

JULY 2023

inspiration

M A G A Z I N E

The *Overflowing* Life

Joy in the
Morning

Can You Trust
God's Goodness?

Good Gifts from
A Good God

The Overflowing Life



PAGE 10



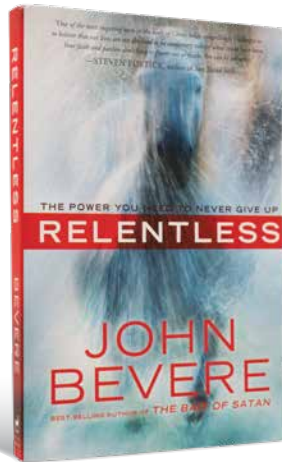
God is our *Jehovah Jireh!* David shares that the more you set your heart on the Lord of Heaven, the more you will experience the joy and peace of overflowing abundance. Read his powerful article on **page 5**.



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Turn to page 28 for details about our **THANK YOU GIFT** this month. Act quickly—our supplies are limited.

EDITOR'S CORNER



Roone Acree

What do you need from God today? Will you put it on the altar and allow Him to show Himself as *Jehovah Jireh*, your Provider? In this issue of **INSPIRATION MAGAZINE**, we take a look at powerful, biblical keys for trusting God's goodness—quickly taking you from a life of just eking by to one of overflowing abundance! God is so good. No matter what the world's economy looks like, you can rely on Jesus!

How has God provided for your needs? Please send me a note to let me know at editor@inspiration.org.

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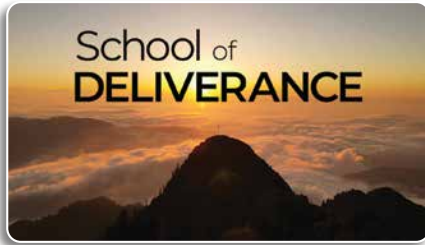
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Trust God for Your Deliverance



Living the Overflowing Life



July 10–July 21

Do you need to be delivered? Do you know someone who needs to be delivered? Watch this brand-new series by Işik Abila to discover the authority given to you by Jesus, your

identity in Jesus, and the root of your problems, so you can live with the Holy Spirit's power.

July 24–August 4

Are you struggling to trust God in certain areas of your life? If doubt has crept into your mind, your sense of peace has been replaced by fear, anxiety, or depression.



David Cerullo shares foundational principles that will help you build your life on God's faithfulness.

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STRENGTHEN
your walk
with David Cerullo

How much does God want to bless us as believers?

Some people have a limited idea as if God only wants to bless us in *small* ways. They live as if there are *limits* to what is possible through Him.

But the Bible gives us a completely different perspective. Jesus said He came that we might have *life* and have it “*abundantly*” (John 10:10). In his translation, Charles B. Williams indicates that this literally means having life “*till it overflows.*” Can you think of a better promise from our Heavenly Father?

Friend, if you are facing a difficult situation today, you're a prime candidate for a supernatural breakthrough. And there's a great story in Matthew 14:14–21 that gives a glimpse of what it looks like to go from lack to overflowing abundance.

This passage begins with Jesus teaching an enormous crowd of people. When evening came, the disciples told Jesus that He should send the multitudes away, so they could get some food.

They recognized it was a dangerous situation to have thousands of hungry people roaming the countryside.

However, Jesus shocked them by saying, “*They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat*” (v. 16).

Replying to Him, the disciples pointed out how ludicrous this was, “*We have here only five loaves and two fish*” (v. 17). In essence, they were saying, “Jesus, get serious. We simply don’t have enough resources to feed thousands of people. Five loaves and two fish are not adequate to meet this enormous need.”

Perhaps you are facing a situation much like this. You’re surrounded by an overwhelming need, and the resources on hand are insufficient to even make a dent. So what can you do?

This is where the story begins to get exciting—and practical as well. Instead of conceding that the circumstances were hopeless, Jesus pointed to the loaves and fish and told His bewildered followers, “*Bring them here to Me*” (v. 18).

You see, this is always the starting point of our miracle—when we take the resources in *OUR* hands and place them instead in *JESUS’* hands. In effect, the loaves and fish became SEEDS that Jesus took and multiplied. The Lord took their meager resources, looked up to Heaven, and blessed the loaves before breaking them and giving them back to the disciples.

YOUR PART IN THE MIRACLE

Notice that Jesus gave the loaves and fish **BACK** to the disciples. Isn’t that wonderful? The same resources they entrusted to the Lord were given *back* to them in the form of an abundant harvest—one that not only would meet their own needs, but also feed thousands of hungry people!

The disciples became part of the miracle as they freely distributed the loaves and fish to the crowd: “*So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained. Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children*” (vs. 20–21).

What a great crescendo to the story. At the beginning of the passage, the disciples didn’t have enough resources to feed the people. I’m sure they would have been thrilled if Jesus even gave them barely enough—avoiding a riot among the hungry crowd.

However, Jesus did much more than they could dream or imagine (Ephesians 3:20). They not only had *enough* to meet the need—they had more than enough with 12 overflowing baskets of leftovers!

I’m so grateful the God we serve is a God of overflow. Our Heavenly Father offers to freely give us abundant forgiveness, healing, and provision.

My friend, I encourage you to read this story one more time, asking God to show you what steps *you* may still need to take to receive your breakthrough. Don’t worry if your resources seem totally inadequate to meet the needs around you. The key is to *bring everything to Jesus*. Trust Him with the seeds in your hand, and expect Him to multiply them into an overflowing harvest.

WHERE ARE YOU LOOKING?

One of the keys to the loaves and fish miracle was that the disciples learned to *look to Jesus* instead of to their own resources. He is “*the author and finisher of our faith*” (Hebrews 12:2), and we will always be disappointed if we look to anyone or anything other than Him to be our Source.

The starting point of our miracle is when we take the resources in our hands and place them in Jesus' hands!

Trust Him with the seeds in your hand, and expect Him to multiply them into an overflowing harvest.

In some ways, the world's economic downturn we're experiencing may be a blessing in disguise. Why? Because these difficult times are compelling many believers to reassess whether they're truly trusting in the Lord as their provider.

It's one thing to claim we're trusting in God for our provision when we have a good job, lots of equity in our home, and a growing 401(k) fund for our retirement. But what happens to our faith when the whole world's financial system is shaking and our resources seem to be drying up instead of growing?

It has never been more important for God's people to learn the secrets of coming to Him as *Jehovah Jireh*—our faithful Provider—even when every human resource seems to be failing us.

The devil will try to use your circumstances to accuse God and His Word. So instead of focusing on your circumstances, fix your eyes on your God and His ability to do abundantly above and

beyond what you can ask or think (Ephesians 3:20).

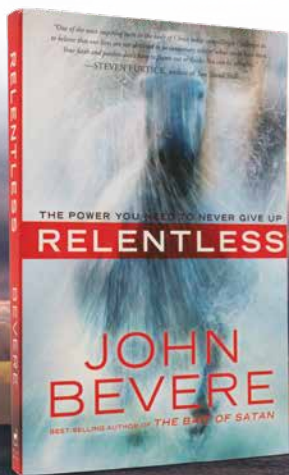
Your key to overflow has nothing to do with your abilities or the economic systems of this world. Your breakthrough will come from looking to the Lord and trusting Him to do what only He can do! The psalmist says this well: *"Unto You I lift up my eyes, O You who dwell in the heavens"* (Psalm 123:1).

The more you set your heart on the Lord of Heaven, the more you will experience the joy and peace of overflowing abundance in His presence and His provision.

God bless you!

David

P.S. Our THANK YOU GIFT this month was chosen to help you live a life of overflowing faith even in the midst of difficult circumstances. See **page 28** for details.



Craving Freedom?

Jesus offers us His breakthroughs.

What kind of freedom do you need? Physical freedom? Financial freedom? Emotional freedom? Spiritual freedom? Good news: Christ came to free you from bondage. Look at what the prophet Isaiah predicted about Jesus—700 years before His birth:

*The Spirit of the LORD GOD is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor;
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;
to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn (61:1–2 ESV).*

By becoming an **Inspiration Ministries Monthly Partner**, you enable us to share the Good News with people in over 200 nations and territories who desperately need the freedom that Christ offers them. You also prepare yourself for the breakthrough God has for you. Here's what one partner shared:

"I give to your ministry, and God keeps blessing me. First, He blessed my son by getting him released from jail, and then God released me from an almost \$2,000 loan! Thank God for Inspiration Ministries! Praise Yeshua-Jesus, AMEN!"—Rev. Elbert, VA

Now is the time to sow into the good ground of Inspiration Ministries so that you can experience God's true freedom. Contact us today:

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Joy in the Morning

In an instant, your darkness can turn to dawn.

