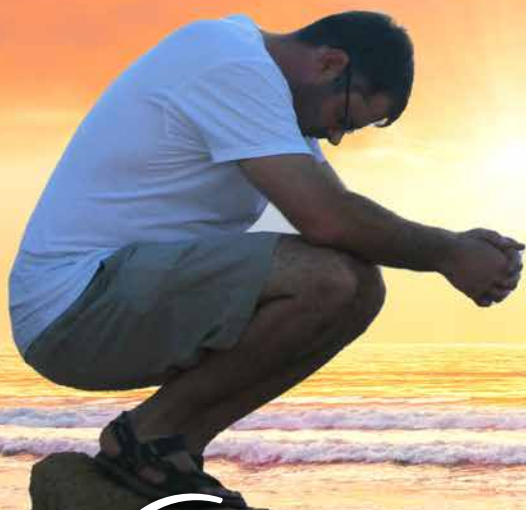


AUGUST 2023

inspiration

M A G A Z I N E



Amazed by *Grace*

The Unexpected
Attack

The
Prospector

Severing the Roots
of Poverty

Amazed By Grace



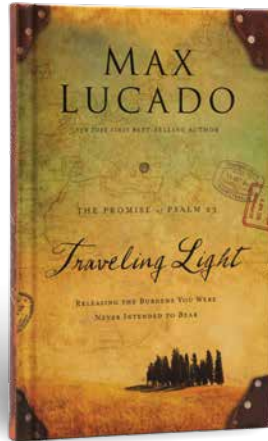
PAGE 10



Have you fallen, failed, or floundered in your life in some way? David Cerullo's article on **page 5** explains how God's grace gives you the power to live fully in His blessings and embrace His joy!



PAGE 14



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



PAGE 18

EDITOR'S CORNER



Rooney Acree

God's so good...and He's working all things for your good even as we speak. My prayer as you read this month's articles and devotions is that your eyes are opened to the amazing grace and power of our Heavenly Father. Remember, He loves you more than you can comprehend, and He longs to give you the fullness of His love and joy. His grace is real!

If you have a story about how our Heavenly Father has revealed His grace in your life, send me a note at editor@inspiration.org. In every part of your life today, I pray the gift of Christ will bless you as you are blessing others!

10 **The Unexpected Attack**

By Jentezen Franklin

You know how frightening unexpected attacks can be. Run to the shadow of *El Shaddai*. Miracles can strike as suddenly as tragedies!

14 **The Prospector**

By Rooney Acree

Discovering true treasure when you're stuck in the mud.

16 **God Has Done It**

Does technology make a difference? Daniel's life was transformed by the Inspiration Ministries TV app.

18 **Severing the Roots of Poverty**

By Ben Cerullo

Being victorious over poverty means laying an ax to spiritual strongholds.

19 **Your August Devotions**

Enjoy God's wonderful grace by spending time with Him each day.

52 **What's So Amazing About Grace?**

In Pursuit of God's Promises

Everyone has sinned and falls short of His glory, but God, in His grace, makes us right in His sight.

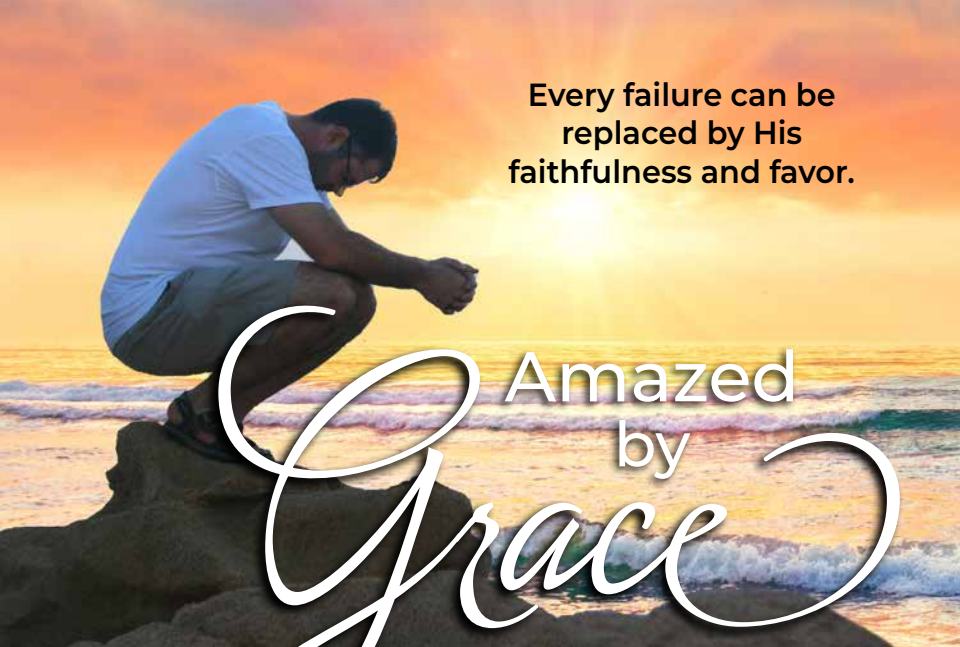


Experience God's Favor

August 7–September 1



Every failure can be replaced by His faithfulness and favor.



Amazed by Grace


Living in the Favor of God with David Cerullo

Experiencing God's favor is one of life's most important blessings.

What exactly is the favor of God? How do you receive more of His favor? Can you be a child of God and NOT live in His favor? David answers these questions and provides you with practical, life-changing steps you can take today to experience a new level of God's supernatural favor and blessings.

Are you signed up for our daily *Strengthen Your Walk*™ videos?

[StrengthenYourWalk.org](https://www.strengthenyourwalk.org)

Find us on 



 YouTube



STRENGTHEN
your walk
with David Cerullo

As believers, we have such a great privilege to bring all of our cares before God's "throne of grace" (Hebrews 4:16). Yet why do so many people allow guilt and shame to keep them from approaching God with their needs?

The Bible makes it clear that God can forgive you and restore you after you've fallen in your faith. As you acknowledge your sins and receive Jesus as your Savior, your sins are forgiven, and you are now free to live your life in His goodness and mercy!

Take a good look at Paul's life, and you'll see a good example of this. Before his conversion, the apostle Paul was a persecutor of Christians. When he looked back on his life before Christ, he described himself as the "foremost" or "chief" of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15 NASB/NKJV). However, instead of wallowing in his past sins and failures, Paul boldly declared in Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."

However, even though the Bible says we have become “*the righteousness of God*” in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21), there is something that often gets in the way of our full restoration: *We struggle to forgive ourselves!*

Do you see how silly that is? The holy God who created the universe declares us NOT GUILTY because of the blood of His Son, but we feel as if we are still under God’s judgment!

Peter seems to have felt this same way at one point. After he denied the Lord, Peter was horrified by what he had done. His old self-reliance was gone, but now the pendulum had swung completely to the other extreme: He didn’t think Jesus could ever forgive him and use him again.

John 21 tells the story of Peter trying to return to his previous life as a fisherman. Reading between the lines, he seems to have figured his days in ministry were over. Instead of moving forward in the purposes of God, he determined that the best thing to do was simply to go back.

Yet Jesus had called Peter to a higher mission than his old life as a fisherman. He was called to be a “*fisher of men*” (Matthew 4:19). In a gentle and loving way, Jesus appeared to Peter in John 21 and gave him another miracle catch of fish (as happened earlier in Luke 5:1–11). Not only that, but Jesus also went on to recommission him for ministry: “*Feed My sheep*” (John 21:17)!

If you have failed or fallen in some way, you need to hear Jesus’ voice of forgiveness and restoration today. Can you see His desire to give you a new beginning and bless you again with His grace and favor? Do you hear His loving heartbeat to restore you to fruitful service in His Kingdom?

The ironic thing about Peter’s failure is that it actually was a necessary part of his future

success. Why? Because the old, arrogant, self-reliant Peter wasn’t really usable by God! It wasn’t until Peter was broken that he could truly understand his need for full reliance on God’s grace and power.

The good news is that Jesus didn’t allow Peter to stay in a place of defeat and failure. After Peter’s denial, he discovered God’s grace in a new way. And on the Day of Pentecost, he became the “*fisher of men*” that Jesus had called him to be—and 3,000 people were saved as a result (Acts 2).

Perhaps you are struggling today with a struggle in some area of your life. If so, the story of Peter can be a powerful message to you. By God’s amazing grace, a new beginning is possible. Your failures don’t have to be final. Every failure can be replaced by His faithfulness and favor.

GO AHEAD...ASK!

No matter your circumstances today, I pray for an outflow of His grace on your life in every way. Our Lord is never caught off guard when we go through life’s trials. He has already provided everything that we need to overcome. This is why the Bible says we can “*rejoice in the Lord always*” (Philippians 4:4). His grace gives us the power to live a life of blessings and joy.

Although He freely gives good gifts, it’s your choice whether to ask Him for His help in the first place. He will give you the power to overcome if you humble yourself and approach His throne room in faith. Nothing you can do in your own strength can ever come close to what God can do through His amazing power.

Ephesians 2:8–9 says, “*It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast*” (NIV).

Nothing you can do in your own strength can ever come close to what God can do through His amazing power.

You need to hear Jesus’ voice of forgiveness and restoration today.

And just as you're saved through grace, you can also live your life in that same grace.

It's God's plan for you! All you have to do is accept His presence and ask for His help in your time of need.

