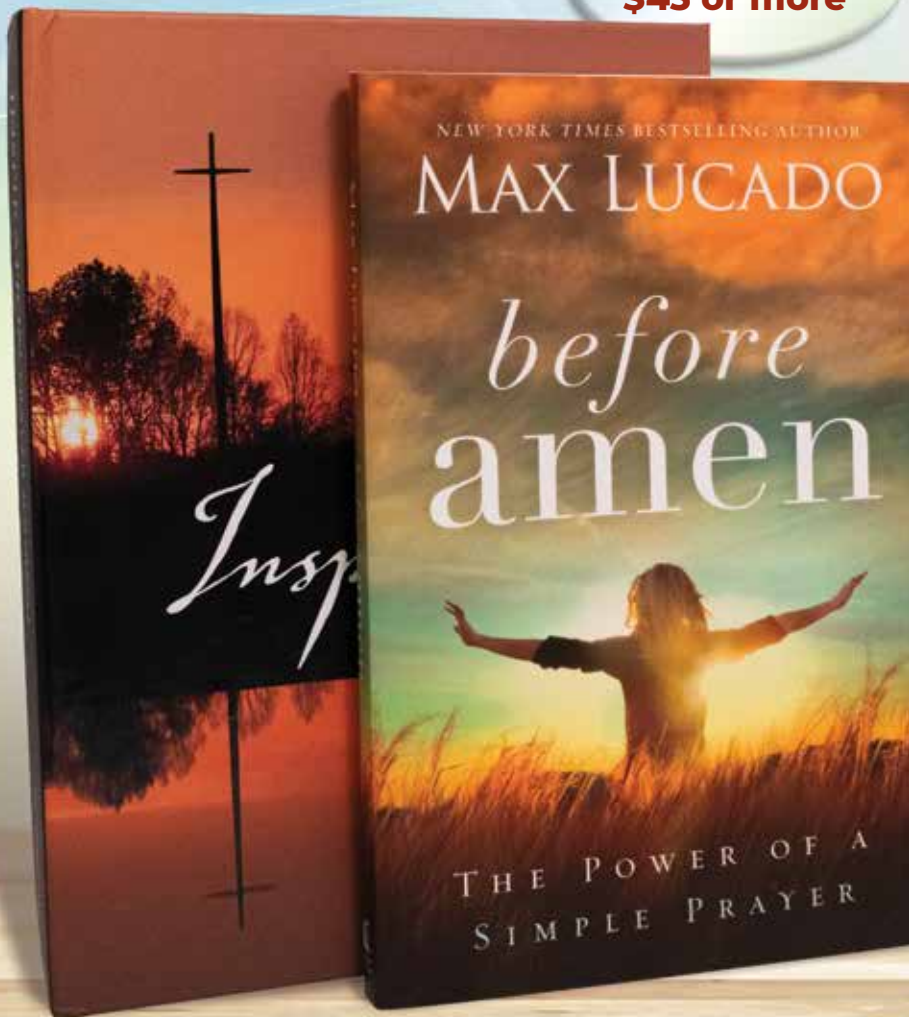
PRAYER:

Father, thank You for the seeds you've given me. I will sow them into Your Kingdom. I trust You for the result. In Jesus' name, amen.

What kind of seeds has God given you to sow into His Kingdom?

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SUNDAY

July

10

Cry for Restoration

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: LAMENTATIONS 5

You, LORD, rule forever; Your throne is from generation to generation... Restore us to You, LORD, so that we may be restored; renew our days as of old.

Lamentations 5:19-22
NASB

PRAYER:

Father, forgive me. Thank You for setting me free. Help me to live in a way that is pleasing to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

After writing a book filled with heart-felt lamentations, Jeremiah closed with a prayer from a heart of humility. He recognized that his people were suffering because of their sin and disobedience. But it was not too late. They still could hope in God. He could “restore” them. But for this change, they needed to repent and confess their sins.

These principles are still true. The Bible reminds us that we reap whatever we sow (Galatians 6:7). This means we may experience the consequences of our actions. God is ready to forgive us. But to be restored, we need to *confess* our sins and repent. He may be angry for a season, but He is also ready to forgive (Psalm 30:5).

As Jeremiah realized, God continues to look at our hearts, to examine our lives, to see if we have recognized our mistakes and have repented.

Remember these biblical promises. No one is perfect. We have all sinned and made mistakes (Romans 3:23), but “*if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us*” (1 John 1:9). God is the perfect Judge, but He never stops being merciful. His mercies are new every morning (Lamentations 3:23).

If you have sinned, turn to God. Be honest. Confess your sins to Him, confident that He is ready to forgive, cleanse, and set you free.

Write a prayer of repentance for specific sins in your life.

Always Ready

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: MATTHEW 25

It began as a typical Tuesday in South Florida. People went to church, visited the beach, went shopping, watched a big game. Nothing seemed unusual.

But that morning, people north of Miami found themselves scrambling to survive torrential downpours and floods. For a few hours, a freak storm dumped more than fifteen inches of rain on a small area. The impact was dramatic. For these people, everything changed in minutes.