Life seems harder than we can sometimes bear, especially on days when we're stunned by grief, worried about loved ones, or reeling from waves of trouble. We long for joy in the morning, but sometimes we're in the darkest night. That's when we should remember the old saying: "It's darkest just before the dawn."

According to 1 Samuel 30:6, David responded to his trouble by strengthening himself in the Lord. David was under incredible strain as his circumstances had gone from bad to worse. Yet he refused to give up. He knew how to strengthen himself in the Lord by shifting his attention from his hopelessness to his Helper.

Written by David, the three simple stanzas in Psalm 13 move

from darkness to dawning to daylight. And that's the pattern we need to follow as we encourage ourselves in the Lord.

DARKNESS

Psalm 13 opens with David darkly crying: "*How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily?*" (vs. 1-2).

David feared the omniscient God had forgotten him, and the loving God had forsaken him. When darkness covers our lives, the emptiness seems to last forever. Emotional pain is the cruelest kind, and hopelessness is one of the cruelest kinds of emotional pain.

It's impossible to always stay on the sunny side of the street because the sun moves as the world turns, and sometimes we land in the valley of the shadow of death. During such times, it's best to pray honestly, like David, who cried, "*How long, O LORD?*"

DAWN

As we continue reading Psalm 13, we see David turn a corner in verse 3 as he continued, "*Consider and hear me, O LORD my God; enlighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death; lest my enemy say, 'I have prevailed against him'; lest those who trouble me rejoice when I am moved*" (vs. 3-4).

Though David felt abandoned, he knew better in his heart. His knowledge of God was greater than his emotions of despair. Despite his pain, he managed to pray, asking God to consider him and to hear him in his hour of need.

The night: It's not permanent. We are not forsaken, not forgotten, not destitute, not detached. If we can lift our eyes heavenward and whisper a prayer in Jesus' name, we'll eventually see a glow on the

horizon as the sun begins to rise with healing in its rays. The Lord has a way of imparting grace when we need it most.

The Lord gives grace from moment to moment, and as the hours pass, the darkness turns to dawn and the dawn to daylight.

DAYLIGHT

At the end of Psalm 13, David senses the possibility of rejoicing once again. "*I have trusted in Your mercy,*" he wrote. "*My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation. I will sing to the LORD, because He has dealt bountifully with me*" (vs. 5-6).

Because David chose to trust God's mercy, he was able to say, "*My heart shall rejoice...I will sing.*" When we realize the darkness doesn't last forever, we grasp a ray of God-sent hope.

You can strengthen yourself in the Lord. God hasn't forsaken us, even though the darkest hours in our lives make us feel alone and forgotten. His sustaining care will turn the darkness to dawn, the dawn to daylight.

Don't give up. It's darkest just before the dawn. ❖



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

FOR THE LIFE OF THE WORLD

Letters to the Exiles

In this fun look at Christ and culture, discover how to be in the world yet not of it—not only for yourself, but for the life of the world.

Saturdays, July 22 & 29
at 3:00 p.m. ET

Watch the trailer at
inspiration.org/trailers

Program times subject to change. Check inspiration.org/tv for details.



God's Call to FREEDOM!



Saturday, July 8 at 3:00 p.m. ET

We Were Enemies

In war-torn Cambodia, they were enemies. Then Jesus set them free! Now they fight for a different cause as brothers in Christ.



Saturday, July 22 at 9:00 p.m. ET
Sunday, July 23 at 5:30 p.m. ET

Yellow Day

A young man discovers love and true freedom in this dazzling spiritual quest for the whole family. With Drew Seeley.



Thursdays at 9:00 a.m. ET

Dream Church Live

A former Muslim, İşik Abla pastors a multiracial discipleship church proclaiming the freedom of Jesus' love to all nations.



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7 STEPS to Enjoy the Journey



When I was a kid, our family would often take long road trips. In the backseat of our 1970s, blue Chevy Malibu, a big, red cooler separated my space from my brother's. My dad would carefully place the cooler exactly in the middle before we left. But gradually, the cooler would begin to inch left and then right.

Eventually, one of us would give it a hefty shove in the opposite direction, which inevitably led to a wail: "Mooooom, he pushed the cooler all the way onto my side!" Our mother usually told us to stop bickering, put the cooler back in the middle of the seat, and not touch it again—or else.

At the time, my melodramatic, elementary-aged self thought that a big, red cooler encroaching on my backseat space was the worst thing that would ever disrupt my journey. Many decades later, I long for the simplicity of those days.

Now my brother and I live on opposite sides of the globe, and I'm pretty sure that big, red cooler is still in my parents' basement.

So, how did I get from a selfish eight-year-old to a (sometimes) more mature adult who strives to enjoy this journey called life?

Here are seven steps to help you get the most out of the journey—whether it's in an old Chevy or navigating the potholes of life.

J **JOY** is a choice. It's a state of being that knows God is in control. Philippians 4:4 *commands* us to "rejoice in the Lord always." Rejoice in knowing who God is and that He has good plans for you. Don't wait for circumstances to be perfect (spoiler alert: they won't be).

O **OTHERS.** Focus on making others happy. When you do, you'll find that you're happier as well, and everyone enjoys the journey more.

U **U-TURN.** Make a U-turn when you realize you've gone the wrong direction. In life, it's easy to start down the slippery slope of sin with just an innocent text or internet search, but just as when you're driving, it's never too late to make a U-turn and head back in the right direction.

R **REST.** I usually pack so much into every vacation that I return home exhausted. We often do the same in our lives. But God invites us to rest and "be still and know that [He is] God" (Psalm 46:10). When we forget who God is, we forget who we are: His children. And then we forget to enjoy the journey.

N **NEVER** pet the bison...and other things I never thought I'd say as a parent. But how many times does God tell us things that we should already know or that He's told us numerous times before? All. The. Time.

E **EXPECTATIONS**—let them go! Unmet, unrealistic expectations will ruin a vacation, a relationship, or a life faster than you can blink.

Y **YES.** Say *yes* to detours occasionally to take a picture of a sunset. Say *yes* when God puts a detour in your path. We may plan, but God directs our steps (Proverbs 16:9). Be open to the Holy Spirit's leading.

**Are you ready to enjoy your summer vacation...
and your journey through life? ❖**



Bethany LaShell is a writer and editor at Inspiration Ministries. She lives in South Carolina with her cats and is busy planning her next adventure.



Can You TRUST God's Goodness?



by Ben Cerullo

You know you're supposed to trust God. You know God is good. But how can you have confidence in God's goodness when your social media and TVs are full of wars, sparring politicians, rampant diseases, economies in shambles, and more?

God's goodness is in His *character*, not in our circumstances. We live in a world full of sin, and its consequences are a part of our lives on earth. But look at what the psalmist David penned—after lamenting his situation:

Oh, how great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for those who fear You, which You have prepared for those who trust in You in the presence of the sons of men! You shall hide them in the secret place of Your presence (Psalm 31:19–20).

Here, David models for you how to claim God's goodness—in all sorts of situations. Let's walk through Psalm 31 to see how that looks.

David begins with a statement

of hope in God for refuge, then he cries for God to hear and help him. He reminds himself of who God is and asks for guidance *"for your name's sake"* (v. 3).

David vividly describes how distressed he is. Not only is he experiencing physical calamities, but he's also in emotional upheaval because his enemies are gossiping about him and his demise.

As David begs for God's favor, he again praises God for His goodness and protection. He ends with a call for us to be courageous and wait on the Lord.

How did David claim confidence in God? He committed his spirit into God's hands (v. 5). Those words echo throughout the Bible. When you learn to trust God no matter what, your soul can be at rest.

Friend, I would encourage you to read and personalize Psalm 31. Reflect on the goodness of God's character even when life is difficult. He alone offers hope. ❖



Sowing Seed Works!

Just ask Tammie and her husband, Moir.

Tammie's husband, Moir, was under a lot of pressure from his bosses, and he wanted to leave the company. However, Tammie knew that he would be walking away from a sizable amount of vested company stock.

"I recommended he wait at least a year before making a final decision," Tammie recalls. "Although he agreed, I continued asking God to confirm that I had given him the correct advice."

The next morning, their TV was tuned to Inspiration Campmeeting, but Tammie was too busy doing housework to watch the broadcast closely.

"I happened to hear the preacher say, 'Just do it for one year!'" Tammie says. "I stopped in my tracks because I felt it was the confirmation I'd been praying for."

At the end of the message, the speaker urged viewers to sow \$1,000 into God's Kingdom

through Inspiration Ministries.