TRUST AND OBEY

If you trust Him and do what He tells you to do, He will demonstrate His power in your life. If you believe in His Word and obey His instructions, He will pour out so much grace that you will hardly be able to contain it.

Remember, your troubling times are merely temporary—they won't last forever. Even when the firestorms of life seem unbearable, you must not give up. Just as God delivered the three Hebrew men from the fiery furnace, He will also rescue you in your time of need (Daniel 3).

The Word declares that even the fiercest trials can have a beneficial outcome: *"May the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you"* (1 Peter 5:10).

Be patient and persevere, my friend! Divine help is on the way. God is committed to working all things for your good—constantly guiding, strengthening, and molding you into the likeness of Jesus (Romans 8:28–29).

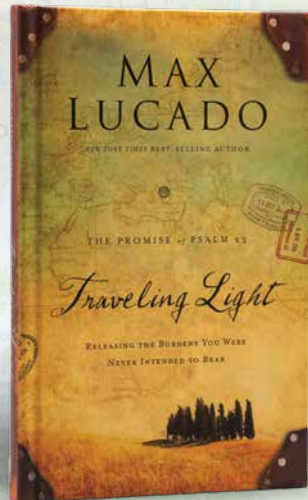
Most importantly, give thanks to the Lord for providing an open window for grace in your life. He will always give you enough grace for today to fulfill His plans and purposes.

Enjoy His blessings. Enjoy His peace. And never forget: You can trust Him with your hurts and frustrations. While you may pass through some dark valleys along the way, your Heavenly Father wants you to have a joyful, peace-filled life.

God bless you!

David

P.S. Don't forget to request our life-changing THANK YOU GIFT this month (see **page 28**). It will help you discover God's amazing grace and power!



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

5.1 MILLION Souls in 2023

THANK YOU FOR BEING A HERO!

Inspiration Partner, through your sacrificial financial seeds for souls each month, you are truly a **HERO** of the faith! Thanks to you and the other partners of Inspiration Ministries, God is doing **AMAZING** things in the hearts of people all over the world.

For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved (John 3:17).

Please continue to spread the Good News of wonderful love through Jesus! Contact us to sow your seed today:

US / CAN / CAR:
+1 (803) 578-1899

UK / Intl:
+44 (0) 84 5683 0580

inspiration.org/souls

God's Kingdom needs more HEROES like you!

After I prayed the sinner's prayer that I saw on the iprayedtheprayer.org website, I felt a peace in my heart, my mind, and my body!

—Marva



The Unexpected Attack

No matter when Satan strikes, you're safe in the shadow of *El Shaddai*.

Moses declared that God would protect you from snakes. An adder lies quietly under a rock or behind a bush and strikes when you least expect it. It represents the unexpected attack from the enemy. When you are attacked by an adder, you say things like, “Wow, I didn’t see that coming!”—that accident, that job loss, that relational problem. “The adder was just lying there under that rock, and I did not see it coming to attack.”

You know how frightening that unexpected attack can be. Somehow the element of surprise takes you off guard. You feel overwhelming fear in that moment. But you don’t have to freak out when the adder attacks unexpectedly. Run to the shadow of *El Shaddai*. You need to know that miracles can strike as suddenly as tragedies! Just call on the name of the Lord!

Do what the apostle Paul did when the deadly snake grabbed his wrist, and shake it off into the fire (see Acts 28). When an adder attack of the enemy strikes you, don’t just let it chew on you; shake it off!

If the adder tries to chew on your mind, filling it with fear, resentment, anger, or unforgiveness, shake it off. Don’t allow him to gain advantage over you by listening to his sneaky accusations. The devil will try to steal your peace and joy, your relationships, and your faith in God. He will try to strike your children, your finances, and your future.

Run to the tent of *El Shaddai*, and allow Him to cleanse your heart from the chewing adder. He will destroy the traumatic effects of the unexpected attack on your life. God will restore to you all the enemy has tried to steal from you.

Satan is a joy robber. His unexpected attacks can chew away your joy. He wants you to get up every morning and hate your life. It can happen to any of us. Depression is always looming over us, but you

don’t have to take it. Just declare, “The Lord is my refuge. The Lord is my life. The Lord is my safe place.” The Bible says that at His right hand there are pleasures forevermore (Psalm 16:11). God wants you to be a happy, carefree child living in His presence.

Satan wants to steal your peace. I prayed with a person who was being tormented by demon spirits. They kept him from sleeping at night, robbing him of his peace. I told him, “There is only one place where you can be safe. You can go to a psychiatrist, but they can’t make you safe. You can try to get relief with medication or alcohol, but you will only find the true place of safety in the shadow of *El Shaddai*, God Almighty.”

I know what it is to be attacked by devils. I have experienced this firsthand. But that is when I run to *El Shaddai*. I pull on His tent cord and call on His name. In that place of divine safety, all the armies and angels of Heaven step up and declare, “He’s under the shadow of the Almighty! We have to rescue him!” ❖



Jentezen Franklin is an author, conference speaker, television show host, and pastor in Gainesville, Georgia, and Orange County, California.

Excerpt from Jentezen Franklin, “Your Refuge from Fear.” *The Fearless Life*, Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2014. Used by permission.

JOHN RHYS-DAVIES KRISTYN GETTY BEN PRICE

The Pilgrim's Progress

BASED ON JOHN BUNYAN'S
EPIC MASTERPIECE



"AN EPIC FAITH-BASED MOVIE. AN INSTANT FAMILY CLASSIC."
-AMERICAN FAMILY ASSOCIATION

Saturday, August 26
at 9 p.m. ET

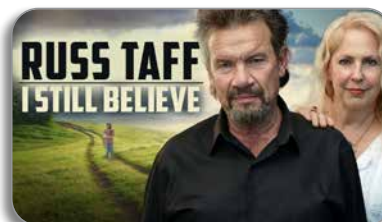
Sunday, August 27
at 5:30 p.m. ET

Wednesday, August 30
at 9 p.m. ET

Watch the trailer at
[inspiration.org/trailers](https://www.inspiration.org/trailers)

Program times subject to change.
Check [inspiration.org/tv](https://www.inspiration.org/tv) for details.

The Power of Grace in Action



Saturday, August 19 at 3:00 p.m. ET

Russ Taff: I Still Believe

Christian singer Russ Taff hid his heartbreak behind smiles and performances. Join Russ in his never-before-shared story of how God redeems broken people.



Saturday, August 26 at 3 p.m. ET

Children of Shanghai

See how an unlikely partnership between a British footballer and the Chinese government led to the first foster children in China's history. With Bear Grylls.



Sundays at 11:30 a.m. ET

Burdens to Blessings

Journey with women who are challenged to quit hiding and be real about the hurts and regrets they carry. You'll be amazed at the blessings God can bring from your burdens!



inspiration | tv.

The World's Favorite
Christian TV Network

Watch free on [inspiration.org/tv](https://www.inspiration.org/tv)
or the Inspiration Ministries TV app.

The Prospector

Discovering true treasure when you're stuck in the mud.



I wanted a souvenir. I discovered pure gold.

I was in the North Carolina mountains on a short trip several years ago and decided to stop at an old general store to buy a gift for my wife. As I strolled inside, I headed over to the gifts and notions. For several bucks, you could get a two-for-one deal on some local honey and rhubarb jam, the sign read. My blood sugar keeps me from indulging very often, but since it was for my wife, and since it was a good deal...

That's when I spotted the prospector. Not a cartoon version from *Toy Story*, but an actual, modern-day *prospector*. Pickaxe and everything. He was tall and thin—a wiry fellow with a gray beard who looked like he had just rolled off the hay wagon.

By the time I crossed the room, he was giving a panning demonstration to a group of kids. I could tell they were mesmerized. In his hands, he held a tin pan that he was dipping into a tub of water.

“Take your pan with your sand, like this. Shake, shake, shake. All the gold's at the bottom, see. When you see black sand, stop. Let it settle. Don't swirl it. When you see gold, you stop.”

It was fascinating to watch him. But after a moment, I remembered my purpose for being in the store and resumed what I was looking at. After several minutes, however, I heard the man say in a low, southern drawl, “Hey, young fella...ever tried pannin'?”

The prospector was looking right at me. *Maybe he didn't*

see that I had no kids with me, I thought. So I said as politely as possible, “I'm just looking for something for my wife.”

He held out the pan, and said, “Go ahead, give 'er a try.”

I begrudgingly walked over to the table and rolled up my sleeves. Taking the pan, I dipped it down in the water and scooped up some rough, clumpy sand. “Now gentle like,” he said. “Let the water do the work. See them black clumps at the bottom? Let it settle, don't swirl.”

I did what he said.

Suddenly, small flecks of gold began to appear in the pan, shimmering like fairy dust. It was an instantaneous *wow*. I was stunned. In the clusters of mud was something very precious and beautiful although it took a good bit of shaking to reveal it. The result was spectacular.

I've since thought about that moment and why that old hayseed wanted me to have the experience. It was clear he knew there was something precious in the dirt and wanted me to know the feeling of

discovering it myself.

I've come to believe our Heavenly Father has that same desire for us. He wants to bring out the treasure of His righteousness and grace in our lives.

He just knows it takes a whole lot of shaking of the grit and grime to do it.

I want to encourage you, when you have a moment, go to your Father in prayer. Surrender all that you have and are, so He can cleanse away any debris.

What you may think of as a pan full of old, clumpy dirt is actually something priceless. Let your Father sift the spiritual grime from your life, so He can reveal His goodness and mercy.

