

AUGUST 2024

inspiration

M A G A Z I N E

Draw Near
to
God

Embracing Change
The Lord Is With You
Trading Despair for Delight



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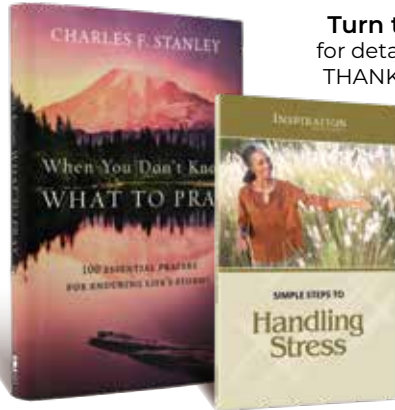


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Draw Near to God



Turn to **page 5** for David's article "An Invitation to Intimacy" where he invites you to draw near to the Lord and experience the power of His goodness and love.



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

Act quickly—supplies are limited.

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EDITOR'S CORNER



Roone Acree

I believe you'll love this month's issue of *Inspiration Magazine*, my friend. God has a very special invitation for you today—an invitation to draw near and commune with Him. As you faithfully worship Him today, your troubles will vanish, and your heart will be mended in the presence of the King! He will boost your faith and show you how to sow seeds of faith and move the mountains in your life. Best of all, you'll never regret the steps you take on your journey into the heart of the living God. May He richly bless you!



"The Warrior's Focus"

What are you focusing on? What's holding you back? How can you learn to focus on God's priorities instead? We have so many distractions in life, but God calls us to center our thoughts on Him. Craig and Gonen help you walk through your past hurts and your present roadblocks, so you can focus on the Christian race in front of you. [Watch Here](#)



FREE

E-Newsletter from Inspiration Ministries

Receive a daily dose of faith, inspiration, wisdom, and more!

Our e-newsletters are a great way to receive the best content Inspiration Ministries has to offer.

Whether you're new to our ministry or a loyal partner, we always have something to inspire you and help guide you along your journey of faith.



WANT TO UNDERSTAND THE HOLY SPIRIT?
Unveil the mystery... with our THANK YOU GIFTS!
Receive these THANK YOU GIFTS by sending a need for souls of \$48 or more!

Today's Prayer

"My sheep listen to My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me."
John 10:27 NASB

Need Prayer? [Submit Request Here](#)

Thank you for being my Shepherd. Help me hear You more clearly. I long to have a more intimate relationship with You.
AMEN

Be a Blessing Today

Be a Blessing to Someone in Need of God's Word

For more than 50 years, millions of people have received encouragement and the Good News of salvation in Christ through Inspiration Ministries. Your gift of \$30 will help us to provide daily devotions and other uplifting content to those who are hungry to know God. Click the Donate Now button below to get started.

[DONATE NOW](#)

That's Interesting

"Forgiveness is not an occasional act, it is a constant attitude."
- Martin Luther King, Jr.

In 2016, Mozart sold more CDs than Adele, Drake, and Beyonce.
Teeth are the only part of your skeleton that you can see and clean.
Recipe of the Day: [Rock Bottom Cajunokies](#)
Today in History: In 1867, Swedish chemist Alfred Nobel patented dynamite in England, and in 1994, Edward Munch's "The Scream" was recovered after theft, almost three months after it was stolen from a museum in Oslo.

An Invitation to Intimacy



Just as we yearn for a deep bond with God, He's longing for it even more.



STRENGTHEN
your walk
with David Cerullo

I'm sure you've looked up into the night sky and wondered about the incredible universe God has created. I do often. Whenever I gaze into the stars, Psalm 144:3 (NASB) comes to mind, "LORD, what is man, that You look after him? Or a son of man, that You think of him?"

I love astronomy. I find it fascinating. With all of our science and technology, man still hasn't been able to measure the extent of the cosmos. Astronomers speculate that there are literally billions of galaxies. As David wrote in Psalm 19:1, "The heavens tell of the glory of God; and their expanse declares the work of His hands" (NASB). That's one thing most scientists and astronomers agree on...the universe is larger and more expansive than we ever thought possible.

Subscribe today, and be inspired with the best Bible-based resources on the web!



In the midst of all of His magnificent creation, the God of the universe wants to have a personal, intimate relationship with you and me.

I don't know if you've ever taken a look at the size of our planet Earth in comparison to some of the other planets in our solar system. While the earth is larger than Venus, Mars, and Mercury, we dwarf in comparison to Neptune, Uranus, Saturn, or Jupiter.

If it seems like Jupiter, the largest planet in our solar system, is big, compare that to our sun. If you think our sun is big, compare that to Arcturus, which is the fourth brightest star in the Milky Way. Or compare Arcturus to Betelgeuse or Antares, two of the most massive red super giant stars we've been able to observe.

My point simply is that in all of God's magnificent creation...in the entire expanse of the universe...here is planet Earth where God made man, and in the midst of all that, the God of the universe wants to have a personal, intimate relationship with you and me. Incredible. Amazing. Unbelievable.

What is man that God is mindful of us?