"I was skeptical about giving to TV ministries," Tammie says. "But I knew if I truly believed this message was from God, I had to sow a seed of faith. So I pledged \$100 a month for 10 months."

The same day, Tammie and Moir unexpectedly received a \$500 check from their insurance company. Tammie knew it was an answer to prayer.

A short time later, one of Moir's former coworkers got him a great job with a new company.

"The new position will provide our family with more income and give him an opportunity to grow professionally and influence more people," Tammie reports.

Thrilled with their uncommon harvest, Tammie and Moir are thankful for Campmeeting: "May God continue to anoint the good ground of Inspiration Ministries!"

**What God has done for Tammie and Moir,
He can do for you! Sow a seed for souls today:**

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Unleash the Power of Financial Freedom

Although it seems counterintuitive, planning ahead actually brings more freedom than flying by the seat of your pants. If you stick to a budget, for example, you'll more than likely save money. Wouldn't you love to continue blessing your family (and the lost) through your financial diligence?

If you're worried about whether an Estate Plan that includes Inspiration Ministries will also provide for what you and your family need, take a look at what the apostle Paul shares:

God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others (2 Corinthians 9:8 NLT).

Creating a sound financial plan will give you and your family freedom both now and in the future. It will also give the gift of freedom in Christ to people in over 200 nations.

Contact our Planned Giving Team today for free information on how you can create financial freedom for your family and share the Gospel around the world after you go to be with the Lord.



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Sand on the Seashore

BIBLE READING: 1 KINGS 4

Standing on a beach, we see sand in every direction. Each grain seems immeasurably tiny, with hundreds, perhaps thousands, in just a handful. Pondering the expanse of the beach, the volume of sand seems beyond counting.

Researchers at the University of Hawaii actually tried to calculate the number of grains of sand on earth. They estimated that the earth has roughly 7.5 *quintillion* grains of sand! (Each quintillion represents a 1 followed by 18 zeros!)

This number defies our grasp. But this vastness is how the Bible describes God's *unlimited* nature. The comparison was used to describe His blessings for Abraham, and how He would greatly multiply his seed as the sand on the seashore (Genesis 22:17).

The Bible uses this comparison twice in describing Israel during Solomon's reign. They were as "*numerous as the sand that is on the seashore in abundance.*" And God gave Solomon wisdom "*like the sand that is on the seashore.*"

The picture is of blessings extending in *every direction* beyond what we can imagine. Paul expressed this truth when he wrote how God could "*do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think*" (Ephesians 3:20).

How easily we can limit God! We restrict ourselves to what *we* can imagine. These are moments to ponder the sand on the seashore: Truly, there is *no limit* to what He can do. There are no limits to His wisdom and power.

In which areas have you been tempted to limit God recently?

SATURDAY

July
1

Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand that is on the seashore in abundance [...] God gave Solomon wisdom and very great discernment and breadth of mind, like the sand that is on the seashore.

1 Kings 4:20, 29 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I believe You can do all things. Nothing is impossible with You. Help me trust You. I seek more of Your wisdom. In Jesus' name, amen.

I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work among you will complete it by the day of Christ Jesus.

Philippians 1:6 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You that You continue to perfect me. I trust in You and submit my life to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Which areas of your life do you need God to work in the most?

How Would We Act

BIBLE READING: PHILIPPIANS 1

How would we act today if we *really* believed that God's Word was true, that He *really* will provide for our every need? How would it change our thinking if we spent every minute *convinced* that He never forgets us but continually is refining us, that He constantly is with us to guide us? Help us? Even *perfect* us?

Paul clearly was sure of these truths. He used a Greek word indicating he was *absolutely persuaded* and had *complete confidence*.

He was confident because he knew God from personal experience. They had a real relationship. Paul knew believers might go through temporary challenges, but he was confident God would continue His work until He has *perfected* or *completed* us.

This is a *process*. Day by day, God chisels away at our flaws and imperfections and builds Christ-like characteristics. Instead of giving up or feeling discouraged, believers should learn to depend more on God. We should look to Him and trust Him in every situation, realizing that He knows what we are going through and that He uses circumstances to grow us spiritually.

Throughout every situation, remember these truths. When you face uncertainties, use them as opportunities to focus on God. Have faith that in every situation He is *perfecting* and teaching you. Don't give up or become discouraged. Instead, confess His promises. Trust Him. Let Him deliver you from fear and anxiety and flood your heart with peace.

Our Motives

BIBLE READING: PHILIPPIANS 1

Paul knew there were differences within the early church. Among believers there were different motivations. Some people were inspired by genuine goodwill. But others focused on themselves. A few were not even sincere.

Writing from prison, Paul realized that the most important thing was that "*Christ is preached*." The key was not receiving credit but proclaiming the Gospel, not winning awards or getting attention but spreading the knowledge of Jesus.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus had said, "*If I am lifted up from the earth, [I] will draw all peoples to Myself*" (John 12:32). Reflecting on this perspective, Paul was glad whenever Jesus was lifted. He might have had differences with some people but had learned to rejoice whenever Christ was preached, "*whether in pretense or in truth*."

The Bible urges us to be vigilant about our faith and committed to the purity of the Word. We also are called to recognize that He might use people with whom we have disagreements. We must realize that believers are not perfect.

Focus on spreading the Gospel and lifting the name of Jesus. Do not focus on your personal ambitions but on building His Kingdom. Dedicate yourself and your resources to serving Him. Pray for churches and ministries around the world. Pray that the Gospel would be preached to the ends of the earth and that men and women everywhere would know Jesus.

Compose a prayer for your church and specific missionaries.

Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife... The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely... What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice.

Philippians 1:15–18

PRAYER:

Father, I dedicate myself to spreading the Gospel. I dedicate my time, talents, and treasures to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Philippians 1:21 NASB

The Price of Freedom

BIBLE READING: PHILIPPIANS 1

In 480 BC, a huge Persian army confronted a relatively small force of Greeks at Thermopylae in southeastern Greece. Persia expected little opposition, but these Greeks surprised them with a dedication that Persian King Xerxes could not understand.

What had happened? Historian Paul Cartledge described how the Spartans were fighting for ideals dearer than life itself. What drove them? The idea of freedom. This commitment astonished Xerxes. In fact, his aides had to explain why freedom was so important.

Although the Greeks technically lost the battle, their efforts laid the groundwork for later victories. The Spartans who fought at Thermopylae provide a model of a people committed to freedom. Freedom really isn't free, but it requires people who will stand and fight for what they believe.

Over the centuries, many peoples and nations have waged campaigns to achieve freedom—freedom from repression, freedom to vote, freedom to decide their future, freedom to live according to their own beliefs.

This is the kind of commitment God wants us to have about our faith. Like Paul, we're called to give up *everything* to serve Him. Commit *everything* to Jesus. *Nothing* else really matters except living for Him.

What kind of commitment do you have? Declare you will live for Him without reservation. Follow and serve Jesus.

Journal about your commitment to the Gospel.

Our Humble King

BIBLE READING: PHILIPPIANS 2

As a conquering hero, Julius Caesar galvanized the Roman community, particularly after leading his armies to victory in battles in Spain. Returning to Rome in 45 BC, he was honored with the right to wear a special robe and crown. An ivory statue of his likeness was ordered to be carried at religious processions. A special statue was placed in a temple with the inscription To the Invincible God.

Many revered Caesar, but he alienated others. And on March 15, 44 BC, he was assassinated. But his death only *accelerated* the deification process. In January 42 BC, he was named Divine Julius by the Roman Senate, officially confirming his status as a god. Eager to follow in these footsteps, his adopted son Octavian (Caesar Augustus) began calling himself the son of a god.

Jesus was quite unlike these men! They clamored to be treated like gods. But Jesus, who *was* God, *humbled* Himself and became like an ordinary person. He encouraged us to realize that we can approach Him anytime *just as we are*. He called us to realize He was “*gentle and lowly in heart*” (Matthew 11:29).

Remember that you serve the risen Savior. He is the same Man who was born in a stable and spent His life in humility and service, died on a cruel cross, but now reigns. Worship Him. Follow His example; seek to be a person of humility.

How can you remind yourself to stay humble?

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation...coming in the likeness of men.

Philippians 2:5–7

PRAYER:

Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for Your example of humility. I humble myself before You. Use me to impact people for Your Kingdom. In Jesus' name, amen.

Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being.

Philippians 2:6–7 NLT

PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, give me a spirit of humility. I surrender my life to You. Use me to impact lives for Your Kingdom. In Your name. Amen.

Write a prayer of surrender to the Lord.