You may only be browsing through life, searching for trinkets and whatnots, but the Lord wants to give you something good and precious. Leave yesterday's mess behind you. Set the promise of His goodness ahead of you.

Get ready to strike it rich, my friend. **You won't find a greater treasure.** ❖



Roone Acree is the senior staff writer and editor in chief of *Inspiration Magazine* at Inspiration Ministries.



GOD Has Done It!

See how our
Inspiration Ministries TV
app is changing lives.

Ever wondered whether today's new-fangled apps make a difference? Well, this testimony from Daniel in Nigeria will answer that question.

Technology can be a love/hate relationship with many people. While it can do many great things, it can also be frustrating at times. That's what happened to Daniel last year. As he was trying to download another app on his phone, the **Inspiration Ministries TV** app popped up on his screen.

As Daniel ate his lunch that day, he began reading our daily devotions. "A light shone into my heart," he says, "then I fell in love with the message because of my broken insides." Since then, God's peace has continued to fill his heart as he reads Inspiration's devotions and feasts on His Word every day.

Despite facing daily challenges, Daniel is thrilled to share his joy with his friends and family members because of "the Spirit and life brought to him via God's Word." Not only has he been delivered

from perversion, alcohol, and drugs, but Daniel also feels a new-found confidence in Jesus.

"God has done it," he says. "My joy is unending because of the Word of God."

Daniel continues to use the Inspiration Ministries TV app daily as a divine resource. It's a "wonderful experience in the revelation of God's Word," he says. His newfound understanding has helped him impact others for Jesus—revealing an amazing calling from God that continues to guide his footsteps.

"Thank you, Jesus Christ, and thank you and your team for making such a life-changing app available to the world. I love you!"

Have you downloaded our **Inspiration Ministries TV** app? If not, what are you waiting for?

It's FREE and available for IOS and Android devices. ❖



Your HABITS Determine Your DESTINY!

"Character is basically a composite of our habits. Because (habits)...constantly, daily, express our character."

—Stephen R. Covey

Our Inspiration Ministries Monthly

Partners demonstrate a powerful positive habit: winning souls to Christ on a month-to-month basis. These treasured partners help fulfill the Great Commission and build God's Kingdom through *automatic* gifts.

They make generosity a habit—and produce a continual harvest of earthly and eternal blessings for others!

It's easy to become a monthly partner...

Seeds sown in God's Kingdom often produce a harvest money can't buy—breakthroughs in health, peace of mind, greater security, or stronger family bonds.

Establish your own habit of generosity today with convenient, automatic gifts. Call now.

US / CAN / CAR:
+1 (877) 578-7979

UK / Intl:
+44 (0) 80 0043 8420

inspiration.org/mmp

Severing the Roots of Poverty



by Ben Cerullo

Having a relationship with Jesus certainly doesn't mean we'll be free of problems or struggles. Life can be tough, and even as Christians, we'll face many challenges.

Most of our battles, struggles, and trials in life are rooted in the spiritual realm. As a result, we must learn to step out in faith and sever spiritual strongholds.

Overcoming poverty is one example of this principle. Jesus taught us that the devil is a THIEF who comes to steal and destroy God's blessings in our lives (John 10:10). Many Christians unnecessarily suffer financial lack simply because they don't understand the demonic strongholds that entangle them.

DEFEATING SATAN'S LIES

Scripture tells us that the devil is "the father of lies" (John 8:44 ESV). Many Christians believe the lie that God wants them to experience lack instead of abundance. Yet God wants to replace that lie with the truth that you have the power to create, obtain, assimilate, or

possess wealth by the wisdom and power of God (Deuteronomy 8:18).

If you're a child of God, the devil has no rights in your life. You need to boldly speak to your circumstances, reminding them that you are a child of the King and a joint heir with Christ. The power of life and death is in your tongue, so make sure your words line up with God's Word.

Don't stop pressing in until you experience the victory you've been promised. Make sure you are taking steps of faith—sowing financial seeds to prepare the way for God's abundant harvests in your life.

In Jesus' name, you have power over the devil, but he's not going to give up without a fight. You must realize the authority God has given you and lay an axe to the roots of poverty and financial lack in your life.

May God awaken the mighty warrior inside of you, so you can pull down strongholds in your own life and the lives of your loved ones. ❖

Sovereign Ruler

BIBLE READING: PSALM 31

John Ryland was influenced by his father. John had moved with the family to Northampton in central England when his father became pastor of a church there. Following his father's example, John went on to become a copastor of the church, jointly sharing responsibilities. Showing continued respect, he often just signed his name J. Ryland, Junior.

He went on to hold several positions of his own, including president of a Christian college, founder of a missionary society, and pastor of his own church.

On this day in 1777, he wrote a hymn that summarized his attitude. It was called "Sovereign Ruler of the Skies." Reflecting on a lifetime of serving God and remembering his godly heritage, he expressed his confidence in God. John realized that He was "ever gracious, ever wise." He had confidence that all life's events were in His hand. There may be troubles all around, but we can trust Him.

He realized God had formed him and would continue to guide him throughout his life. He was with him in health and sickness, in poverty and wealth, in triumph or defeat. When he went through trials, God was right there with him. Ryland declared that he would always bless God, confident that He would provide everything he needed and that He was worthy of praise.

Remember that you serve the Sovereign Ruler, the Creator, the Lord of all. You can trust Him.

Are you trusting that our Sovereign God is really in control of your life?

My times are in Your hand; deliver me from the hand of my enemies, and from those who persecute me.

Psalm 31:15

PRAYER:

Father, thank You that I can trust You. Thank You for Your protection and favor. I praise and worship You. In Jesus' name, amen.

The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

Revelation 21:21

Open the Pearly Gates

BIBLE READING: REVELATION 21

A vivid description and powerful image adapted by people of all backgrounds, it is a vision of Heaven as a place with streets paved with pure gold, guarded by the pearly gates.

This was an important image for Fredrick Blom. Born in Sweden, Blom immigrated to America. Even though he was a pastor, he fell into sin and was sent to prison. There, he had time to think about life, and after leaving, got his life right with God. He put his thoughts in writing with a hymn called “He the Pearly Gates Will Open.”

Grasping what it meant to be forgiven, he wrote, “Love divine, so great, wondrous, deep, mighty, pure, and sublime! Coming from the heart of Jesus, just the same through tests of time.” Blom described how Jesus would open those pearly gates, so he could enter, “for He purchased my redemption and forgave me all my sin.”

Blom described how he had been “like a dove when hunted.” He was frightened like a “wounded fawn” and “brokenhearted.” Yet Jesus had saved him and promised to respond to his cries.

Blom had experienced “His power to save.” He was so grateful that he would “sing His praise forever.” Approaching the end of life, he pictured those pearly gates, confident that “by the precious love of Jesus I shall enter.”

Jesus offers everyone that same freedom and forgiveness. Trust Him today, confident that you will enter Heaven.

What do you imagine Heaven will look like when you arrive?

Direction

BIBLE READING: PROVERBS 3

We naturally tend to trust ourselves, depending on our resources and the things we can touch and see. But the Bible reminds us that serving God means doing the *opposite*. We are to realize that *everything* depends on Him, yield everything, and totally trust Him.

We need to practice this process every day. When do we need to realize that everything depends on God? When we are confident and when we lack confidence; when we feel capable and when we feel helpless; when we have experience and when we have no experience at all; when we face problems and when there don't seem to be any problems; when we feel pressure and when we feel no pressure at all; when we feel strong and when we feel weak.

The Bible teaches that God looks for people who *trust* Him in *every* situation—people who pray and commit everything to Him, who listen to His voice and seek His will, who always follow the leading of the Spirit, who have learned to seek His will and wait on Him, who have submitted *every* aspect about their lives to Him...every thought and feeling, every plan and desire, every problem and project... everything.

Seek to trust God in every situation you face. Despite what other people tell you, despite your feelings, don't depend on your “*own understanding*.” Acknowledge Him in *everything* you do. Depend on Him.

What is the most pressing issue you're dealing with right now?

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.

Proverbs 3:5-6

PRAYER:

Father, I commit these issues to You: _____. I seek Your answers and direction. I trust You. In Jesus' name, amen.

In Him you have been made complete.

Colossians 2:10 NASB

PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, I surrender my life to You. Thank You for giving meaning to my life. I am complete only in You. In Your name, amen.

What area(s) of your life do you still need to surrender to God?

Complete

BIBLE READING: COLOSSIANS 2

What does it mean to be “*complete*”? The Greek word here indicates being made full; *nothing* more is needed. There is *total* fulfillment and *total* satisfaction.

Many people spend their lives restlessly searching to be *complete*. They experiment and seek experiences, yet they never really know how to be fulfilled and satisfied or how to be complete.

Some look inward to the realm of thoughts, emotions, or desires. Some focus on relationships or possessions. But the Bible tells us the *only* way to find completion is in Jesus Christ.

Through Him *alone* we find balance in all the various parts of life. As we depend on Him, everything makes sense. Our questions are answered, for in Him “*are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*” (v. 3). Through Him we realize our purposes, and our lives have meaning.

We are *incomplete* outside of Him. Christ brings everything into perspective. Through Him, sins can be forgiven; we can be free of burdens; we have direction; we have access to God’s power and wisdom; we can have peace and contentment; we can trust Him for all our needs—financial, physical, mental, and emotional.

Don’t allow the world to shape your thoughts. Others may tempt you with ideas and experiences that may bring short-term gratification. But remember, nothing will bring lasting satisfaction or fulfillment except Jesus. Trust Him. He makes you complete!