Storms can strike just like this. One moment, everything can seem normal, but then, without warning, circumstances can change! Conditions may seem calm for some but turbulent for others.

Many are not prepared for storms in the world or their spiritual lives, for tribulations and trials, for the coming of the Lord.

Jesus said that the Kingdom of Heaven was like a group of virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Some were foolish, and some were prudent (vs. 1-2). The prudent virgins were ready for his return, but the foolish were not prepared.

Jesus warned us to *“be on the alert.”* We don't *“know the day nor the hour”* (v. 13). He could return at any minute. But we also might encounter various storms.

Today, be sure you are ready for whatever comes along. Fill your mind with God's Word. Pray and seek His wisdom. Don't compromise or be distracted. Ask for His help. Be ready!

How can you prepare for life's storms?

MONDAY

July

11

But at midnight there finally was a shout: “Behold, the groom!” [...] The groom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut.

Matthew 25:6, 10 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, help me be prepared for the storms. Serving You is my highest priority. I commit my time, talents, and treasures to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

TUESDAY

July

12

*The word of the LORD
came expressly to
Ezekiel the priest...and
the hand of the LORD
was upon him there.*

Ezekiel 1:3

PRAYER:

Father, help me to hear
Your voice. Speak to
me. Use me to help
spread the Gospel. In
Jesus' name, amen.

Be Transformed

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: EZEKIEL 1

What was Ezekiel's motivation for the messages he delivered? He might have had personal opinions on these subjects, but for him, these were not matters for debate, and he was not attempting to convince others he was right.

The Bible tells us he spoke because God directed him. Others may have questioned this inspiration, but Ezekiel had no doubts. He had heard from God and only spoke because His hand was upon him. He was confident because he had been transformed by that relationship.

The Bible reminds us that every believer can develop this kind of relationship with God, realize that He wants to communicate with us, open our eyes to see the world in new ways, and give us His assignments.

This is part of our heritage as *new creations* in Christ. In fact, through Him, "*all things have become new*" (2 Corinthians 5:17). As believers, we are "*transformed*" (Romans 12:2). We can realize that God changes us and gives us a new understanding. We can know Him personally and become instruments of His supernatural power, available to think His thoughts, deliver His messages, and serve Him.

Don't be conformed to the world around you, but fill your mind with God's Word. Make yourself available to Him, ready to be transformed. Spend quality time with Him in prayer. Always listen. Let Him transform you, guide you, speak to you, and use you.

How can you spread the Good News to those around you this week?

A Prophet's Heart

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: EZEKIEL 2

From our perspective, the prophet Ezekiel can appear bold, without fear regardless of circumstances. Yet early in his life, we see a man filled with uncertainty and doubt, unsure of himself.

This becomes clear when we realize that three times within one sentence, God encouraged him not to be afraid. God also told him not to be “*dismayed*” by others. The Hebrew word suggests being in despair, terrified, filled with panic to the point of being disabled.

His situation was like being surrounded by “*briers and thorns.*” On the surface everything might appear peaceful while painful plants were everywhere, ready to cripple or inflict pain.

God also said Ezekiel was dwelling among scorpions. The picture is of creatures that can tear anything apart, paralyze with venom, or suck the fluid from a life.

These images remind us that the world is full of people whose impact is like scorpions. People who can cause pain, just like briers and thorns, often in subtle, unexpected ways. These are situations in which we can be victimized, criticized, crippled, paralyzed, or poisoned by the attacks of others.

Remember the lessons God gave Ezekiel. In every situation, don't give in to fear or worry. Fill your life with His Word. Stand on His promises. Surrender your life to Him. Stay sensitive to His Spirit, commit to serve Him. Trust Him. Stay faithful.

Do not be afraid of them nor be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns are with you and you dwell among scorpions; do not be afraid of their words or dismayed by their looks, though they are a rebellious house.

Ezekiel 2:6

PRAYER:

Father, fill me with Your Spirit. Give me confidence and boldness to obey You. I trust my life to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Reflect on a time you were victimized and how God helped you overcome.

THURSDAY

July

14

I will make your tongue stick to the roof of your mouth so that you will be unable to speak... But when I speak to you, I will open your mouth and you will say to them, "This is what the LORD GOD says."

Ezekiel 3:26-27 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I surrender my life to You. Use me. Guide me. I commit my life to serve You. In Jesus' name, amen.

A Trustworthy Servant

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: EZEKIEL 3

It was a dramatic lesson, one Ezekiel would never forget.

God told him to shut himself in his house where he would be bound with ropes, unable to escape. He would not be able to get help, for God would "*make [his] tongue stick to the roof of [his] mouth.*" No one could hear him.

We can imagine that Ezekiel must have had questions, wondering why God was doing these things.

Ezekiel was learning the importance of obedience. He had to be ready to serve God unconditionally, totally surrendered to Him. If he had personal opinions, he had to lay them aside and speak only when God opened his mouth.

God wanted Ezekiel to have this kind of dedication, to be sold out for His kingdom. He did not want Ezekiel to be focused on personal gain or reputation but be willing to lay aside his own interests, always ready to please and obey God and committed to serving Him.