Our Model

BIBLE READING: PHILIPPIANS 2

It was a massive composition that stretched musical boundaries. The results were so unexpected that some listeners were confused. Others were overwhelmed.

In writing *A Hero's Life* in 1898, Richard Strauss created a massive tribute to the idea of the hero. Employing a huge orchestra, his composition was grand. The sound was designed to use the symbolism of music to describe a hero's moments of victory and his tranquility at home, as well as his achievements and response to his admirers.

What made this more memorable was that many claimed Strauss had written about himself as the hero. (He wrote several other compositions with autobiographical features.) But not everyone appreciated these apparent motives. At the work's premiere, one critic called it “a monstrous act of egotism.”

Strauss was not the first artist to focus on himself. History is filled with examples of all manner of people who thought primarily about themselves or advancing their own reputation.

Believers are reminded that God hates pride (Proverbs 8:13) and that our Savior was the model of humility. He “*gave up his divine privileges*” and became human. Earthly kings may be arrogant, but Jesus is “*humble and gentle*,” offering refuge for all who come to Him (Matthew 11:29).

Make sure Jesus is *your* model and hero. Like Him, seek to embrace humility, serve God with your life, and always give Him the glory.

At the Name of Jesus

BIBLE READING: PHILIPPIANS 2

Caroline Noel began writing hymns while she was in her teens. But as health problems intensified, she stopped writing. She wrote nothing for many years, but God continued to give her insights even when she became bedridden. Eventually she returned to writing poetry and hymns focusing on conveying these God-given insights. Her hymns encouraged many, particularly those who struggled with health.

She expressed many insights in a hymn she called, “At the Name of Jesus,” inspired by Paul's letter to the Philippians. Here, she declared how she found hope in her relationship with Jesus. As she wrote, someday every tongue would confess Jesus as King, but she hoped many would make Him their Lord right then.

Her hymn reminds us of the power of Jesus' name—the power to heal (Acts 3:6) and power over demons (Acts 16:18). The Bible describes how “*all things were created*” through Him (Colossians 1:16), yet He *humbled* Himself and, in the end, emerged triumphant.

Noel had made Jesus her Lord and hoped others would join her by enthroning Him in their hearts and crowning Him as their captain. Jesus gave us hope in knowing He would return, but He also gives us hope right now, particularly for those who confess Him as King.

Today, find hope in our risen Savior. Remember the power He has given you in His name. Declare Him your King and Lord of all.

Write about the meaning of a particular name of God.

At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth.

Philippians 2:10

PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, I declare You as my Lord. I dedicate my life to serving You. Thank You for the power in Your name. In Your name, amen.

The LORD possessed me at the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I have been established from everlasting, from the beginning, before there was ever an earth.

Proverbs 8:22–23

PRAYER:

Father, I cry out for Your wisdom. I commit these situations to You: _____. Show me how to respond and live for You. In Jesus' name, amen.

What specific situation do you need God's wisdom for?

In the Beginning

BIBLE READING: PROVERBS 8

The Bible teaches the importance of wisdom. But biblical wisdom is more than a collection of information. It's more than a roadmap to understand situations we face or help us make decisions. Wisdom is part of the *essence* of creation. It is the very expression of the operating nature of God and defines how we should respond to every challenge. As the Bible says, “*before His works*” wisdom was established from the beginning even “*before there was ever an earth.*”

To know wisdom is to be in harmony with God and all of creation. It is knowing conditions that existed before *anything* else was created, before people and nations, before there were any problems.

Wisdom was there before the fountains were “*abounding with water,*” before hills were brought forth, or the earth was made. This wisdom was there when God “*prepared the heavens*” and “*marked out the foundations of the earth*” (vs. 24-30). God's wisdom provides us with a foundation for everything in life, helping us live in harmony with God and all of creation.

How do you gain this wisdom? Read and study God's Word. Pray. Humble yourself before God and ask for His wisdom and understanding. Ask for discernment so that you might have a revelation of true wisdom—beyond information, applicable in every situation, leading to a life that lines up with His principles and is in accord with the foundation of creation.

Complaining

BIBLE READING: PHILIPPIANS 2

It can be easy to find reasons to complain. Conditions may fall short of our expectations. We may wish things were different. We may assume the worst and draw our own subjective conclusions. We may complain about the weather, our jobs, politics, or various products.

We think about how the Israelites reacted to situations they faced leaving Egypt. It was hard for them simply to have faith. Instead of believing God's promises, they grumbled about everything. They complained about Moses' leadership (Exodus 16:2) and even about God Himself (Numbers 14:27).

The Israelites must have felt these reactions were justified. But God was not pleased. He desired that they learn to trust Him in every situation. He *always* keeps His promises—though not always in the way we expect. His timing always is perfect even if He may not act according to our timetable.

Our reactions to situations demonstrate whether we really believe in God, have confidence in His Word, and have faith in Him. This is the strength of our testimony. The Bible says simply, “*In everything you do, stay away from complaining and arguing, so that no one can speak a word of blame against you*” (TLB).

How are you reacting to situations you face? Be on guard against grumbling and complaining. If you have concerns, pray about them. Confess God's promises. Be thankful. Declare your faith in Him. Trust Him.

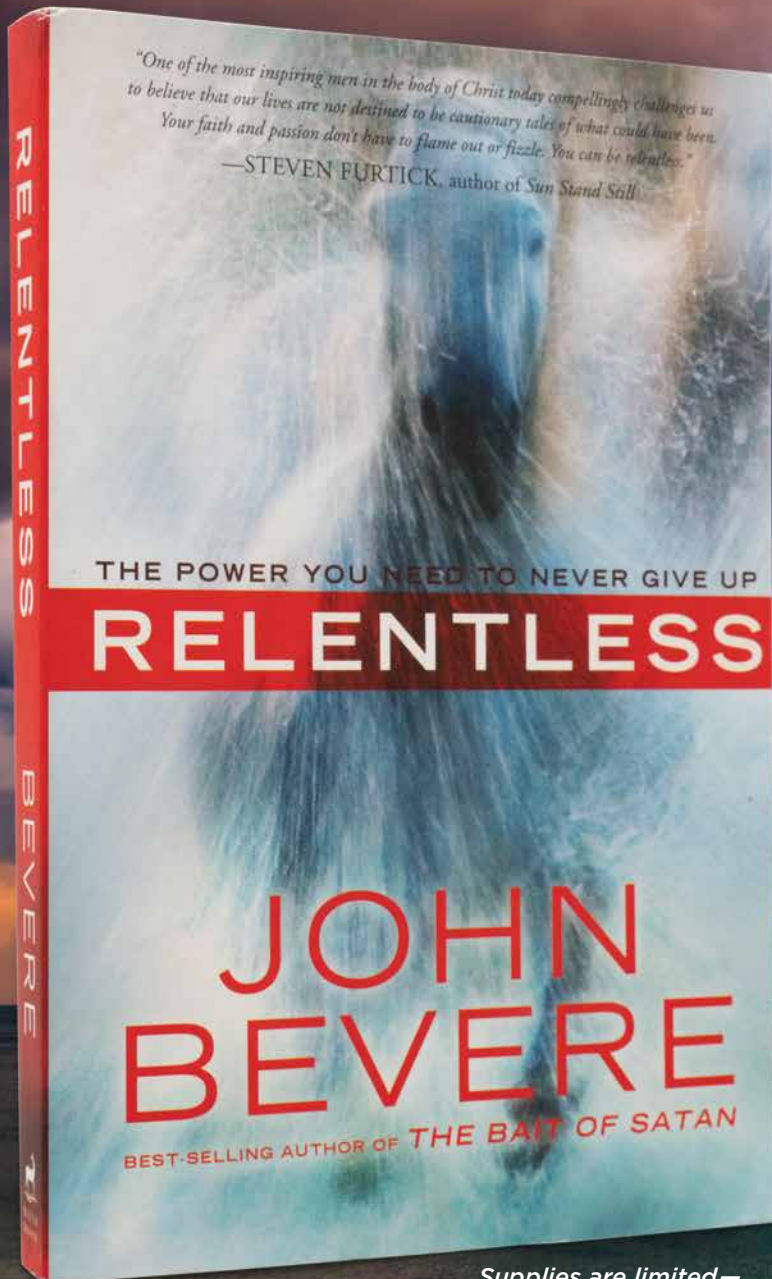
How do you typically respond in difficult situations?

Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.

Philippians 2:14–15 ESV

PRAYER:

Father, I commit these situations to You: _____. Thank You that Your promises are true. I'm grateful for all You've done for me. In Jesus' name, amen.



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Philippians 3:13–14 NLT

PRAYER:

Father, give me a clear sense of the goals You have given me. Help me avoid distractions and focus on Your Kingdom. In Jesus' name, amen.