Free in Christ

BIBLE READING: COLOSSIANS 3

Booker T. Washington was born in a slave hut in Franklin County, Virginia. After slaves were emancipated, his family moved to Malden, West Virginia, to escape abject poverty.

Unable to afford school, he began working when he was nine, first in a salt furnace and later in a coal mine. Determined to get an education, he enrolled at Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in Virginia, walking 500 miles to the campus. A few years after his graduation, he joined the institute’s staff.

Washington achieved a breakthrough in 1881 when he was selected to head a newly established school in Alabama, which became known as Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute. Under his leadership, this became a respected institution, providing thousands of African Americans with a first-rate education. He influenced the lives of thousands of people, helping them realize their God-given potential.

Washington consistently gave praise to God and found strength in his faith. He told one audience about the importance of prayer and that he never went before an audience “without asking the blessing of God upon what I want to say.” As a man who overcame overwhelming obstacles, he demonstrated that miracles could take place for anyone who had faith.

No matter what obstacles you face, remember you are free through what Jesus has done for you. Live for Him. Seek to be an example to others. With Him, *all things* are possible.

How are you using your abilities to impact those around you?

Put on the new self which is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created it—a renewal in which there is no distinction... but Christ is all, and in all.

Colossians 3:10–11 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for setting me free! I celebrate freedom! Help me impact this world for You. I commit my life to You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

Colossians 3:10–11

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for renewing and molding me. I submit my life to You. Finish the work You have started. In Jesus' name, amen.

A New Person

BIBLE READING: COLOSSIANS 3

People throughout the history of the Roman Empire were plagued by barbarians—tenacious people from the north. In Rome's past, before Paul wrote to the Colossians, Julius Caesar had been victorious in battles against tribes like these. Yet these ruthless warriors remained a constant threat.

Coming from central Asia, Scythians, too, were remembered with fear and anxiety. They caused havoc by sweeping into Roman territory, raiding communities, capturing people, and making slaves.

The world in which Paul wrote was plagued with various conflicts. Rome faced constant threats from people such as the Parthians. There were serious rivalries within the Empire itself.

The early church often was divided internally by disputes between Greeks and Jews or the circumcised and the uncircumcised. But Paul said that *Jesus ended every division*.

All who believe in Him are unified. God can save and use anyone. All of us are in the process of being renewed. God is molding and shaping us into His image and likeness.

God is creating new people. It did not matter if someone was a barbarian or Scythian, a Jew, or a Greek. The work of Jesus was so *powerful* that it broke down all barriers.

God is doing powerful work in your life. In Christ, you are a *new creature*. Allow Him to complete His work. He is renewing and reshaping you and making you into a new person.

How has God been shaping you into His image recently?

Our New Clothes

BIBLE READING: COLOSSIANS 3

Everything changes when we are born again. We don't just become followers of Jesus or better people. A total *transformation* takes place (v. 3). We express this change in practical ways. Paul said we are to "*put on*" a whole new heart. The Greek word here often was used for putting on clothing, external appearances that make it clear we look and act *differently*.

This change starts as we realize our new nature. God has chosen us, and through Him, we are holy. We are set apart and different. We should affirm our new reality with the things we do and the choices we make.

We demonstrate this change in our relationships with others, "*bearing with one another, and forgiving each other*" with lives filled with love (v. 13). We don't think of others as rivals but as part of the same body. We are bonded together.

This new life means being focused on the words of Jesus. As Paul admonished, "*Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you*" (v. 16). This enables us to have the right motives and think His thoughts.

We can apply this in all our relationships. "*With all wisdom,*" we are to teach and admonish each other "*with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God*" (v. 16).

Do *everything* in Jesus' name (v. 17). Put on this attitude, just like putting on new clothes.

Can others around you tell that you're a believer?

As those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

Colossians 3:12 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, change me. Help me think Your thoughts and speak Your words. May my life demonstrate the change You have made. In Jesus' name, amen.

*Never give up praying.
And when you pray,
keep alert and be
thankful.*

Colossians 4:2 CEV

Never Stop Praying

BIBLE READING: COLOSSIANS 4

How do we respond when we encounter obstacles we can't seem to overcome? When we face adversaries who seem stronger than we are? When we experience situations that do not seem to have solutions?

We can be frustrated if we have prayed but don't sense an immediate change. It can seem our prayers don't help. These can be discouraging moments. At times like these, we can be tempted to stop trying. But the Bible encourages us to have a different attitude. We're never to give up.

To illustrate this principle, Jesus told a story about a widow who had a nagging problem (Luke 18:1-7). She appealed to the judge deciding her case, but he would not change. Still, she persisted until the judge finally granted her request. He concluded, *"I will help this widow because she keeps on bothering me."* She had *worn him out*.

Jesus told this story to teach us to *"keep on praying and never give up,"* and to be *persistent*.

No matter what we face, we must never give up. We are to *keep praying*. *"Keep alert and be thankful."* Be *confident* that God hears our prayers. Have *faith* because we can trust Him.

Remember to make your requests known to God in a spirit of thanksgiving. When you apply this principle, the Bible promises that God's peace will keep your heart and mind (Philippians 4:6-7). Never give up!

Write a prayer for something you've been asking God for a long time.

Hidden and Safe

BIBLE READING: EXODUS 33

Even though she was blind for most of her life, Fanny Crosby wrote a surprising amount of music dealing with visual elements. It almost seemed God gave her supernatural vision. We see this element in "He Hideth My Soul," a hymn she wrote in 1890.

She could have easily spent her life complaining and bitter. She became blind because of doctors' errors when she was just a few weeks old. Instead, her life was filled with praise.

She wrote how Jesus was her Lord and "a wonderful Savior." She learned to trust Him as she went through life's storms. She depended on Him to hide her soul "in the cleft of the rock," where she could witness "rivers of pleasure."

He would hide her "with the depths of His love" and cover her with His hand. She knew that He took away all her burdens and gave her strength for every trial she went through.

She said that He crowns our lives with numberless blessings each moment. "Filled with His fullness divine," she could "sing in my rapture, oh, glory to God for such a Redeemer as mine!"

She awaited that day "when clothed in His brightness," she would rise to meet Him in the sky. She would "shout with the millions on high" talking about His wonderful love.

Praise Him! Tell others all He has done. You are hidden and safe!

Compose a prayer of thanksgiving for what God's done this past month.

*I will put you in the cleft
in the rock, and will
cover you with My hand
while I pass by.*

Exodus 33:22

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for all
You have done for me.
I trust You and worship
You. In Jesus' name,
amen.

Ever Feel Like a Weary Traveler?



On the journey of life...we all feel weary—if not with our physical luggage, then at least with our spiritual load.

We all lug loads we were never intended to carry. Fear. Worry. Discontent. No wonder we get so exhausted. We're worn out from carrying that excess baggage. Wouldn't it be nice to lose some of those bags?

Join best-selling author Max Lucado as he empowers you to lighten your load with the Word of God. Through poignant teaching, real-life stories, and laugh-out-loud, encouraging truth, Lucado unpacks Psalm 23 to help you release your burdens and experience God's rest.

Receive your THANK YOU GIFT when you sow a seed for souls of \$45 or more.



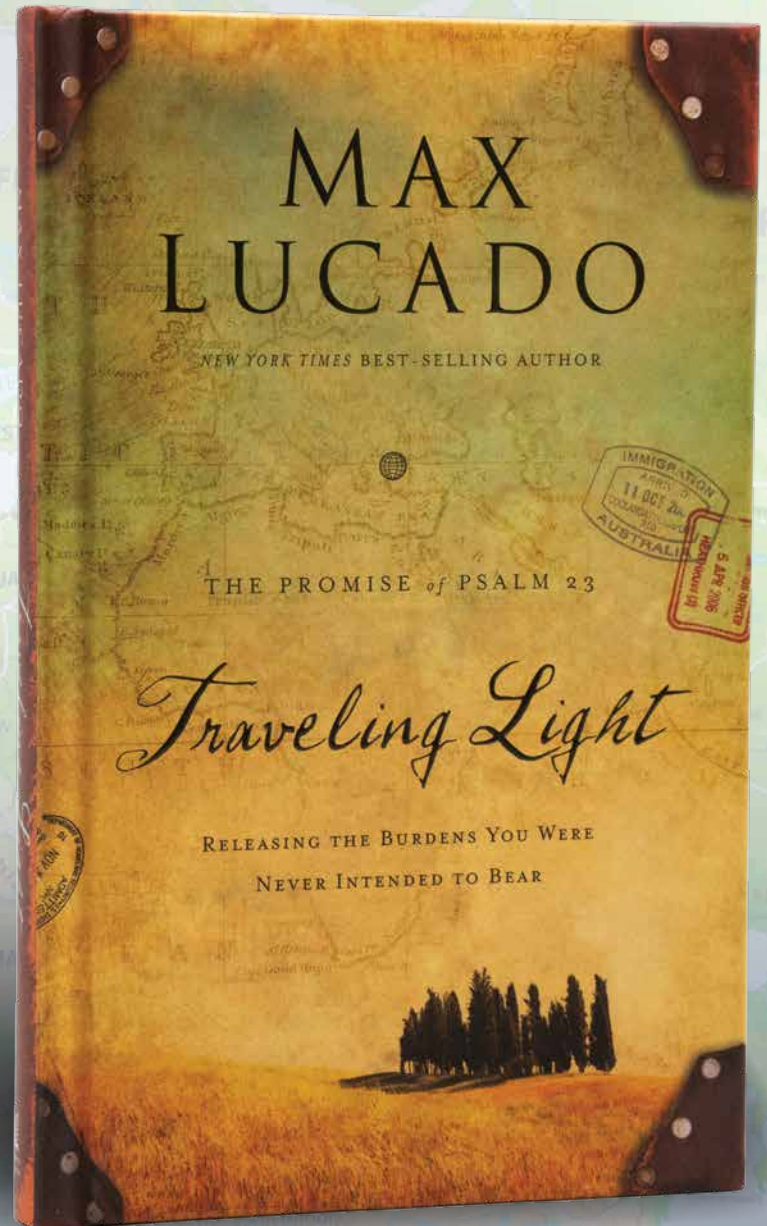
Call **+1 (855) 331-4585**



Go to **inspiration.org/AUG2023**



Send your gift in the enclosed envelope with the **reply form**



Supplies are limited—request your gift TODAY!