The person who wants to be God's servant must learn the lessons He taught Ezekiel: seek first His kingdom and be sensitive to His leading. This level of commitment requires that we be clear about His call on our lives.

Today, make a decisive commitment to serve God. Lay everything else aside before Him. Let Him know that you are committed to Him without reservation. Make this an act of absolute surrender. Be dedicated to being His servant.

Compose a prayer of dedication to God and His work.

When We Know

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: EZEKIEL 6

Describing events that would take place after His death, Jesus told His disciples, “*I have told you before it happens, so that when it happens, you may believe*” (John 14:29). He was demonstrating His foreknowledge and sovereignty, proving that His words were true and helping prepare them for the future.

This is a theme throughout many of God's prophetic messages and is central to the ministry of Ezekiel. Repeatedly in the book of Ezekiel, God told him, “*Then you will know.*” When His people experienced judgment, they would *know* He was the Lord (Ezekiel 7:4). When God “*set [His] face against them,*” they would remember His warnings (Ezekiel 15:7).

Some doubted that Ezekiel was delivering God's messages, but God confirmed He would do everything He said through this prophet (Ezekiel 24:24). God even decreed that the day would come when dry bones would come to life (Ezekiel 37). Many refused to accept this prophecy, but God said this would come true, so they would “*know that I am the LORD*” (Ezekiel 37:13-14).

Many people deny that the Bible is true and ridicule those who believe in God. Some conclude that those who know Him are naïve, that the Gospel is foolish.

Like Ezekiel, make sure you are confident in your relationship with God, that you know Jesus, and that He is your Lord. Commit your life to serving Him. Live so that the world may know.

FRIDAY

July

15

Then you will know that I am the LORD.

Ezekiel 6:13 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, Your Word and Your promises are true. Help me live so others may know the truth of the Gospel. In Jesus' name, amen.

How do you answer people who don't believe God's Word is true?

SATURDAY

July

16

The Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the entrance of the north gate of the inner courtyard. [...] He brought me into the inner courtyard of the LORD's house.

Ezekiel 8:3, 16 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I surrender my life to You. Forgive my sins. Help me to lay aside anything that blocks my relationship with You. In Jesus' name, amen.

The Inner Court

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: EZEKIEL 8

The temple was central to Ezekiel's ministry and the messages God asked him to deliver. He lived after the first temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC, and a cornerstone of his prophecy was the vision God showed him about the temple (Ezekiel 40-44).

One focus was the temple's inner court, mentioned sixteen times in his book. In his vision as he entered the inner court, Ezekiel fell on his face. Not able to boast in his own skills and abilities, he recognized that God was holy, righteous, and all powerful. Then as he surrendered to Him, the "*glory of the LORD came into the temple*" (Ezekiel 43:4-5 NKJV).

The inner court symbolizes a personal relationship with God. It's the kind of relationship He wants with each of us, so we may not just know about Him but know Him personally, being conscious of His holiness and surrendering to Him.

In this place of intimacy, our lives are transformed. We experience the fullness of His presence and power. His promises come alive. Our eyes are opened to greater insights.

Many Christians never enter this inner court. They stay outside, content with a superficial relationship with God. They allow their lives to be controlled by the flesh instead of the Spirit. They cherish the things of this world rather than the things of God.

Seek a more intimate relationship with God. He longs to fellowship with you.

What do you need to lay aside to have an intimate relationship with God?

False Assumptions

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: EZEKIEL 12

Many of God's people had formed assumptions that dominated their lives. They had developed their own interpretations of His prophecies and made their own predictions.

Guided by wishful thinking, some assumed that His prophecies would not happen at all or impact their lives in any way. Some were not concerned because they did not believe anything would happen in their lifetime: "His visions won't come true for a long, long time" (v. 27). As a result, they did not feel the need to change or prepare.

These interpretations made sense to them. Regardless of how they sounded, all these assumptions were wrong. The people were being deceived.

God wanted everyone to know that only one interpretation counted, and that was His. They could live with any illusion that made sense to them and be comfortable with their own conclusions, but none of these things would change His actions or the course of events.

God had declared that "*the time has come for every prophecy to be fulfilled!*" Because of Israel's rebellion, God decided the time had come for fulfillment: "*There will be no more delays*" (v. 25).

We too can be guilty of developing assumptions about God's Word and creating our own interpretations. His Word will always come true in His time. He is God, and what He speaks, He will do.

SUNDAY

July

17

Son of man, you've heard that proverb... "Time passes, and prophecies come to nothing...I will put an end to this proverb"... Now give them this new proverb to replace the old one: "The time has come for every prophecy to be fulfilled!"

Ezekiel 12:22-23 NLT

PRAYER:

Father, give me sensitivity to Your Word. Give me Your understanding. Help me be prepared for the future. In Jesus' name, amen.

What happens when you try to create your own meaning of Scripture?

MONDAY

July

18

The LORD is near to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth. He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He will also hear their cry for help and save them.

Psalm 145:18-19 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You that You are near when I call You. I commit these needs to You: _____. Thank You for providing for me. In Jesus' name, amen.

Call on the Lord

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PSALM 145

David knew what it was like to face adversity. As a young shepherd, he had encountered lions and bears. Although he had been a loyal servant and soldier, he had been the victim of Saul's jealousy and forced to flee for his life.