What's distracting you from working toward your God-given goals?

Distractions

BIBLE READING: PHILIPPIANS 3

Born blind, Ward Marston could have become resigned to a life of helpless dependency. But he discovered this handicap became an *advantage*. Instead of complaining or feeling defeated, he realized that blindness gave him greater *sensitivity* to sound.

He applied this gift to restore older recordings with results that often were startling. One critic commented how the reissues he produced sounded more vivid and lifelike than the originals. His handicap actually *enhanced* his ability to concentrate. He discovered an ability to *focus* and avoid distractions.

His observations confirm the results of a study that revealed that people blind from birth are often able to develop superior abilities at using other senses like hearing. They can engage parts of the brain usually devoted to vision, developing heightened sensitivity.

These insights have relevance for our spiritual lives: We can become obsessed with *distractions* that dominate our minds and hearts. They slow us down, frustrate us, and *prevent* us from experiencing the blessings God has *promised*. They can capture our thoughts, consume our energies, and point us toward the wrong priorities.

Paul advised: *Focus* on the truths in God's Word. Confess His promises. Seek first His Kingdom. Eliminate distractions. Ask God to help you develop the right *priorities*. Learn from the past, but don't be fixated on it. Move forward.

Maturity

BIBLE READING: PHILIPPIANS 3

Bruno Walter became a conductor beloved by orchestras worldwide. A musician once observed how Walter took away fear and gave each musician courage and self-confidence.

Walter realized that his insights developed as he matured as a musician. He commented that, for conductors, everything at first seems easy and natural until they go through a period of doubt and insecurity. This drives them to the need to grow and *mature*. This was the point when the music they conducted began to display depth and escape trivial things.

As an example, Walter recalled how only with maturity did he “understand the depth of emotion” in the music of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. When Walter was “very immature,” he conducted two Mozart symphonies only to realize he was not ready. He discovered some depths could only be plumbed through experience.

Yet he marveled how some young conductors did not realize they needed this maturity. Without it, their interpretations tended to be shallow and superficial.

Many Christians do not realize the importance of maturity. They have not followed the Bible's command to reach for “*things which are ahead*.” They don't press toward the goal “*of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus*.”

No matter where you are on your journey, remember the importance of this maturing process. Don't be content with the status quo or the shallow and superficial. Press *onward* toward God's upward call for you. Go deeper.

How are you reaching toward maturity in your spiritual walk?

Reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind.

Philippians 3:13–15

PRAYER:

Father, open my eyes to what You want to teach me. Help me move toward Your goals for me and grow into maturity. In Jesus' name, amen.

Brothers and sisters, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.

Philippians 3:17 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, use me to impact lives for the Gospel. I surrender my time, talents, and treasures to You. Fill me with Your Spirit. In Jesus' name, amen.

Do you make the impressions you desire on others?

Impressions

BIBLE READING: PHILIPPIANS 3

As a young painter, Claude Monet responded enthusiastically when an established artist suggested he paint in the open air. This approach was contrary to convention at the time but enabled Monet to develop a unique style.

Initially, it was not clear what to call his style. In 1872, it is said that Monet, when asked for the title for a new painting, used *Impression*. Guided by this answer, the painting became known as *Impression: Sunrise*, and his style became known as Impressionism.

Gradually this became an accepted art form, and Monet was recognized as a pioneer. He often painted the same subject numerous times at different points in the day, in different lighting, and in changing seasons, guided by his impressions.

Monet demonstrated that how we perceive the world plays a key role in how we view life. We have impressions of other people and impressions of places we go. Many people develop their attitudes toward life based on their impressions.

Paul stressed that we need to be careful how we live. We should follow the right patterns and always be aware that others are watching us and developing impressions from their observations.

What are the impressions others notice when they look at you? What do they hear when they listen to your words? You have the opportunity to impact people every day. Seek to live for Christ and help shape their eternal destiny.

Citizens of Heaven

BIBLE READING: PHILIPPIANS 3

Sometime in the early second century AD, an unknown person wrote a letter to an influential pagan named Diognetus. This writer had been investigating Christians and reported his observations.

He noted that Christians “are indistinguishable from other men either by nationality, language, or customs.” They don’t live in separate cities or speak a strange dialect. And they don’t “follow some outlandish way of life.”

Yet they were *different*: “There is something *extraordinary* about their lives.” For one thing, “Their teaching is not based upon reveries inspired by the curiosity of men” and not based on “purely human doctrine.”

They may “play their full role as citizens,” but “they live in their own countries as though they were only passing through.” For them, “any country can be their homeland.” He recognized, “they are citizens of heaven” and their homeland “is a foreign country.” Even though “they live in the flesh,” he commented, “they are not governed by the desires of the flesh.”

Through his investigation, this writer identified central facts of the Christian life. As the Bible tells us, we are citizens of Heaven. Our focus needs to be on heavenly things and serving God.

Remember, *you* are a citizen of Heaven. Your *primary* loyalty is to God’s Kingdom. Live so others will see that there is *something different* about you. Commit your life to God. Allow Him to impact lives for Christ.

Are you living like a citizen of Heaven or like a citizen of the world?

Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our lowly condition into conformity with His glorious body.

Philippians 3:20–21 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I realize my citizenship is in Heaven. Give me perspective on my life and the challenges I face. I seek to serve You. In Jesus' name, amen.

*Rejoice in the Lord
always; again I will say,
rejoice!*

Philippians 4:4 NASB

PRAYER:

Dear Lord Jesus, I rejoice that You are my King. I know You reign and rule! I trust my life to You. In Your name, amen.

Have you ever faced ridicule for your beliefs?

Filled with Joy

BIBLE READING: PHILIPPIANS 4

Christians who opposed the Church of England faced persecution in the 1700s. Pondering their plight, Charles Wesley believed they should respond by filling their lives with joy, not with fear or anxiety.

With Paul's letter to the Philippians as inspiration, Wesley wrote the hymn, "Rejoice, the Lord Is King." He reminded believers of the importance of rejoicing. Even through trials, they could rejoice because Jesus was King! They could "rejoice, give thanks and sing, and triumph evermore."

We can rejoice because Jesus reigns, "His Kingdom cannot fail," and He rules over earth and Heaven. "He sits at God's right hand till all His foes submit, and bow to His command, and fall beneath His feet." He has defeated every foe and given His people pure joy.

Because of the Gospel, we can "rejoice in glorious hope!" Jesus will come again and take us to our eternal home. In his powerful refrain, Wesley reinforced this message by declaring we could lift our hearts and voices: "Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!"

Don't allow anything to keep you from experiencing the joy of the Lord. As Wesley reminded us, we can rejoice in Him in every situation! No matter what others say, Jesus is Lord. He rules over the nations. He will accomplish His purposes. He loved you so much that He died for you so that you might be forgiven and spend eternity with Him.

Rejoice!

Gentleness

BIBLE READING: PHILIPPIANS 4

What did it take to impact the first-century world and demonstrate the difference Jesus could make? Paul may have surprised believers in Philippi by stressing the importance of *gentleness*. The Greek word here means mild and moderate, patient and soft spoken, kind and considerate.

This is a reminder of the importance of gentleness in our Christian lives. Gentleness is a byproduct of the presence of the Spirit (Galatians 5:23). We always are to speak with a spirit of gentleness (1 Peter 3:15). We are to be like Jesus who described Himself as "gentle" (Matthew 11:29). Gentleness is to be a characteristic of Christian leaders (Titus 3:2). And we are to remember that a "gentle answer" turns away wrath (Proverbs 15:1).

People in the world may act the opposite way. Some may encourage us to be self-centered or forceful, harsh or demanding, loud or boisterous. But God calls us to be different—to be *gentle*.

There is something disarming about gentleness. It exudes a sense of confidence, a faith that God is in charge, Jesus is Lord of all, and we don't need to boast about ourselves.

Ask God to help you do an audit of your vocabulary. Examine what you are like in your interactions with other people. Ask Him to give you a spirit of gentleness so that others would see the Holy Spirit at work within you.

How do you display gentleness to those around you?

*Let your gentleness be
evident to all. The Lord
is near.*

Philippians 4:5 NIV

PRAYER:

Father, give me a spirit of gentleness. Help me to be kind and loving in all my relationships. I trust in You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

Philippians 4:6

PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, I commit these needs to You: _____. Help me hear from You. Renew me. Thank You for being my friend. In Your name, amen.

How do you need to rearrange your schedule to spend time with God?