They have healed the brokenness of the daughter of My people superficially, saying, “Peace, peace,” But there is no peace [...] We waited for peace, but no good came; for a time of healing, but behold, terror!

Jeremiah 8:11, 15 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I need Your peace in my life. Use me to bring Your peace to others. I commit my life to serving You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

How can you be a peacemaker and a peacekeeper?

The World’s Peace

BIBLE READING: JEREMIAH 8

On this day in 1913, the nations of the Balkans (in Eastern Europe) signed *The Treaty of Bucharest*, ending the Second Balkan War. While this treaty technically ended the fighting, no one was satisfied.

As the British foreign secretary later recalled, feelings continued to run deep. These nations continued to look for ways to exact revenge.

Rather than solving problems, this treaty intensified the frustrations, anger, and divisions. Within a year, conflicts in the Balkans lit a spark that led to the horrors of World War I.

How often the solutions proposed by the world are only temporary. In Jeremiah’s time, some said they understood how to solve their problems and proclaimed a message of “*peace, peace.*” They described how their actions would heal “*the brokenness.*” But the healing was superficial and did not last.

Jeremiah waited for their promises to be fulfilled, “*but no good came.*” He looked for “*a time of healing*” but instead found terror.

Do you want real peace? Remember that the world’s solutions are temporary and partial at best. If you want real answers and real peace, make sure to seek God and obey His Word. Seek His wisdom and trust Him.

Make Jesus your Lord, for “*He Himself is our peace*” (Ephesians 2:14). He heals relationships and breaks down dividing walls. He gives a peace that lasts, “*not as the world gives*” (John 14:27).

The Lord’s Coming

BIBLE READING: 1 THESSALONIANS 1

Fighting with the Northern army during America’s Civil War, Daniel Whittle was rewarded for bravery. He rose in the ranks and eventually lost his right arm and became a prisoner of war.

While in prison, an orderly noticed Whittle reading a New Testament. He called on Whittle to pray with a dying prisoner, but Whittle was reluctant. He knew he needed to get his life right with God.

After confessing his sins and asking for forgiveness, he felt justified in praying for the boy. As Whittle prayed, the boy became quiet. When Whittle arose, he discovered that the boy had died. But his face glowed with peace. Whittle realized that God had used the dying boy to bring him to salvation.

After the war, Whittle might have been thinking about this boy when he wrote “The Hope of the Coming of the Lord,” a hymn inspired by the hope he felt about the Lord’s second coming. This thought brought peace to the heart of many, like Whittle, who had endured the Civil War. This hope, he wrote, provides a sure anchor when we go through storms. It is “a refuge for the soul, where in quiet we may hide us.”

Make sure that you are right with God and that Jesus is Lord of your life. Remember, He is coming again, and you will spend eternity with Him! Allow this thought to fill your heart with hope.

Do you need to make anything right with God?

We always give thanks to God for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; constantly keeping in mind your work of faith and labor of love and perseverance of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Thessalonians 1:2–3 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You that Jesus is coming again. Thank You for giving me hope and taking away my fears. I trust You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Thessalonians 1:2–3 KJV

PRAYER:

Father, help me to be faithful in all I do. Give me Your love for others. I seek first Your Kingdom. In Jesus' name, amen.

How do you react to difficult circumstances?

Faithfulness

BIBLE READING: 1 THESSALONIANS 1

Paul knew these Thessalonian Christians constantly were under the microscope as people all around were examining their lives. As a result, Paul encouraged them to demonstrate their faith in *practical* ways to prove they truly had been *changed* by the Gospel.

He was thankful they were engaged in a “*work of faith*” and labored “*without ceasing*.” But he also knew they could become *weary* of the practical challenges of life. Just going about our daily tasks can leave us *drained*.

It is often difficult to stay motivated. The pressures and strains of daily life can leave us vulnerable and willing to compromise. It can be easy to find ourselves frustrated, tired, and worn out.

The Bible reminds us why having the right attitude is important and why we should seek to be *faithful* in everything we do, looking to God for all the strength and energy we need.

Think about how you react to the challenges in your life and the circumstances you face. Remember that your attitude is a testimony to the way Jesus has transformed your life.

Don't be distracted by issues that might divert or discourage you. Stay focused and faithful, persevering in every situation. Look to God to provide the energy and answers you need. Let your light shine through the things you say and do. Trust God and ask Him to help you to be faithful.

Power

BIBLE READING: 1 THESSALONIANS 1

The Gospel spread to Thessalonica through preaching and teaching. During his visit, Paul had “*reasoned with them from the Scriptures*” (Acts 17:1–9). Responding, these believers realized that the message was the actual “*word of God*” (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

But Paul knew there was *more*. He described the *total* impact the Gospel could have. He reminded believers how the Gospel included demonstrations of God's *power*, how he worked among them, performing miracles, and showing how *supernatural* things happened through the work of the Holy Spirit.

The spread of the Gospel included the work of the Holy Spirit. This was a reminder of the *spiritual* dimension of the Christian faith. The Gospel was not just about words. The Spirit could give them supernatural *discernment* and act through them in displays of power. These were ways Paul and his colleagues demonstrated “*what kind of men [they] were*” (v. 5).

The Gospel still is proclaimed through preaching, teaching, and sharing testimonies. But just as Paul reminded the first-century church, demonstrations of power still are central parts of our faith. This includes believing in prayer and having faith for miracles.

The Gospel impacts *every* part of our lives—our thoughts, attitudes, finances, relationships, the physical and mental, protection, guidance, and our eternal destiny.

Don't limit what God can do!

In what area of your life do you most need to see God's power displayed?

For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance.

1 Thessalonians 1:5

PRAYER:

Father, thank You that Your power is real and available to me. I commit these situations to You: _____. Please display Your power. In Jesus' name, amen.

You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit...you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.

1 Thessalonians 1:6–7 NIV

PRAYER:

Father, help me to be a good example for others. Purify my life. Show me the right people for me to imitate. In Jesus' name, amen.

What kind of behavior would others do if they were imitating you?

Examples to Imitate

BIBLE READING: 1 THESSALONIANS 1

Paul reminded these Thessalonians that Christianity was a *lifestyle*. Following Jesus should make a *practical* difference in their lives. As they learned what it meant to follow Him, Paul reminded these believers that they “*became imitators of us and of the Lord.*”

They learned by watching Paul and listening to his words, using them as models. This was a practical way in which they grew and matured. They could see how they were to live.

Paul provided an example of hard work and commitment. It was a lifestyle pleasing to God: “*You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed*” (1 Thessalonians 2:9).

Paul displayed the kind of care and compassion God desired. He had dealt with them “*as a father deals with his own children.*” He had encouraged them and urged them “*to live lives worthy of God*” (1 Thessalonians 2:11–12).

This imitation process was important for them, and as their lives were being transformed, they became a model for other believers to observe, study, and imitate.

But this perspective also implied a warning to realize how easily we can follow the wrong examples. We need to be careful whom we imitate.

Remember that others are observing your life. What kind of example will you be for them? As others study your life, will they be drawn closer to God by imitating you?

Pure Motives

BIBLE READING: 1 THESSALONIANS 2

When Paul visited Thessalonica (Acts 17), he faced strong opposition. He was forced to leave the city in conditions that continued to trouble him. From his accounts, there were lingering questions about his witness and sincerity and even about the truth of the Gospel.

In his letter to these Thessalonians, Paul stressed the purity of his motives, arguing that his heart was right. Some might be motivated by a desire to twist the truth or please the masses, but the only real motivation that mattered was pleasing God and having a heart that passed His tests.

Paul knew it didn’t matter what other people concluded. God was the only witness that mattered, and Paul was convinced that God approved his actions and ministry.

He also demonstrated that his words and actions were sincere. He “*never used flattery*” and did not say things just to win favor. He was not greedy for fame or recognition. He did not “*put on a mask*” (v. 5) but acted in ways consistent with the Gospel, demonstrating his sincerity. It was important to be genuine, not artificial or phony.

Paul returned to these themes frequently. He knew they were important.

In your interactions with others, remember that people are watching you. Seek to be a pure vessel and a strong witness for the Gospel. Ask God to purify your heart and mind to be sure He is pleased.

Is your spiritual walk pointing people to Jesus?

We had...been treated outrageously...but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel...the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives...We are not trying to please people but God.

1 Thessalonians 2:2–4 NIV

PRAYER:

Father, direct my path. Help me be sensitive to Your leading. Purify my heart, soul, and mind. In Jesus' name, amen.

This is the will of God... abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust...no one should take advantage of...his brother in this matter.