He had been cornered in situations that seemed impossible. He had led soldiers against armies with more resources. He had made mistakes, like when he committed adultery with Bathsheba. And he had fought a civil war, in which his own son led his adversaries.

Through these experiences, David realized God was present with him. He might make mistakes or become worried or afraid, but God was "near to all who call on Him." David also knew that he needed to call upon God in truth. God is holy and wants His people to "fear Him." David had learned that when he called on God, He answered. God heard his cries and saved him.

That same promise is true for you today. What problems do you face? What adversaries stand before you? Do you feel overwhelmed? In despair? Are you worried or afraid? Angry or bitter? You can call out to Him right now in any situation.

Call on Him about the things you need, the problems you face, and the burdens of your life. He will hear your cry and save you. Call on Him right now. Remember, God answers prayer.

What situation are you facing that seems impossible? Give it to God.

Promises Fulfilled

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PSALM 146

Keeping a promise is like a major deposit, a principle taught to millions of people by author and business consultant Stephen R. Covey.

Covey encouraged people to think of their words and actions as investments. Through in-depth analysis of personal and business interactions, he discovered that people only tend to believe people who keep their promises. He realized that every time we keep a promise, others gain confidence in us. They know that we are serious about our words and commitments.

The opposite is also true. Breaking a promise is like a major withdrawal. Those who don't keep their word find that others won't believe their promises. They have less credibility.

Covey encouraged us to understand the impact of our habits and then form positive habits. One of the most important patterns we can foster is to keep our promises, to be trustworthy, so others consistently believe us.

These practical principles point back to the timeless truths in God's Word, which teach that we should always speak the truth (Ephesians 4:25) and "let your 'yes' be 'yes,' and your 'no,' 'no'" (Matthew 5:37 NKJV). We are also to trust in God and His Word.

God demonstrated His promises were true when He sent Jesus into the world.

Remember that all God's promises are true. And they are true for you. You can count on Him. He keeps His promises forever!

How can you remind yourself to consistently keep all your promises?

TUESDAY

July

19

He made heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them. He keeps every promise forever.

Psalms 146:6 NLT

PRAYER:

Father, help me know Your promises. Thank You that You are faithful. I trust You. Help me keep my promises! In Jesus' name, amen.

WEDNESDAY

July

20

They lead my people astray, saying, "Peace," when there is no peace, and because, when a flimsy wall is built, they cover it with whitewash.

Ezekiel 13:10 NIV

PRAYER:

Father, help me be alert to deception. Give me discernment. Help me always to speak the truth in love. In Jesus' name, amen.

Misleading Promises

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: EZEKIEL 13

Some of God's people had been encouraged by a message of peace. Everyone longed to hear it. The problem? It was not true.

Many motivations existed for messages like this. The deceivers may intentionally have sought to mislead, but the deception also could have been well-intentioned, given by people guilty of wishful thinking. Regardless of the motivation, the words were not true, and listeners were being misled.

The Bible reminds us that wishful thinking may help us feel good for a season, but it also can distort our perspective. We are always called to speak the truth and always to be motivated by love (Ephesians 4:15).

This commitment to truth demonstrates that our hearts are right, and we want to serve God more than anything else. We will not cave into inconvenience, pressure, conformity, or personal gain. We will try to do what is right in all circumstances, always aware that God is watching. He knows our hearts, our attitudes, and our actions.

Unless we focus our minds and hearts on truth, we can be vulnerable to deception. We can be deceived by well-intentioned statements or wishful thinking.

Ask God to give you discernment to know what is true and help you not be deceived by well-intentioned statements that are ultimately deceptive. Ask Him to help you focus on Him, to stay sensitive to His Spirit, and to be committed to speaking the truth.

How can you temper your words of truth with love?

Gloating

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: EZEKIEL 26

Tyre had become rich. This city on the Mediterranean coast had held out against attacks from Assyria and later Babylon. As a seaport and commercial center, its merchants gained great wealth, but these people also angered God. Why? They gloated over the misfortune of His people, taking advantage of them for their own purposes.

God knew His people had sinned. They had worshiped idols and rejected His Word. They would reap what they had sown and receive inevitable judgment. They had made mistakes but were still His people. He was still jealous for them. He still had a plan for their lives. He reserved the right to judge them, but He would also defend them and punish those who took advantage of them.

Gloating is a common reaction. This is a response when we take pleasure in the misfortune of others. It may seem understandable from a human perspective, but in God's sight, it's never acceptable.

We may see others making mistakes. We may be aware of believers who have sinned, but the Bible reminds us God wants us to be messengers of His love and healing, to be people of mercy and salvation, and to show compassion.

Today as you think about other people, ask God to give you His wisdom and discernment and to fill you with His love. Pray for others. Remember that He loves them. Be His messenger of compassion, mercy, and salvation.

Because Tyre has said in regard to Jerusalem, "Aha, the gateway of the peoples is broken; it has opened to me"... this is what the LORD GOD says, "Behold, I am against you, Tyre, and I will bring up many nations against you."