An Hour with Jesus

BIBLE READING: PHILIPPIANS 4

Born in Michigan in 1877, Katharine Atherton Grimes became a writer and editor at an early age. In later years, she formed her own business helping other writers find publications for their works. She also was an accomplished musician and even made contributions to archaeology.

Among her passions was writing hymns. In 1912 she wrote a hymn that expressed what she had learned about dealing with problems. It was called “Spend One Hour with Jesus.”

She addressed those weary souls oppressed by sin. Spending time with Jesus will “give your spirit rest.” We can be confident because He has felt our grief and can give us joy. If we are worried about world conditions, we can turn to Jesus. He can give us an eternal perspective on any events that trouble us.

As the Bible promises, we can turn to Him knowing He will supply every need and satisfy the longing of our souls. “Oh, the mercy He will show, Oh, the grace He will bestow.”

We may go through storms, but we can “call upon Him day by day.” Knowing He is our friend, we can tell Him every detail and every concern. Trust in Him; He can send countless blessings and keep us to the end.

Seek to follow Grimes's advice: Spend time with Jesus. Read His Word. Seek Him in prayer. Talk with Him about the problems you face. Silently *wait* on Him.

Filling Our Minds

BIBLE READING: PHILIPPIANS 4

Why do some people have better memories than others? Are they more intelligent? Better educated? Do they have biological advantages?

These questions were examined in tests conducted by the Institute of Neurology in London. Two groups with similar backgrounds were compared.

These tests revealed that there was only *one* significant difference between the groups: Those with superior memories had *developed habits* that led to an increased ability to remember. They *trained* their brains to store and retrieve information.

These results might surprise people who feel they *cannot* change or whose minds are dominated by gossip, politics, and celebrities.

All of us have *choices*. As Paul wrote, we can decide what to “ *dwell on*” or “ *think about*” (ESV). The Greek word here has its roots in the word *logos*; thus it suggests our ability to reason, what we *put together* in our minds, and how we occupy ourselves.

Seek to develop godly thought-life habits. You can make choices. You don't have to be controlled by the media or worldly gossip. Reject whatever is corrupt and displeasing to God and anything that violates His Word.

Fix your mind on things that are true, honorable, and just; whatever is pure, lovely and lovable, kind, and gracious; things with any virtue and excellence; anything worthy of praise. Then *practice* thinking about these things!

Do you need to change the thoughts that dominate your mind?

Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Philippians 4:8 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, help me to control what I think about. Help me fill my mind with Your Word and not worldly distractions. In Jesus' name, amen.

For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities.

Philippians 4:16

Again and Again

BIBLE READING: PHILIPPIANS 4

Paul, writing from prison, told the Philippians how grateful he was for their financial support. Through their giving, they proved they were concerned about him and helped him focus on ministry (vs. 10–13).

In his need, he was grateful for what the Philippians had done. He told them that when he departed from Macedonia, they were the only church to share “*with [him] concerning giving and receiving*” (vs. 14–15).

The Philippians hadn’t merely sent one gift; they had given *more than once*. Some thought it was enough to send one gift. But the Philippians knew Paul *continued* to have needs. They responded by giving *again* and *again*.

Paul focused on their spiritual condition. He knew God blessed them abundantly for their gifts. Because of their attitude and generosity, they were giving again and again. This gave him the confidence to state, “*My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus*” (v. 19).

Today, some Christians give grudgingly to support the work of God. Others feel content to give once or occasionally. But some realize that the work of ministry can never stop. These people find joy in giving and never stop seeking to serve God.

Ask God to give you a generous heart and a desire to serve Him without ceasing. Give repeatedly to support His Kingdom.

How can you remember to give regularly to the work of the Kingdom?

Our Heavenly Account

BIBLE READING: PHILIPPIANS 4

You may not realize it, but you have an *account* in Heaven. You are not saved by your financial gifts or the things you have done. There is nothing you can do to *buy* your way into Heaven. But the Bible also teaches that we will be *rewarded* in Heaven for the things we do on this earth. Paul told the Philippians that he was seeking so that they would experience *increases* in their accounts.

How did they make deposits? By sending gifts to support his ministry. His goal was not “*the gift itself*” but “*the profit which increases to your account.*”

We can make deposits into our heavenly accounts in many ways. Every time we share our testimony, help meet needs, or sow a seed into God’s Kingdom, He deposits into our accounts. Someday, we will reap the rewards of what we have done for Him in this life.

Ask God to show you what seeds He has given you—what talents or abilities, what ways can you contribute to His Kingdom, and what resources you can share with others. It doesn’t matter if you are rich or poor by the world’s standards. God has given you seeds to sow. Just think of all the ways *you* can sow!

Seek to make investments into your heavenly account. Remember, it will pay dividends in this life and into eternity.

How can you add to your heavenly account today or this week?

Even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs. Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek the profit which increases to your account.

Philippians 4:16–17 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, give me compassion for others. Show me how I can invest in Your Kingdom. I commit my life to You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

My God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:19 NASB

Unlimited Supply

BIBLE READING: PHILIPPIANS 4

When George Mueller was young, his father, a tax collector, often trusted him with money, hoping to teach discipline. Instead, George developed ways to use money without being detected. He even cheated a minister out of funds his father had given to their church.

When George was 15, his father was transferred to another city. Left at home, George continued his life of deceit. He used money that had been paid in taxes for a trip he called “days of sin.” But he was caught and jailed. Back at school, he continued to find money to support his unhealthy habits.

Then one Saturday night, a friend brought him to a meeting where he saw people praying and reading the Bible. Overwhelmed, he changed his lifestyle. He became serious about serving God and devoted himself to Bible study and prayer.

He married, and he and his new wife, convinced that God would meet their needs, decided to depend totally upon God. For the rest of their lives, God always provided for them, often miraculously.

As the Muellers learned, God will supply *all* our needs. But to receive the fulfillment of this promise, we need to *trust* Him, look to Him, obey His Word, and live by faith.

Call on God to meet *your* needs. He is faithful. Remember to invest in His Kingdom. Trust Him to multiply your seed and meet your needs.

When was the last time God tangibly provided something you needed?

Jesus Saves

BIBLE READING: JOHN 12

Driven by a burden for children, Priscilla Jane Owens became active in both the public schools and Sunday schools in her native Baltimore. Born on this day in 1829, she found that music was an effective way to minister to children and wrote many hymns specifically to enrich this ministry.

In 1882, she wrote a song called “Jesus Saves” for the children of her church that expressed the *joy* salvation brought her. She wanted them to understand that salvation wasn’t a burden or an obligation but a *joyful* experience. Being saved opened the door to a wonderful relationship with Jesus.

What a “joyful sound” it was to realize that “Jesus saves!” It was such a *glorious* experience that believers should feel delighted to “spread the tidings all around,” bearing “the news to every land.” It was “our Lord’s command” that we tell “sinners far and wide” about salvation.

We may face problems that can cause discouragement, but nothing must stop us from telling others about Jesus. We are to “shout it brightly through the gloom” and sing this message “in triumph.” Even the wind is to carry this message, telling everyone about a salvation that is “full and free,” about this “song of victory.”

Jesus *still* saves today. And millions of people *still* need to hear this message. Dedicate your life to bringing the message of salvation to the nations.

Make a list of people who need salvation, and pray for them daily.

I have come as Light into the world, so that no one who believes in Me will remain in darkness...for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world.

John 12:46–47 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, here are people who need salvation: _____ . I pray that they would be saved. Use me in their lives. In Jesus’ name, amen.

We also... have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will... so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects.

Colossians 1:9–10 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I desire to please You. Fill me with Your knowledge and wisdom. Help me serve You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Compose a prayer asking for greater spiritual wisdom.

Constant Prayer

BIBLE READING: COLOSSIANS 1

Paul began his letter to the Christians in Colossae with a reminder of his commitment to pray for them. He didn't just pray occasionally but *constantly*. It was never-ceasing prayer—day and night.

What did he pray about? He prayed that they “*may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.*” This knowledge was a foundation for success in spiritual matters. It gave him perspective and insight and the ability to make wise decisions. But the impact also was *practical*. It changed lives and bore fruit in every good work.

Paul went on to pray for the power, gifts, and resources needed to live the Christian life. There were many temptations and ways to be distracted. Believers needed to be steady and constant, loyal and faithful, persevering, and always giving joyful thanks to the Father.

Paul wanted believers to realize that God has *prepared* gifts, talents, rewards, and blessings for each of us. We have an *inheritance* ready to *equip* us with the power we need. This knowledge also results in pleasing God “*in all respects,*” fulfilling our ultimate desire to please Him.

Pray to be filled with the knowledge of God's will. Pray that He would empower you to walk in ways that please Him and give you the strength you need. Be sure to give Him thanks.