1 Thessalonians 4:3–6

PRAYER:

Father, thank you for taking care of me and those who are being taken advantage of. Show me how I can help them. In Jesus' name, amen.

How can you help those whom others may take advantage of?

Don't Take Advantage

BIBLE READING: 1 THESSALONIANS 4

In the world, we see people trying to take advantage of others every day. We may even see Christians taking advantage of others—even fellow Christians.

If we think like people in the world, we can find ourselves adopting this attitude and feeling justified in being willing to cut corners or be deceptive, looking for ways to get ahead by taking advantage.

We can feel that without this technique and attitude, we will be defenseless, trampled by the onslaught of others taking advantage of us. But Paul wrote that “no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter.”

Paul used a word that suggests being covetous, seeking to gain more or get an advantage. But the Bible tells us that we must not take advantage of any believers. We must not be covetous or put others down in any way.

Though others may try to take advantage of us, our goal always should be to live according to the principles in the Bible. Take up your cross daily and follow Jesus. Seek first God's Kingdom. Be sure that He is pleased with your choices, actions, and lifestyle.

We can be sure God will right every wrong and look out for those who have been taken advantage of.

Ask God to help you learn not to take advantage of others, no matter what they have done to you.

Complete

BIBLE READING: 1 THESSALONIANS 5

Paul closed his letter to the Thessalonians with a prayer that God would sanctify them “entirely,” making them holy and separated for Him. He wanted them to realize that God wasn't just interested in a little blessing but wanted to impact *everything* about their lives.

Paul used a word, used here for the only time in the Bible, meaning to be *complete*. Paul wanted us to see that God is concerned about our *entire* being, everything about us—our work, families, finances, health, mind, and emotions. He will not abandon us when we go through trials but will sustain us, protect us, and provide for us.

Paul wanted them to think about Him as “the God of peace,” particularly as they went through trials and tribulations. But to experience this peace, they needed to have lives that were right with God, separated for Him.

Paul followed up by praying that their entire being would be ready to meet Jesus when they faced Him. They should be concerned about being blameless. Realizing God was faithful no matter what they went through, they could be bold and persevere if they trusted in Him.

Knowing that prayer unlocks God's power, Paul ended this letter by asking the Thessalonians to pray for him.

Commit your life to God. Realize that He desires to bless you entirely, to change and empower you completely.

Compose a prayer asking God's peace to blanket your mind today.

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Thessalonians 5:23 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, purify my life so that I might be pleasing to You. Sanctify me completely. Fill me with Your peace. In Jesus' name, amen.

We ought always to give thanks to God for you... for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions... This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy.

2 Thessalonians 1:3–5 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, use me to impact people with the Gospel. May others see Jesus in me. Thank You that I can trust You. In Jesus' name, amen.

How can you set a spiritual example for others?

Examples

BIBLE READING: 2 THESSALONIANS 1

As he traveled throughout the Roman world, Paul encountered many people and situations. While sharing the Gospel, he also sought to teach what it meant to follow Jesus. His challenge was to encourage and motivate believers—even while correcting them.

We see how he praised the Christians in Thessalonica for the *example* they set for others. They *demonstrated* faith through their individual lives as well as in the overall church. They also had shown *love* for each other that “*grows ever greater.*”

They had grasped these core elements of what it meant to follow Jesus. They realized the importance of living by faith and how they were to be filled with love toward God and others.

Paul particularly was pleased by the *perseverance* they had shown in response to difficulties. Faced with problems, it might have been easy to give up or compromise. But the Thessalonians had *endured* and remained *steadfast*.

Paul reminded them that God knew every situation they faced. Regardless of the situation, they shouldn't be discouraged. They could be confident that God would bring about “*righteous judgment*” for everyone, including those who persecuted them.

They needed to be worthy of God's Kingdom, seeking to please Him, living according to His principles, and never giving in to compromise.

Through every situation you face, seek to stay faithful, trust in God, be full of faith, and be a good example for others.

Responding Well

BIBLE READING: 2 THESSALONIANS 1

Like other first-century believers, the Thessalonian Christians faced “*persecutions and afflictions.*” But what made them particularly noteworthy was their response.

Paul commended them for their *faith*. Instead of being defeated or discouraged, they continued to trust God and *believe*. Their faith became a model for other churches as he spoke proudly of them.

Paul also commended them for their *love*. They were not self-centered and didn't just think about themselves. They displayed an increasing love for each other that could be seen by people all around them, even nonbelievers.

They persevered. Faced with problems, they did not panic or give up but remained constant, steady, patient, and faithful.

They were committed to God's Kingdom. Paul knew God would reward them for their love, faith, and perseverance.

Like these Thessalonians, each of us has choices about our response to circumstances. Our responses demonstrate our true character and our real motives.

Let the Thessalonians inspire you. Seek to demonstrate a love for others. If you experience difficulties, remember that God is with you. Never give up or allow doubt to cripple your life. Never give in to hopelessness or despair. Always believe. Always act in faith. By these reactions, you demonstrate that you truly are trusting God and that the Gospel changes lives.

What about your spiritual life is commendable?

Your faith is increasing abundantly, and the love of each and every one of you toward one another grows ever greater. As a result, we ourselves speak proudly of you...for your perseverance and faith.

2 Thessalonians 1:3–4
NASB

PRAYER:

Father, give me a greater love for others. You are my rock and fortress. I trust You through every situation. In Jesus' name, amen.

This man will come to do the work of Satan with counterfeit power and signs and miracles...every kind of evil deception to fool those on their way to destruction...they refuse to love and accept the truth that would save them.

2 Thessalonians 2:9-10 NLT

PRAYER:

Father, give me discernment to recognize deception. Help me focus on Your Word. Grant me Your wisdom. In Jesus' name, amen.

In what spiritual areas are you susceptible to being fooled?

Spiritual Placebos

BIBLE READING: 2 THESSALONIANS 2

By definition, a placebo is a substance with no inherent medicinal capabilities, given to fool patients into thinking they are taking genuine medicine. Their minds are *tricked*.

But research reports that some scientists have found ways to bring real health benefits from placebos. They have been proven to help even when patients knew they were taking a placebo.

Fake medicine has an impact because it boosts the connection between the brain and body, activating aspects of the healing process. It can trigger the same response as real medicine. So effective is this procedure that some doctors said they have prescribed placebos for their patients.

In the spiritual realm, many people are *fooled* by various kinds of fakes. Our enemy, Satan, specializes in *counterfeits*, trying to *deceive* and *fool* us. The Bible says, "*Satan disguises himself as an angel of light*" (2 Corinthians 11:14). He tries to *trick* us with displays of "*counterfeit power*" and even "*signs and miracles*."

He seeks to "*use every kind of evil deception*." He promises solutions that might seem to work but that ultimately point us in the wrong direction. He works to deceive us into believing his lies.

Stay on guard from this kind of deception. Don't be fooled. Fill your heart and mind with God's Word. It is *the truth*. It provides answers that *really* work. Seek to stay sensitive to the Holy Spirit, always alert and prayerful.

Stand Fast

BIBLE READING: 2 THESSALONIANS 2

What happens when our problems seem to linger, and we don't see immediate solutions? Many issues believers face are long term with no end in sight.

This can become particularly puzzling for Christians who believe God can meet our needs. When we have taken steps of faith and tried to trust Him, what happens when we do not see results? Instead of continuing to believe in God, we can want to give up. Instead of being confident, we can become filled with doubt.

Knowing that believers in Thessalonica faced these tendencies, Paul told them they needed to "*stand fast*." This meant persevering and not giving up hope, even if they didn't see the results they were expecting. They were not to doubt, regardless of circumstances.

This applies to you too! What happens if you haven't seen the results you were hoping for, or your prayers don't seem to be answered? These are times to stand fast and persevere. These are times to continue obeying God and believing His Word, not being discouraged, and remembering that His promises are true for you. He is faithful and will keep His Word.

Keep believing God's Word. Declare every promise to be true for you. Keep putting His principles into practice. Keep sowing seeds with your time, talents, and treasures, assured that you will reap a harvest if you persevere. Continue to be faithful, confident that He will reward you and meet every need.

For what breakthrough have you been praying for a long time?

Stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught... May our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father... comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.

2 Thessalonians 2:15-17

PRAYER:

Father, help me not to be distracted or discouraged. I will not give up or compromise. I stand fast upon Your Word. In Jesus' name, amen.

We hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies... we command and exhort... to work peacefully and eat their own bread... brothers and sisters, do not grow weary of doing good.

2 Thessalonians 3:11–13 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I commit my time, talents, and treasures to You. Help me to be faithful and disciplined. May my life please You. In Jesus' name, amen.

How are you stewarding the resources God's given you?

A Disciplined Life

BIBLE READING: 2 THESSALONIANS 3

The supernatural was a central part of Paul's ministry; he frequently taught about God's power and demonstrated miracle-working power. But he was also concerned about practical matters.

For example, in writing to Christians in Thessalonica, he stressed the importance of living a *disciplined life*. He heard that some believers were "*undisciplined*." The Greek word here has its roots in the military, referring to the response of soldiers to a commander.

As believers, we are to be like soldiers who obey their commander. We are to recognize that we have been given assignments and resources. God looks to see how we respond and whether we are faithful and good stewards of our time, energies, and resources.

Paul knew some believers did not have this discipline, "*doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies*." Paul instructed these people to put the gifts God had given them into practice and be good examples for others.

Being a Christian was not an excuse for laziness. Even those who are born again still should put their gifts and talents into practice. All of us should "*work peacefully and eat [our] own bread*."