Ezekiel 26:2-3 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for forgiving my sins. Use me in the lives of others. Fill me with compassion. Help me to reach the lost with Your love. In Jesus' name, amen.

How can you tangibly show love to those around you today?

FRIDAY

July

22

You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and exquisite in beauty. You were in Eden...Your clothing was adorned with every precious stone...I ordained and anointed you as the mighty angelic guardian.

Ezekiel 28:12-14 NLT

PRAYER:

Father, forgive me for glorying in the gifts you have given me. Help me be a good steward of these resources. In Jesus' name, amen.

Pride and Success

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: EZEKIEL 28

Ezekiel's prophecy about the king of Tyre seems to describe an ideal life. He was "the model of perfection, full of wisdom and exquisite in beauty." He was powerful, wealthy, and intelligent. His countenance was spectacular. Possessing rich spiritual gifts, he was blameless and anointed. Chosen by God, he dwelt in His presence and had access to His holy mountain.

Yet with all these blessings, he still rebelled against God and became puffed up with pride.

This pattern provides a warning to us. We can dream of the successes experienced by this king without realizing that it can become a trap. Filled with thoughts about ourselves, we can become self-centered and dominated by pride, rebelling against God, and rejecting His Word.

God knows how easily any of us can experience this kind of fall, how easily even the most spiritual believers can fall into sin and rebellion.

This passage also provides a picture of what happened to Satan, who is described here. Satan, too, was anointed, attractive, and gifted. Yet with all this, he still rebelled against God and became His enemy. Ultimately his successes made him eager and willing to reject God and go his own way. They did not keep him from sinning or defying God.

Stay on guard, be careful not to glory in your accomplishments, skills, or appearance. Remember to stay humble before God, and give Him all the praise, honor, and glory!

Write a prayer repenting of all the pride in your life and accomplishments.

The Lord

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: EZEKIEL 30

This message repeats throughout the book of Ezekiel: God wanted people to “*know*” that He is the Lord. This phrase repeats eight times alone in Ezekiel 29 and 30.

This is a constant theme throughout the Bible, beginning in the opening pages. We see God as the Lord of all creation in the Garden of Eden. There, Adam and Eve were able to experience the glories of creation until they stopped thinking of Him as the Lord. Suddenly their fellowship with God was broken and the blessings stopped.

God knows why making Him Lord is so important. This is the starting point for a life of blessing and fulfillment, receiving all the blessings He has prepared for us.

Yet even believers can forget God and take Him for granted. This happens when we make ourselves the center of the universe and fail to treat Him as the Lord when we fail to remember that everything should start with Him.

Why is this so important? God wants us to experience fulfillment and abundance. This life starts when we make Him our Lord.

Today, humble yourselves before God. Don't allow pride to dominate your life. Don't seek to chart your own path, but trust in Him with all your heart. Don't lean on your own understanding but acknowledge Him in all your ways. Let Him direct your path. Worship Him. Make Him the Lord of everything.

How can you remind yourself not to take God for granted?

SATURDAY

July

23

When I scatter the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them among the lands, then they will know that I am the LORD.

Ezekiel 30:26 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I humble myself before You. Forgive me of pride. You are the Lord of my life. Help me to please and serve You. In Jesus' name, amen.

SUNDAY

July

24

You compared yourself to a young lion of the nations, yet you are like the monster in the seas; and you burst forth in your rivers and muddied the waters with your feet and fouled their rivers.

Ezekiel 32:2 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, forgive my sins. Help me to be pure in Your sight. Give me greater compassion for the lost. In Jesus' name, amen.

Young Lions

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: EZEKIEL 32

In a novel he wrote in 1948, Irwin Shaw used the phrase “young lions” to describe soldiers who fought in World War II. Since ancient times, this phrase has described people who were arrogant and ambitious.

God used this phrase to describe Egypt, a nation proud of its heritage and accomplishments, a nation that felt invincible. But God had a different point of view.

God declared that eventually everyone would be humbled in His sight, particularly the nations and people who thought of themselves as invincible, proud, and arrogant.

Who are today's young lions? They are athletes, supremely confident in their abilities; celebrities, caught up in their physical appeal and image; politicians, determined to expand their power; media moguls, driven to advance their agendas; armies and nations defiantly dedicated to advance their kingdoms.

Today, as throughout history, God promises that everyone will be humbled, every “young lion.”

Everything is different for those who trust God. As Psalm 91 describes, they “will walk upon the lion and cobra.” They will “trample the young lion and serpent” (v. 13). God will give them peace and security. He will deliver them from fear and protect them.

Don't trust in yourself, but trust in God. Seek to be free of pride. Humble yourself before Him. Dedicate your life to serving Him. In everything, seek first His Kingdom.

Have you ever been humbled before God?

Love Songs

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: EZEKIEL 33

In vivid, poetic language, Ezekiel described the case of those who say they will obey God but, in the end, do not. He used the picture of a singer with a beautiful voice. Listeners liked the sound of the songs, but their lives did not change.

While in a sense listening attentively can be deemed worthwhile, the singing of these songs can also be an empty calling. In the end, the songs sung, in most cases, are just songs enjoyed for a season but then soon forgotten.