Transferred

BIBLE READING: COLOSSIANS 1

A major change had taken place, and Paul wanted believers to realize the amazing transformation.

The Colossians had heard the Gospel and the “*hope reserved for [them] in heaven.*” But Paul urged them to realize that a change *already* had taken place. The Gospel “*is bearing fruit and increasing*” in their lives (vs. 5–6). Through the Gospel, they were “*qualified... to share in the inheritance of the saints in light*” (v. 12).

They once were residents of the “*domain of darkness*” but had been “*transferred.*” They were *different* and had moved into a new Kingdom. This was a Kingdom with different rules, different expectations, and different standards—a Kingdom where Jesus is Lord.

They were able to enter this Kingdom because, in Jesus, they “*[had] redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*” They once were part of the kingdom of the flesh, the kingdom of this world. But Jesus paid a ransom for them—and for us—delivering them from sin.

Thanks to Jesus, we, too, have been released. We are forgiven. This transfer is not theoretical but a *complete change* in our attitudes and standards, our words and thoughts, and our expectations and goals.

Remember that you have a new home. You have been transferred; you are no longer in bondage to the flesh or bound by this world. You are no longer a prisoner of darkness. Live in this freedom! Live in this light!

How can you practically live in the Kingdom of God today?

He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Colossians 1:13–14 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for the complete transfer that has taken place in my life. Help me bear fruit for Your Kingdom. In Jesus' name, amen.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation: for by Him all things were created...all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

Colossians 1:15-17 NASB

PRAYER:

Dear Jesus, thank You for saving my soul. I commit everything to You. Guide and lead me. I trust my life to You. In Your name, amen.

What do you need to do to make Jesus the center of your life this week?

Held Together in Him

BIBLE READING: COLOSSIANS 1

How important is Jesus? Much more than a teacher or religious leader, as Paul explained, He is the *foundation* of life itself. He “*is the image of the invisible God.*” Thus, Jesus shows us what God is like and how we should therefore live. To understand God Himself, we need to focus on Jesus.

Not only was He fully man, but He was also fully God. He is not one of many options; He is first in *all* things. He was the agent of creation, “*Before all things.*” He is “*before*” in time, rank, and importance.

Jesus is the glue to all creation, holding everything together. He also is the head of the church. He is God’s instrument of reconciliation, unity, and peace, for “*through Him*” God reconciles all things to Himself, “*having made peace through the blood of His cross.*” In Jesus, there is healing of body, soul, spirit, and relationships.

These truths may not make sense to the world. But for believers, following Jesus answers *all* questions.

There are many options for how *you* live your life, on whom you rely, and what you believe. It can be easy to depend on yourself or other people, trusting in your resources or abilities. But the key to success is placing Jesus at the center of your life.

Make sure He is the foundation of *your* life. Remember, He holds everything together.

Christ in You

BIBLE READING: COLOSSIANS 1

Amanda Smith was born into slavery. Her first husband died in the Civil War. She remarried, but because of her husband’s neglect, she had to support herself and her children, mostly by doing laundry and cleaning. Tragically, four of her children died in infancy.

She earlier had committed her life to Christ but came alive spiritually after hearing a sermon by Reverend John Inskip. His message was “Get God in you in all His fullness, and He will live Himself.”

Listening to that sermon, Smith described how “a wave came over [her].” The words from Paul’s letter to the Colossians echoed in her heart: “God in you, God in you.” In an instant, she knew the key was God living in her. He wanted to rule “every ambition and desire” and bring “every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.”

Suddenly, she was filled with peace. She experienced the power of the Holy Spirit in a *personal* way. She had known pain, and God used her to impact people around the world.

Today, realize that He is the same God who took Amanda Smith from slavery to a ministry with worldwide influence. She learned that the key was depending on God. That same power is available to you. Through Christ, you can do all things. You have no reason to be afraid or worried. He can give you His peace and meet your needs.

How has God used your pain to impact others for Him?

The word of God in its fullness—the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages... God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Colossians 1:25-27 NIV

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for sending Jesus to die for me. By faith, I know He is in my heart. Fill me with confidence. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Paul...came to Ephesus, and found some disciples. He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said to him, "On the contrary, we have not even heard if there is a Holy Spirit."

Acts 19:1-2 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, fill me anew with Your Spirit. Give me sensitivity to His leading. Direct my life. Use me to impact lives for Christ. In Jesus' name, amen.

Compose a prayer welcoming the Holy Spirit into your life.

Power to Witness

BIBLE READING: ACTS 19

As a former slave, Amanda Smith had been set free and set on fire for the Gospel. She faced prejudice because of her race but continued to serve God. In 1870, she felt called to be a full-time evangelist, speaking in meetings, and witnessing in the streets.

During a service in Salem, New Jersey, she was given the opportunity to share her testimony. She felt called to speak on Acts 19. God moved powerfully in this service, and many were saved. She was invited back to speak the next night, and people heard that God was doing something special.

After her message, people streamed to the altar. A revival broke out, lasting for two weeks and spreading for miles around. The presence of the Spirit's power was so great that some could not even work.

Word spread about Smith's ministry. She began receiving invitations to speak throughout the world, ministering in England, India, and Africa. Because of her sensitivity to the Spirit, thousands of lives were impacted by the Gospel.

Today, God looks for people with that same commitment to evangelism—people who realize that they cannot witness in their own strength; people who, like Amanda Smith, realize they need the power of the Spirit.

Right now, the Spirit is available for you. Seek His presence. Seek His power. Cry out for His wisdom and discernment, His anointing and guidance. Allow Him to use you as His witness.

Seeing the Lord

BIBLE READING: HEBREWS 12

In the last words of her autobiography, Amanda Smith prayed that God would raise up "younger women who have talent...to do better work for the Master." She prayed that they would continue the standard "with the inscription deeply engraven on heart and life: 'Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.'"

Smith had encountered prejudices throughout her life. Born into slavery, it seemed unlikely, even impossible, that her life could amount to anything significant. Even after gaining her freedom, she felt resistance because she was an African-American woman. But she learned that *anything* was possible for those who committed their lives to God and had faith.

She realized that living for God is a *personal* decision; each of us has choices. Because of her commitment, she impacted the lives of thousands of people throughout the world.

The Bible reminds us that God desires to reveal Himself to us in new ways. He wants to teach us new *insights* and *deepen* our walk with Him. He wants to free us from worry and fear and give us boldness and confidence. He wants to give us His peace and meet every need.

He waits to see our response. Do we want Him to move in our lives? Do we want more of Him? Do we want to "*see the Lord*"? If you do, seek to live a life that is pleasing to Him. Commit yourself to Him. Serve Him wholeheartedly.

Write a prayer asking God to reveal His holiness to you in a personal way.

Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.

Hebrews 12:14

PRAYER:

Father, help me to embrace holiness and be at peace with the people in my life. I surrender my life to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

I, the LORD, have called you to demonstrate my righteousness. I will take you by the hand and guard you.

Isaiah 42:6 NLT

Take My Hand

BIBLE READING: ISAIAH 42

The daughter of a teacher, Julie Katharina von Hausmann became a poet. Many of her poems became the bases of hymns. Born in 1826 in Riga, Latvia, she worked as a governess but found herself spending more time caring for her father, who had gone blind. She also experienced health problems of her own.

She found herself stretched by these experiences, but they also taught her many spiritual truths. She learned that God was with her in every situation and that she could depend on Him. Her most popular hymn summarized what she had learned. It was called “Lord, Take My Hand and Lead Me.”

She desired to linger at Jesus’ feet and learn from Him so that He would be with her “through night and darkness.”

This hymn became a source of encouragement particularly for young people who were beginning their spiritual journey. It was a prayer that God would lead His people throughout their lives—to stay by their side and keep them from wandering, to trust Him to help them make the right decisions, and to find strength in His presence.

Today, realize that God is by your side. Don’t take Him for granted or rush away. Linger at His feet—listening, praying, sharing your deepest needs with Him. Remember that you always can turn to Him. Trust in Him to guide you and help you make the right decisions.

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for being with me. Help me trust in You. Speak to me. Lead me. Guide me. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Write a prayer sharing your deepest concerns with God.

The Mind of Christ

BIBLE READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 2

God was present in a particularly moving way one summer morning in 1918 during a meeting at Emporia College in Kansas. Eager to recapture the spirit of that moment, some in attendance asked pastor/composer Calvin Laufer to produce a hymn. Laufer was able to compose a tune but could not find appropriate words.

A few weeks later, he shared his dilemma with colleague William Foulkes as the men rode on a train. Intrigued, Foulkes requested to see the tune. He brought the manuscript with him that day and found words flooding into his mind. After returning to Emporia, the two men completed the hymn, and the next day it was sung for the first time at morning prayers there.