Paul knew subjects like discipline can seem unspiritual. His instruction: We must not "*grow weary of doing good*." We need to stay faithful and be good stewards of the resources God has given us, living disciplined lives, pleasing God with our choices, and being good examples for others.

What Do You Want?

BIBLE READING: JOHN 5

One day, Jesus confronted a man who had been ill for 38 years. In a sense, this man must have believed God could heal him, for he continued to wait and believe. Yet at the same time, he seemed content with his infirmity. He just kept waiting. Finally, he came face-to-face with Jesus, who asked him a simple question: "*Do you wish to get well?*"

The word here translated well implies being completely whole; sound in body, soul, and spirit. It can include mental and emotional health and physical and spiritual health.

This man symbolizes people who have needs but in one way or another, have become content with their conditions. They don't believe change is possible. They have given up hope. They aren't sure what to think.

What would you do today if you heard Jesus ask you, "Do you want to get well?" Do you *really* believe He can solve your problems? Ask yourself if you are content to live with the problems you face. Do you *really* believe He can intervene in your life and change your circumstances?

The example of this sick man is a reminder that Jesus is ready to hear you and help you, right now. He is standing by your side, ready to heal and deliver, protect and provide. Tell Him what you need. Don't doubt, but have faith. With Him, all things are possible.

Write a prayer to commit a long-standing need to God.

A man...had been ill for thirty-eight years...“Do you wish to get well?” The sick man answered Him, “Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool”...“Get up, pick up your pallet and walk.” Immediately the man became well.

John 5:5–9 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I commit these needs to You: _____. I believe You want to help me. Thank You for health, provision, and abundant blessing. In Jesus' name, amen.

The Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing [...] I can do nothing on My own...I do not seek My own will but the will of Him who sent Me.

John 5:19, 30 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I commit these issues to You: _____. I seek Your direction. I wait on You. I desire to do Your will. In Jesus' name, amen.

What issue or problem do you need to commit to God to discover His will?

The Father's Will

BIBLE READING: JOHN 5

Some followers of Jesus were puzzled. They could not understand why He didn't seem to be more aggressive. It even seemed that Jesus was reluctant to act.

He was criticized for not promoting Himself more aggressively and not doing more to gain disciples and take advantage of the attention He received. To them, *"No one does anything in secret when he himself is striving to be known publicly"* (John 7:4).

But Jesus was teaching them important lessons. He demonstrated the importance of being sensitive to God's timing, *waiting* for the right time, not acting on our own but pausing until God reveals His will—His purposes, what He wants us to do, and when He wants us to act.

Even though He was the Son of God, Jesus taught that He could do *"nothing of Himself"*. He constantly watched to see what the Father was doing and stayed sensitive to what the Father wanted Him to do *every* moment. Jesus said He could not do *anything* on His own initiative. His sole desire was to do the will of the Father and accomplish His purposes in every situation.

These are critical issues for every believer. We are called to commit *every* situation to God, seek His guidance, and be sure we have His direction. We are to be sensitive to the Spirit, always committed to doing His will.

Be sure you are sensitive, waiting, and listening.

Who Influences You?

BIBLE READING: 1 KINGS 12

The Bible gives many examples of the importance of having the right influences and being careful who we allow to advise us. To whom do we listen when we need to make a decision? We learn much about this process from examining the life of Rehoboam.

Rehoboam could have had the best advice possible. The grandson of David and son of Solomon, he could have drawn on the legacy they provided him. He became king of Israel at a time when sensitive issues were being debated. He needed to know what to do.

As he debated his options, he should have listened to the recommendations of Israel's elders and considered their perspective. He should have sought God for discernment or applied insights taught by his father: how to make decisions and how to avoid mistakes. Instead, he turned to his friends who guided him in the wrong direction. The result was a disaster and the division of the kingdom of Israel.

Who are the people who are helping to shape *your* life? Parents? Relatives? The characters in the media and the lifestyles they encourage? The advice you receive from social media? The opinions expressed by friends?

You have a choice about who you allow to influence you. Be careful to whom you listen. Remember to place your confidence in God. Stand on His Word and seek His guidance. Stay sensitive to His Spirit. Trust Him to help you make wise decisions.

To whom do you turn for advice and guidance?

Rehoboam rejected the advice of the older men and instead asked the opinion of the young men who had grown up with him and were now his advisers.

1 Kings 12:8 NLT

PRAYER:

Father, I seek Your wisdom and discernment. I submit these choices to You: _____. I trust in You. In Jesus' name, amen.

God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good.

Genesis 1:31

Bright and Beautiful

BIBLE READING: GENESIS 1

Words were important for Cecil Alexander. As a girl in Ireland, she wrote poetry in her school journals. As an adult she showed her concern for disadvantaged people by traveling long distances to visit the sick and poor, providing food, warm clothes, and medical supplies. Cecil and her sister also founded a school for the deaf.

She continued to spend much of her time writing. Her first book of poetry was *A Christian Year*. Providing a resource for children, she wrote hymns based on key days in the church year, all written in simple language.

One of her most endearing hymns called “All Things Bright and Beautiful” focused on the beauty of creation. She described how God made “all creatures great and small, all things wise and wonderful.”

He created “each little flower” and “each little bird that sings.” He made the glowing colors of each creature. He made the mountains and rivers. He made the cold of winter, “the pleasant summer sun,” as well as the ripe fruits in the garden. We see the hand of God in the “tall trees” and “the meadows where we play.” He made them every one.

Then He made it possible for all of us to share in these glories, giving us eyes to see and “lips that we might tell how great is God Almighty.”

Pause for a moment to think about God’s creation. Thank Him. Praise Him.

What is your favorite part of God’s creation and why?

Come, Holy Spirit

BIBLE READING: ACTS 1

Although his father was a minister, Benjamin Beddome wanted to pursue a career in medicine. But that changed one Sunday when he heard a sermon describing the joy in Heaven when a sinner is converted (Luke 15:7). Feeling convicted, he gave his life to Christ. He was so radically changed that he dedicated his life to the Lord, desiring to bring salvation to lost souls.

For more than 50 years, Beddome pastored a church in south-central England. There he wrote a hymn for each of his sermons to be sung at the close of each Sunday service to reinforce his messages.

Listening to one of his hymns, “Come, Holy Spirit, Come,” we can imagine sermons about the Spirit. Here he described how, without the Spirit, his heart could be frozen and unresponsive, but the Spirit could melt away that coldness.

He discovered how the Spirit made him new. He was so grateful for the wonderful ways the Spirit changed him; he rejoiced and gave praise to God, devoting himself to God’s service.

Celebrate the many ways the Spirit can impact your life. He can lead and guide you (John 16:13) and fill you with His power. He can give you peace and love, kindness, and joy (Galatians 5:22). Seek the refreshing work of the Spirit. Yield to His presence. Wait on Him. Make this your prayer: Come, Holy Spirit. Come!

How have you felt the power of the Holy Spirit recently?

You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

Acts 1:8

PRAYER:

Father, fill me anew with Your Spirit. Change me. Empower me. Use me to impact others with the Gospel. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Keep me as the apple of Your eye; hide me under the shadow of Your wings.

Psalm 17:8

PRAYER:

Father, throughout this day, may I trust in You. May my life bring You praise. I worship You. In Jesus' name, amen.

How can you praise God each night for His daily blessings?

All Praise to God!

BIBLE READING: PSALM 17

Thomas Ken lived in complicated times. He was born in 1637, a time of conflict between Protestants and Catholics. He was a pastor, college chaplain, and bishop. He got into trouble because he refused to compromise. A man of conscience, he was willing to resist political pressure for the sake of his convictions.

Believing in the power of praise-filled hymns, he encouraged believers to begin and end each day singing God's praises. One of his most-loved hymns was the evening prayer, "All Praise to Thee." This prayer of remembering praised God "for all the blessings of the light." It was a prayer that God would keep him "beneath Thine own almighty wings."

It was a prayer that God would forgive his mistakes. Going forward, he wanted to be sure God was pleased with his choices, so he would be ready to face Him. He looked forward to spending eternity with Him, joining the angels as they sang His praises. He prayed that while on earth, God would give him peace and protect him from the powers of darkness.

Like many of his hymns, he closed by quoting the doxology, "Praise God, From Whom All Blessings Flow." It was a call for all of us to praise "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

Ken's life leaves us with these examples: Always trust God. Always do what is right. Fill your life with praise. Be sure God gets all the glory.

A Child of the King

BIBLE READING: ROMANS 8

In 1876 Harriet E. Buell (Hattie) traveled to Thousand Island Park in New York to attend a Bible conference where she heard a speaker describe being an heir of God. "Christian friends," he cried, "we are the children of a King!"

These words made a dramatic impact on Buell who soon wrote a poem inspired by the message. It was called "A Child of the King." When the poem was published, it attracted the attention of John Sumner who added music to the poem, creating a powerful hymn.

Buell describes her realization that "My Father is rich in houses and lands." He holds "the wealth of the world in His hands!" He has riches untold, and His "coffers are full" of rubies, diamonds, silver, and gold.

What amazed her was that she was a child of the King and that Jesus was her Savior. Looking at her own life, she realized she was once an outcast stranger, "A sinner by choice, an alien by birth." But thanks to Jesus, she had been adopted into God's family, and she was "an heir to a mansion, a robe, and a crown."

She knew He would provide for her on earth but also was preparing a palace for her where she would spend eternity. She could sing, "All glory to God, I'm a child of the King."

Remember that you are a child of the King!