If we become “*nothing more than one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays an instrument well,*” we might find ourselves being received well for a short time. Others may admire and appreciate what we say and do. The question is, how will our words and deeds impact others long term?

Ezekiel warned that people may well hear our words but not put them into practice. We must remember that the word of God is much more than “*one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays an instrument well.*” His Word is powerful, timeless, and true, regardless of how it is delivered.

True obedience and respect take place when we hear God's words and then put them into practice. Without this obedience, all our listening and believing are meaningless, and our commitment is empty.

MONDAY

July

25

My people come to you...to hear your words, but they do not put them into practice...To them you are nothing more than one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays an instrument well.

Ezekiel 33:31-32 NIV

PRAYER:

Father, please help me to not just listen to your Words, but also to put them into practice. I want to be obedient. In Jesus' name, amen.

How can you practically put God's Words into action today?

TUESDAY

July

26

Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should the shepherds not feed the flock? [...] They scattered for lack of a shepherd.

Ezekiel 34:2, 5 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for all You have given me. Help me to be a faithful steward of Your resources. Use me to bless others. In Jesus' name, amen.

Your Responsibilities

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: EZEKIEL 34

God was angry. Why? He had appointed people to positions of responsibility and given them resources to care for His people, but instead, they ignored their flock and indulged in their private passions. Because of their negligence, many were scattered and lost. The sickly were not strengthened. The diseased were not healed.

God is serious about the gifts He gives us. Jesus reinforced this point when He described the day He will sit *"on the throne of His glory."* Some will be on His right while others will go on the left. The ones on the right will be blessed and *"inherit the kingdom prepared for [them] from the foundation of the world"* (Matthew 25:31-34).

How did they merit this reward? They showed concern. They used the resources they had been given to meet the needs of others. Jesus told them that whatever they did to *"one of the least of these brothers or sisters of Mine, you did it to Me"* (Matthew 25:40).

In contrast, those on the left were sentenced to judgment. Why? They had not shown compassion or used their gifts to help others and advance the Kingdom.

The Bible says we are given gifts of our time, talents, and treasures not to hoard on ourselves, but to bless others and help meet their needs and spread the Gospel.

God has blessed you, so you might bless others. Invest your talents and resources in His Kingdom.

How can you use your resources to help those in need around the world?

Dry Bones

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: EZEKIEL 37

It was a dark time for God's people. Many had been exiled. The temple had been destroyed and its treasures removed. Then God gave Ezekiel a startling vision.

In this vision, God's Spirit brought him to a valley full of dry bones, a place without life. God told Ezekiel that these bones would be re-formed. Then God breathed on these bones, and they "came to life" and became "an exceedingly great army" (v. 10).

God explained, "these bones are the whole house of Israel." He would cause His people to "come up out of [their] graves" and "come to life," and He would place them "on [their] own land" (Ezekiel 37:11-14).

For centuries, these prophecies remained a mystery. Many asked whether God would bring His people into the land of Israel again. This seemed to be impossible. Yet in 1948, this is exactly what took place. The world watched with amazement as Jews came from across the globe and united in the land of Israel. Yes, God's Word is true.

Just as these dry bones came back to life, we can be sure that all the Bible's prophecies will be fulfilled. People may doubt God's Word. They have their own interpretations or develop their own analyses, but we can be sure that God will keep His promises – all of them. He will accomplish His purposes, and He will bless those who bless His people.

He...set me down in the middle of the valley...

This is what the LORD GOD said to these bones, "Behold, I am going to make breath enter you that you may come to life...and you will know that I am the LORD."

Ezekiel 37:1-2, 5-6 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You that Your prophetic Word is true. Help me understand more clearly Your plan for the ages. Bless Your people, Israel. In Jesus' name, amen.

Compose a prayer asking God to breathe life into your dry places.

THURSDAY

July

28

From the outside to the inner gate were chambers for the singers in the inner courtyard.

Ezekiel 40:44 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for all You have done for me. I commit my time, talents, and treasures to You! May my life bring You glory! In Jesus' name, amen.

Music Everywhere

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: EZEKIEL 40

In the vision God gave Ezekiel about the temple, he saw chambers for singers. These were places just for musicians. We have a sense that music was everywhere! We can imagine how glorious the sounds must have been as the music echoed throughout the chambers.

This picture reminds us of the importance of music to God. Admonitions to worship God through music fill the Bible. The Bible also calls us to praise Him with instruments and voices (Psalm 150:3-5).

We are told to “*sing for joy*” (Psalm 5:11). Music fills Heaven itself. There, “*a new song*” declares the Lamb is worthy (Revelations 5:9). There, all who were victorious “*sing the song of Moses*” (Revelation 15:3).

Music has been central to revivals throughout the centuries. In 1538, Martin Luther wrote, “With all my heart I would extol the precious gift of God in the noble art of music.” He described how God gave this precious gift to remind us that we are created to praise and magnify the Lord.

The world often uses music to entertain and celebrate the flesh, to exalt performers. But we need to remember that God created music and that music is part of His creation!

Today remember that God gave you music to provide an instrument of praise for you to worship Him with words and instruments. Celebrate the wonders of His creation through music!