The hymn took the form of a prayer of surrender, “Take Thou Our Minds, Dear Lord.” It was a prayer that we daily would receive the mind of Christ and think His thoughts, that He would teach us the truth and help us honor Him.

It was a prayer that recognized our hearts are His; that He would have the throne of our lives and “use us to make the earth like Heaven above”; that Jesus would take our wills and guide our lives; that we would surrender “heart, mind, and will” to Him; that through us He would fulfill His plans

In your life, seek the mind of Christ. Seek to think His thoughts and follow His leading.

Compose a prayer asking God to start a revival in your heart.

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

PRAYER:

Father, I surrender my life to You. Use me for Your Kingdom. Impact lives for the Gospel through me. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Greater love has no one than this, that a person will lay down his life for his friends [...] I have called you friends, because all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.

John 15:13, 15 NASB

PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, thank You for being my friend. I want to know You more and serve You with my life. In Your name, amen.

In what ways is Jesus your friend?

What a Friend

BIBLE READING: JOHN 15

Born in Ireland in 1819, Joseph Scriven faced a series of tragedies in life. He had fallen in love, but on the night before he was to be married, his fiancée drowned. Later, after moving to Canada, he fell in love again and became engaged. But his second fiancée also died before they were married.

These painful experiences could have made him bitter. But Scriven instead became devoted to serving others and sharing the love of Jesus. He gave freely of his possessions and always was ready to help those in need.

In 1855, when he learned his mother was ill, Scriven drafted a poem for her called, “What a Friend We Have in Jesus,” which later became a powerful hymn. Here, Scriven described what Jesus meant to him: Jesus was his friend. He took away “all [his] sins and griefs.” Drawing on his experiences, Joseph could write with conviction, “What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!”

He knew God could bring peace to troubled hearts who seek Him: “Oh, what peace we often forfeit, Oh, what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.” We don’t have to be discouraged when we face trials, temptations, or troubles. We simply should “take it to the Lord in prayer.”

Remember that Jesus is *your* friend. Take *your* problems to Him. Talk with Him. Spend time with Him. He loves you!

Reality

BIBLE READING: COLOSSIANS 2

Composer Maurice Ravel was fascinated by Shakespeare’s comment, “The eye sees not itself, but by reflection.” Building on these ideas, Ravel developed a five-movement suite for solo piano called *Miroirs (Reflections)*. The piece premiered in 1906.

This music blurred the line between reality and reflection, as suggested by the titles of each movement. One title suggested the flight of moths, while another evoked birds lost in a forest. Another gave a sense of waves tossing a small boat in the ocean, then Spanish guitar chords rang out, and the final movement gave the impression of distant church bells fading into silence.

Grappling with a new way of approaching reality, Ravel achieved these colors through music and the tonal potential of the piano.

Some people struggle with how to approach life. Many seek to find reality through material things that can be seen and touched. Others focus on the unseen—emotions or impressions. Some throw themselves into the world of fantasy through videos, games, and other media.

The Bible calls us to find reality through our relationship with Jesus. We aren’t to be confused by images encouraged in the world. Our perspective is to be shaped by faith, which is “*the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen*” (Hebrews 11:1 CSB).

Find your reality by focusing on God’s Word, your relationship with Jesus, and living by faith.

How do you tend to perceive the world?

These rules are only shadows of the reality yet to come. And Christ himself is that reality.

Colossians 2:17 NLT

PRAYER:

Father, help me live by faith. Give me discernment. I trust in You. In Jesus’ name, amen.



Good Gifts

from a Good God

“The Lord has promised good to me. His Word, my hope secures. He will my shield and portion be as long as life endures.”

Most of us are familiar with this well-known verse in “Amazing Grace.” But what exactly does it mean? After all, good can mean anything from *That pizza was good to I had a good time at the party.*

Since God’s character includes goodness, we know that He is the standard for what is good as well as the Giver of all good things: God IS good, and God DOES good (Psalm 119:68).

The ultimate proof of God’s goodness is our redemption: “God demonstrates His own love toward

us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

As sinners, we don’t even deserve salvation, but because of God’s amazing grace, He gives us many other gifts as well, as James reminds us:

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning (1:17).

So, how can we fully partake of all the good that God has promised to us? By coming to God expectantly, as David shares in Psalm 34:8 (ESV): “*Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good!*”

Let’s take a look at several different ways God gives us

favor. First, God displays general goodness to all of His creation. For instance, the sun and the rain fall on the gardens of the just and the unjust (Matthew 5:45). God provides food for “*every creature*” (Psalm 136:25 NIV). Both the saved and the unsaved experience happiness.

Second, God gives His people additional good things, as conveyed through His many covenants and blessings found throughout Scripture. He protects us and provides for us in many wonderful ways:

The LORD bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly (Psalm 84:11 ESV).

But what about all the suffering in the world? Why do bad things happen to good people? We WILL go through hard times. Even Jesus said we would. People are sinful and make bad choices, and we reap the consequences. But, you can trust God with your heart. You can trust Him to write an amazing ending for your story.

So then, what should your response be to all the good that God lavishes on you? You should seek to nurture goodness in your life—it’s a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23). You should also seek to do good for others: “*As we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith*” (Galatians 6:10 ESV). ❖

Meditate on one of the following verses each week this month, and let us know how you will respond to God’s promise of goodness to you.



Week One

“The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”

Lamentations 3:22–23 ESV



Week Two

“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 23:6



Week Three

“Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; for His steadfast love endures forever!”

1 Chronicles 16:34 ESV



Week Four

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

Galatians 5:22–23 ESV



God so loved the world
that he gave his one and only
Son, that whoever believes
in him shall not perish
but have eternal life.

John 3:16 NIV

Already this year, more than
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have responded to the salvation message
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A Merry Heart...

does good, like medicine. – Proverbs 17:22

What kind of person was Boaz before he got married?

Ruthless!

Who was the greatest comedian in the Bible?

Samson. He brought the house down.

Which servant of God was the worst lawbreaker in the Bible?

Moses. He broke all 10 commandments at once.

At what time of day was Adam created?

A little before Eve.

Which Bible character had no parents?

Joshua, son of Nun.

What animal could Noah not trust?

The Cheetah!

Who was the straightest man in the Bible?

Joseph: Pharaoh made him a ruler.



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

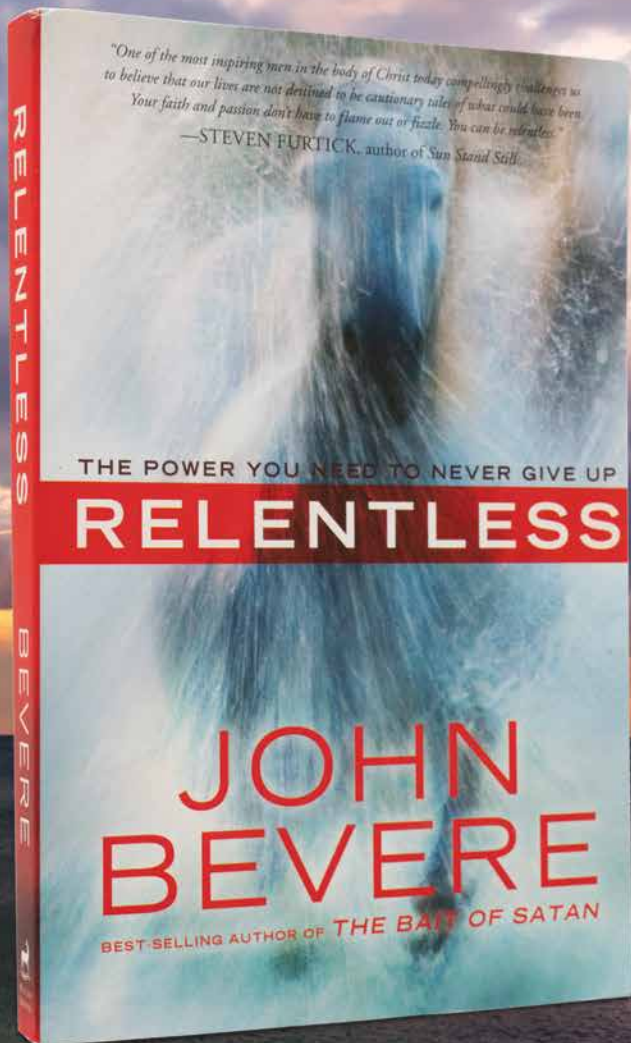
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- Finish well when you want to give up
- Succeed by learning from others

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