What difference should knowing you're a child of the King make in your life?

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

Romans 8:16–17

PRAYER:

Father, thank You that I am Your child. Thank You for meeting my needs. I trust You. In Jesus' name, amen.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

Romans 12:1

PRAYER:

Dear Lord Jesus, I dedicate my life to serving You. May You get the praise from my life. In Your name, amen.

How are you serving Jesus this week?

All for Jesus

BIBLE READING: ROMANS 12

Mary James was born again at a revival meeting. She was so transformed that she spent the rest of her life serving Jesus. We sense her conviction in a hymn she wrote in 1889 called “All for Jesus.” Here, she expressed her desire to point others to Jesus, declaring that everything she did would be for Him: “All my thoughts and words and doings, all my days and all my hours.”

She prayed that her hands would “perform His bidding” that her feet would “run in His ways,” that her eyes would “see Jesus only,” and her lips would “speak forth His praise.”

People in the world might “prize their gems of beauty, cling to gilded toys of dust, boast of wealth and fame and pleasure.” But she trusted Jesus, fixing her eyes on Him, totally consumed by Him.

Overwhelmed by what Jesus had done for her, she was *amazed* that the “glorious King of kings” would call her His beloved and let her rest beneath His wings.

Others talked about her “winning smile,” but she just wanted others to see Jesus. Approaching death, she stressed that she wanted the focus to be on Jesus. Summarizing her life, she declared, “Please don’t exalt me. Exalt Christ. I am of no account; let Christ be all in all.”

Can you say all you do is for Jesus? Commit everything in your life to serving Him.

Rivalry

BIBLE READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 1

The church in Corinth was being torn apart. Divisions pitted groups against each other. The disputes were so intense that Paul heard an account from miles away. The problem? There was *rivalry* among them. This led to conflicts regarding direction and leadership. Some declared allegiance to Paul. Others said they followed Cephas or Apollos (vs. 12–13). There were questions about responsibilities.

These factors can infect any group of believers, churches or ministries, marriages or families. The answer? Submit to the lordship of Jesus and boast only in Him (v. 31). Focus on Him, and be sure He is preeminent. He is the *foundation* for our lives (1 Corinthians 2:1–5).

Seek God’s wisdom, not ideas that may seem popular in the world. Focus on harmony with other believers, and make “*every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace*” (Ephesians 4:3).

We stay on track as we hunger for the Word. Pray for other believers, particularly those with whom we might have differences. Have the attitude of a servant and dedicate yourself to the tasks God has given to us. Treat other believers as coworkers, not rivals. Look to God for your rewards (1 Corinthians 3:1–9).

Do you feel a spirit of rivalry with other believers? Or are you united with Jesus as your Lord? Pray for those with whom you might have differences. Focus on serving Jesus.

Do you need to recommit to having a servant’s attitude?

I urge you...in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree in what you say, that there be no divisions among you, and that you be united with the same understanding and the same conviction.

1 Corinthians 1:10 CSV

PRAYER:

Father, I humble myself before You. Help me have the attitude of a servant. I seek the unity of the body. In Jesus’ name, amen.

What's So Amazing About Grace?

How often do you sing the famous hymn “Amazing Grace” without even considering the words? It’s easy to do! Yet, if you stop to reflect on what grace really is, you’d probably be writing your own version of “Amazing Grace.”

You may not have been a slave trader like John Newton, the composer, but in God’s eyes, ALL sin is just sin. Gossiping—even under the guise of a prayer request—is just as bad as murder. Pride is just as bad as stealing. The truth is, no one—you, me, your pastor—is deserving of God’s grace. That’s what makes it grace; it’s unearned and unmerited.

What makes grace so completely amazing? God lavishes grace

on us. He is not stingy. The apostle Paul says, “*In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us*” (Ephesians 1:7–8 ESV).

Because of His great love toward us, God freely gives us gifts of salvation, sufficiency, spiritual blessings, and more!

Salvation—We can do nothing to earn salvation or any of God’s other good gifts. He bestows them on us because He is a gracious God.

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God (Ephesians 2:8).

Sufficiency—God’s grace is enough for whatever we need. God enables believers to do His will through grace. He enables us to endure hardships for the sake of the Gospel through grace. He enables us to be strong and full of joy in the midst of life’s difficulties through grace.

But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9 ESV).

God’s grace is sufficient to forgive the sins we commit after becoming believers. Now, this doesn’t mean that we can deliberately sin over and over again (Romans 6:15). But when we do sin, God will wipe our slate clean...again. (1 John 1:9).

Spiritual Blessings—God loves to bless all His children. The sun rises and sets every day. Beautiful flowers abound in the summer. We have food and a warm bed.

Grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift (Ephesians 4:7 ESV).

But God also gives special spiritual gifts to each believer. Each of us receives a spiritual gift at salvation that we otherwise would not have.

How should we react to God’s grace? We should be overflowing with gratitude for the grace God lavishes on us. We need to be gracious when we are asked to use those gifts for the benefit of others and, ultimately, for God’s glory. ❖

Discover God’s grace in these verses and let us know how it changes your life! Meditate on one verse each week this month.



Week One

“From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”

John 1:16–17 ESV



Week Two

“For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.”

Romans 6:14 ESV



Week Three

“Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

Hebrews 4:16 ESV



Week Four

“The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.”

Numbers 6:24–26 ESV

The Most Beautiful Words You'll Ever Hear

"Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord."

—Matthew 25:21

After a life well lived, faithfully investing your time, talents, and treasures into God's Kingdom, you can look forward to hearing these wonderful words! Commended by your Lord, you will enter joyfully into His presence, knowing you held nothing back during your days on earth.

Even today, you can have confidence that you're making a difference in the lives of people all over the world through your partnership with Inspiration Ministries.

To find out more about how you can continue winning souls through Inspiration Ministries through your Will and Estate Plan, contact our Legacy Planning Team TODAY!



And here's how your legacy of soul winning can continue...

Through your Christian Will and Estate Plan, you can *continue* winning people to Christ even after you go home to be with the Lord. Perhaps you'll win even *more* souls through your bequests than you did in an entire lifetime of faithful giving!

What a powerful testimony to your loved ones and to lost people around the world.

US / CAN / CAR:
+1 (855) 702-7042

inspirationPG.org



A Merry Heart...

does good, like medicine. — Proverbs 17:22

Bent over and obviously in pain, the old man with a cane hobbled laboriously through the sanctuary and into the pastor's office while the choir was practicing.

Ten minutes later he came out, walking upright and moving with grace and speed.

"Good gracious," the choir director exclaimed. "Did the pastor heal you by faith?"

"No," the old man said with a smile. "He just gave me a cane that wasn't six inches too short!"



A Sunday school teacher was teaching her class about the difference between right and wrong.

"All right children, let's take another example," she said. "If I were to get into a man's pocket and take his billfold with all his money, what would I be?"

Little Johnny raises his hand, and with a confident smile, he blurts out, "You'd be his wife!"



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

Email it to:
MerryHeart@inspiration.org



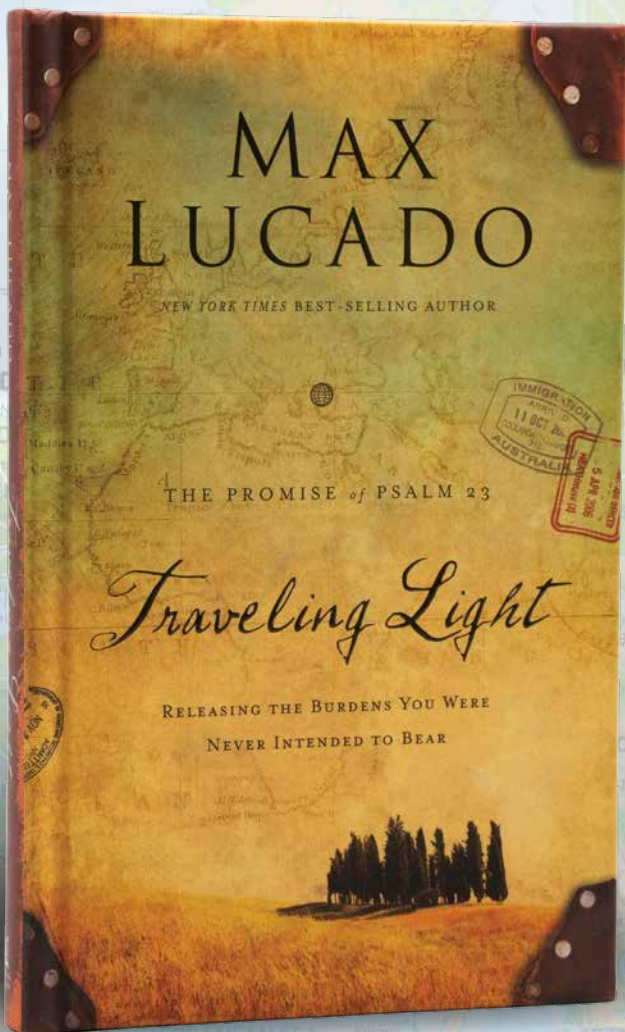
Unpack Your Burdens

We're all weighed down by loads we were never meant to carry.

With *New York Times* bestselling author and pastor Max Lucado as your guide, *Traveling Light* invites you to release some of those heavy burdens and experience true rest.

Centered around the comforting, uplifting words of Psalm 23, Lucado shares the encouragement and tools you need to release the burdens of:

- Self-reliance
- Hopelessness
- Arrogance
- Shame
- Disappointment



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