How do your favorite worship songs praise God?

God's Standards

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: EZEKIEL 42

It had been hundreds of years since God gave the Law, and hundreds more since the first temple was built. Years later when His people were exiled in Babylon, God gave Ezekiel a vision about the temple.

Everyone knew that conditions had changed. Some might have argued that it was time to do things differently, that God's Laws might not have been relevant. But God's vision emphasized that He had not changed. His standards remained the same.

We see this truth regarding His priests. God had told Moses that they were to be "holy" (Leviticus 21:6) and wear special garments (Exodus 28:2-4). The vision God gave to Ezekiel confirmed that He still expected His priests to be holy. Even the rooms where they lived were holy.

Today we face a whole new series of changes. Many believe that the Bible is no longer relevant, that we need to compromise and live according to new realities. However, as the message He gave to Ezekiel confirms, God does not change. He is holy. His standards are the same. His Word is eternally true.

Jesus taught that some are "foolish," and build their house on the sand. They are not prepared for the storms of life. But those who are "wise" build their lives on the Rock – God's timeless Word. They are ready for changing times (Matthew 7:24-27).

Don't compromise. Be bold and strong. Build your life on God's Word!

How are you ensuring that your life is built upon the solid Rock of Christ?

FRIDAY

July

29

There they shall set the most holy things...for the place is holy. When the priests enter, they shall not go out into the outer courtyard from the sanctuary without laying their garments there in which they minister, for they are holy.

Ezekiel 42:13-14 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, cleanse me of sin. Help me to be acceptable in Your sight. Help me to live according to Your Word. In Jesus' name, amen.

SATURDAY

July

30

The glory of the God of Israel was coming from the way of the east... the earth shone from His glory... The glory of the LORD entered the house by way of the gate facing east... the glory of the LORD filled the house.

Ezekiel 43:2-5 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I long to experience Your glory. May my life bring You glory. In Jesus' name, amen.

The Glory of the Lord

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: EZEKIEL 43

In his vision, Ezekiel experienced something extraordinary. An experience beyond anything he could imagine or even describe. He saw the glory of God. How important was this? Four separate times in the space of just a few words, he talked about this glory.

What exactly is the “glory of the LORD”? The root word here indicates something heavy and weighty, a great burden. We see how God’s glory might feel like a weight, something that is deep and profound, something supernatural.

This glory can change our lives. Indeed, it is the very essence of God Himself. The experience of His glory is a moment we touch the supernatural and get a glimpse of His nature.

Many people never experience this glory. We can be blocked and blinded when we focus on this world when we are consumed with our own interests, when we are dominated by the superficial things of the flesh, or when we don’t seek God.

How do we see this glory? Like Ezekiel, we will see God’s glory when we humble ourselves before Him, open our hearts to Him, spend time in His presence, fill our minds and hearts with His Word, be filled with His Spirit, and surrender our lives to please Him.

Seek a deeper dimension in your relationship with God. Seek to know Him more intimately. Cry out for more of His presence. Serve Him. Worship Him.

When and where have you seen God’s glory displayed?

God's River

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: EZEKIEL 47

In his vision of the new Jerusalem, Ezekiel saw a river that flowed throughout the area. As it flowed into desert regions, this water changed everything. It brought life and vitality. Everything it touched was renewed, while everything else became stagnant. It did not just make people feel better. It brought healing and transformation.

The impact of this water here symbolizes the move of God's Spirit, the presence of life-giving nourishment for spirit, soul, and body. Just as the water of God was critical to the new Jerusalem, so His spiritual river is critical to every believer. It gives us wisdom and energy, healing, miracles, power, and productivity. It impacts others and brings lasting change.

The water in the New Jerusalem kept getting deeper and deeper. In the same way, the flow of God's Spirit gets deeper for those who seek Him and walk with Him. As we study His Word, we can go deeper, gaining more insights.

Right now, His water is flowing, ready for us, but we cannot just watch it. We must get in the flow, become immersed in it.

Today remember that you need the constant touch of God's river, His water of life, His Spirit, His timeless Word. Through the symbolism of Ezekiel's vision, remember the power and impact provided by His river. Immerse yourself in God's Word. Seek to be filled with His Spirit. Let Him transform your life, and through you, impact others.

SUNDAY

July

31

Water was flowing from under the threshold of the house [...] water reaching the knees... water reaching the hips...it was a river that I could not wade across, because the water had risen, enough water to swim in.

Ezekiel 47:1, 4-5 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I seek to bathe in Your river. Immerse me in the flow of Your Spirit. Renew me. Revive me. Fill me. Use me. In Jesus' name, amen.

Write out your plan for immersing yourself in the Scriptures.



Never Miss the Opportunity to Pray

Prayer is communication with Heaven that moves us beyond our initial salvation experience into a friendship with God, who speaks to us in His Word and listens to us in prayer.

Deuteronomy 4:7-8 tell us, *“What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to Him? And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws?”* (NIV). The way to draw near to God is by prayer and the study of His great decrees in the Bible.