God created you and me for fellowship and relationship. The Garden of Eden was a place where God Himself would come down to walk and talk with Adam and Eve. God gave them dominion over the earth and told them to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 9:7). Earth was created to be their dwelling place, and the Garden of Eden was a place God came and dwelt with them.

Years later, God spoke to Moses in Exodus 25:8, *"Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, so that I may dwell among them"* (NASB). The purpose of the Tabernacle was to be a dwelling place for God on Earth.

And this incredible, amazing, indescribable God wants to dwell—to tabernacle—with you. That's why He gave you the Holy Spirit as a

comforter and close companion. His desire is to dwell in communion with you...to demonstrate His love for you and bring you into His presence.

DRAWING CLOSER TO GOD

When King David was just a shepherd boy tending his father's sheep, no doubt he looked up into these same night skies that hold Jupiter, Arcturus, and Antares, and in awe, wonderment, and amazement communed and fellowshiped with God. Young David developed a relationship with the Lord characterized by worship and intimacy.

Years later, after he had been made king over Israel, David brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem and established the city as the center of worship for the Most High God. Because the Temple had not yet been built, David set up the temporary Tabernacle to house the Ark and carry out the worship rituals according to the law of Moses.

Imagine how overcome with emotion David must have been when the prophet Nathan declared that God was going to establish His Kingdom through David's lineage forever. After he heard this prophecy, Scripture says that David immediately *"went in and sat before the Lord"* and poured out his heart to God (1 Chronicles 17).

Where did David go to sit before the Lord? The Tabernacle. Overcome by a sense of worship, humility, and awe over God's goodness and mercy, David wanted to draw as near to Him as possible. The cry of his heart was, *"Hide me in the shadow of Your wings"* (Psalm 17:8).

Like King David, you and I were created to live in intimacy with God, who desires to have an intensely personal relationship with each of us. But exactly what does it mean to have an intimate relationship with Him?

"Hide me in the shadow of Your wings."

Psalm 17:8 NKJV

We can say that we truly know someone, and they truly know us, only when we know the other person's deepest thoughts, emotions, and responses. Feelings of closeness, calm, and comfort characterize the relationship. In the same way, this is what it's like to have an intimate relationship with the Lord.

The word *intimate* comes from the Latin word *intimus* meaning close friend. The verb is *intimare*, which means to make known. To be intimate with someone means to be a close friend, one who is willing to risk making himself or herself known by being open and vulnerable.

God wants us to love and trust Him so much that we invite Him to see into the deepest parts of our lives and hearts, even those parts we tend to hide from Him in fear and shame. He wants us to share ourselves fully with Him and receive His love, just as He desires to share Himself fully with us and receive our love.

In recent years, God has shown me how an intimate relationship with Him enables us to live powerful, peace-filled, overcoming lives while having a greater impact in the world for Jesus Christ and His Kingdom. Our hunger for Him will take us into the rich places of God where “*deep calls to deep*” (Psalm 42:7 NASB).

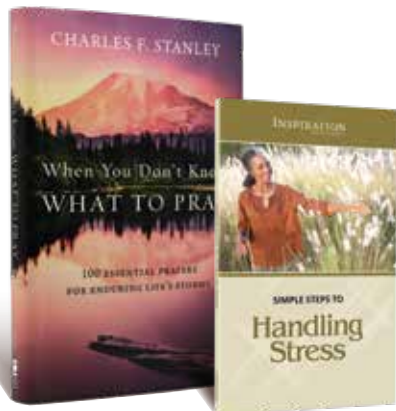
When the day finally comes, and I meet Jesus face to face, I don't want to just hear Him say, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” I want to be able to run into His outstretched arms and hear Him whisper, “I love you, and I know you love Me. Welcome home.” This is the kind of intimate relationship the Lord desires to have with you.

My prayer is that you discover the pathway leading to an ever-deepening intimacy with our living God. I invite you to experience the power of His goodness and love—and a life of greater joy than you've ever known before.

Your friend and partner,



P.S. Turn to **page 28** to see the great faith-building resources we want to send you this month. They will help you draw closer to God in every area of your life!



Sowing Consistently Reaps a Harvest of Souls!

Inspiration Ministries is putting this principle into practice as THOUSANDS of souls say **YES** to Christ every month through our ministry outreaches—**more than 3.8 MILLION so far this year!** People in **over 200 nations** have said they have given their heart to Jesus through this ministry, and someone is now declaring Jesus as Lord **every six seconds or less** around the world.

Through your consistent, monthly seeds for souls, YOU are participating in this great harvest.

“I’m a living testimony that our God is the true and living God. He is my Jehovah Jireh. I’ve learned that Jesus is able to meet every need!”—DIANA, Georgia

Please continue to spread the good news of wonderful love through Jesus!

SOW YOUR SEED FOR SOULS TODAY!

US / CAN / CAR:
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+44 (0) 84 5683 0580

inspiration.org/souls



Embracing Change & SHARING THE LOVE OF JESUS

Current estimates place the number of Christians worldwide at 2.7 billion people, leaving over 5.3 billion people in danger of being eternally separated from God. With over 166,000 people perishing every day, the need for the Good News has never been greater.