Even children can learn the secrets of a meaningful prayer life. Many years ago, James Rogers of the Alabama Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church wrote about Annie Clayton. As a child, she and her sister, Vanie, took a long walk one morning to collect

scraps of wood as fuel for heating their family’s home. As they returned, Vanie collapsed from the lingering effects of cholera.

Annie, only five, was helpless. They sat beside the road not knowing what to do. Finally Vanie said, “You know, Annie, a good while ago mother told us that if we ever got into trouble, we should pray, and God would help us. Now you help me get down upon my knees and hold me up, and we will pray.” The sisters prayed earnestly for someone to help them. Then they waited to see how God would answer.

Far down the street, they spotted a man who walked out of a factory and looked curiously up the street. But the man went back inside. He came out again, looked up the street, and reentered the factory. Then the man walked out a third time with his hat on.

Approaching the children, he said in a broken, German accent, “O children, what is the matter?” When they explained, he picked Vanie up in his arms and carried her home.

Once the girls were delivered, the gentleman told his story. He was the proprietor of a factory and had been working on payroll checks. Suddenly his vision had blurred. He had an impression that someone wanted to see him, so he stepped outside and tried to focus his eyes up and down the street. Seeing no one, he returned to his desk. The darkness in his vision grew worse, and the impression even greater. So he walked outside again, puzzled. Then he returned to his work a second time. But now, he found himself unable to write. The impression on his mind was urgent. So he fetched his hat and walked up the street until he saw the girls who had prayed earnestly for someone to come along.



SOME COMMUNICATION TIPS

We can pray as effectively as those young girls. Our prayers can draw forth God’s answers and achieve divine results. Here are some of the simplest communication techniques for seeking God in prayer.

1. Establish a regular time for prayer each day.
2. Create a simple pattern for your prayers.
3. Include Scripture in your prayer time.
4. Pray with a heart of gratitude and praise.

The most powerful communication tool in the world is an earnest prayer to God from one of His children – He is always present, always loving, always listening – don’t miss the opportunity to pray. ❖



David Jeremiah is the founder and host of *Turning Point for God* and Senior Pastor of Shadow Mountain Community Church in El Cajon, California. For more information visit www.DavidJeremiah.org.

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A Merry Heart...

does good, like medicine. – Proverbs 17:22

Turtle Soup

A young, new missionary couple arrived in Asia and was served a meal. As per the custom in their new country, the men were served before the women. When the first course arrived, the wife, who was pregnant at the time, was dismayed to see that her husband had been served soup – with a small, whole turtle in the bottom!

Not wanting to offend her hosts, but at the same time feeling squeamish about the offering, she scrambled to figure out what to do.

By the time she was served, she had come up with the perfect excuse not to accept a bowl of turtle soup: "In my country, we don't eat turtles when we're pregnant!"



A little girl, dressed in her Sunday best, was running as fast as she could, trying not to be late for Bible class. As she ran she prayed, "Dear Lord, please don't let me be late! Please don't let me be late!" Suddenly, she tripped and fell, getting her clothes dirty.

She got up and brushed herself off. As she began running she once again began to pray, "Dear Lord, please don't let me be late...But please don't shove me either!"



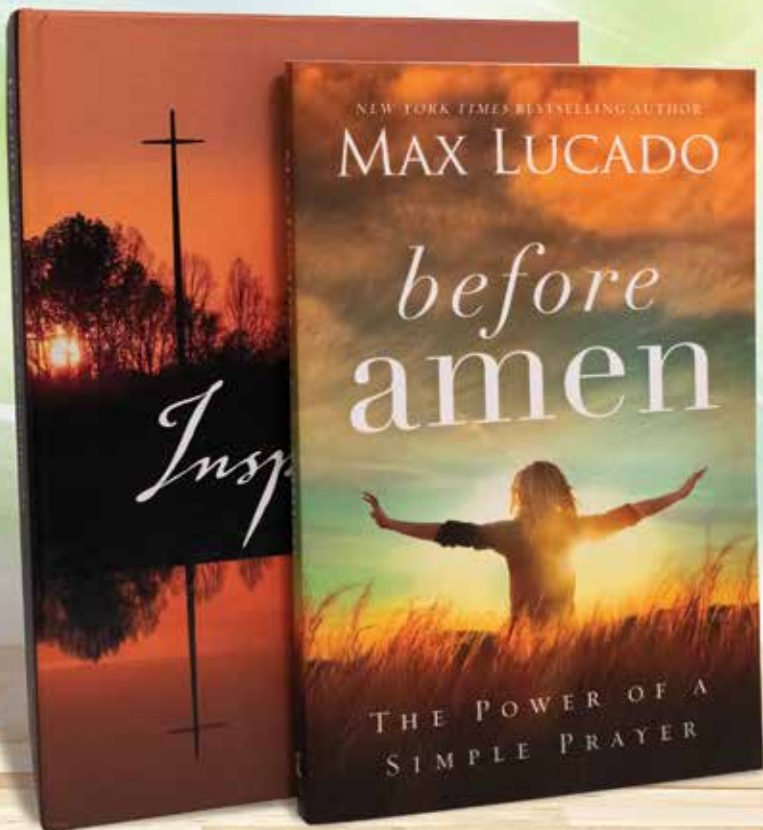
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