In the realm of modern evangelism, adaptation is essential. For example, churches embracing streaming during the pandemic were able to maintain and even grow their reach and impact. Amid the ever-evolving landscape of technology and communication, ministries must discern how best to reach the masses of people who are not Christian with the timeless message of Jesus Christ. Such is the mission of Inspiration Ministries: to be a beacon of hope and faith for millions worldwide.

Recently, Inspiration Ministries

made a crucial decision: shifting from television to digital platforms for our evangelism and discipleship efforts. This shift got underway as Inspiration TV, our international network, ceased broadcasting at the end of June and resources required for its operation were redirected to our digital outreach. This move highlights our passionate commitment to the Great Commission and maximizes the impact of support from our incredible friends and partners worldwide.

Over the past several years, Inspiration Ministries has harnessed the power of the internet to reach millions of hurting people annually with the truth of a loving God. Through carefully curated digital content, we have witnessed a remarkable response as spiritual seekers find solace and answers amidst the vast expanse of the web.

Every day, on average, we present the Gospel to more than 65,000 people, adding up to almost 24 million people each year hearing the Good News. Of those people, more than 5 million every year let us know that they repented of their sins and prayed for Jesus to be their personal Lord and Savior. Hallelujah!

But our outreach does not stop there. We provide robust opportunities for connection and continued discipling for these new believers at [inspiration.org](https://www.inspiration.org) and through our International Prayer Center. Our inspirational website overflows with powerful teaching and encouragement for all believers—new and seasoned—as we strive to help them develop a deep, enduring faith and a close, intimate relationship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The incredible fruitfulness of this harvest field has led us to reevaluate our strategies, recognizing the unparalleled reach and efficiency of online discipleship initiatives.

The decision to pivot from traditional broadcasting to digital discipleship stems from much prayerful consideration. This strategic move aligns with the changing landscape of global evangelism, allowing us to fulfill Matthew 28:19–20 more effectively by utilizing the accessibility and immediacy of online platforms.

At the core of this transition lies a significant expansion of Inspiration Ministries' digital presence. We are dedicated to enhancing believers' spiritual growth through various online resources, including daily newsletters, video discipleship series, and devotional magazines, each meticulously designed to nurture and fortify the faith journeys of believers.

In Romans 10:14–15, the apostle Paul's exhortation underscores the urgency of the task at hand and highlights the indispensable need of sending the Gospel into all the world—a mission to which Inspiration Ministries is steadfastly dedicated. Amidst the changing tides of technology, the ministry's bedrock core commitment to salvation and discipleship remains resolute.


We invite you to join us in this transformative journey, extending your support and prayers as we spread the message of Christ. Your sacrificial generosity fuels our efforts, and we trust in God's promise of reward for those who faithfully fulfill the Great Commission.

As Inspiration Ministries embraces change and charts a new course in the digital arena, we do so with humility, faith, and an unwavering belief in the transformative power of the Gospel. **Thank you for partnering with us in this vital mission.** ❖

“Mighty hero, the LORD is with you!”—Judges 6:12 NLT

HERO

[heer-oh]



A person of distinguished courage or ability, admired for brave deeds and noble qualities.

Inspiration Partners, through your sacrificial financial seeds for souls, you are **HEROES** of the faith! Because of you...

Every second... Inspiration Ministries is able to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with someone, somewhere!

Every six seconds or less... Someone prays the prayer to give their life to Christ!

Every month... More than 400,000 people come to Christ through our evangelistic outreaches!

Every day... We receive testimonies from people around the world who have received amazing breakthroughs in their health, finances, emotions, or relationships!

Because you've been obedient to supply the financial needs of this worldwide ministry to reach the lost and disciple believers, we're confident the Lord will supply your needs as well!

Now you can sow your seed with the enclosed response form or call one of the numbers below to become an **Inspiration Ministries Monthly Partner**—a convenient way to help fulfill the Great Commission by *automatically* partnering with Inspiration Ministries each month.

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When You Need God's Healing Touch...

Where Can You Turn?

At our International Prayer Center, testimonies abound of God's breakthroughs.

Oral Cancer Disappeared: When her dear friend Sharon was diagnosed with oral cancer, Inez called the Inspiration Ministries prayer ministers to agree with her in prayer for Sharon's health to be restored. One week later, Inez called back to report, "Sharon was brushing her teeth, and she noticed the spot was gone! She drove to the doctor, and he was speechless. In just one week, she was cancer free! Thank you for praying with me!"

Massive Stroke Healed: One of the prayer ministers at the International Prayer Center prayed with a partner named Iris whose mother suffered a massive stroke. No brain activity could be detected, and the doctors advised the family to make arrangements for hospice care. However, just three days after praying with our prayer minister, Iris called to say that her mother made a full recovery and was going home! Her speech returned, and she was walking again. The nurses and doctors said this was a miracle!

Paralysis Suddenly Reversed: Karen's life was turned upside down when she had a heart attack, soon followed by a stroke. She became paralyzed and was told she faced a long road of rehabilitation ahead. But only a few days later, she felt a gentle touch one morning, as if someone had laid their hands on her. "Within minutes, I could move my hands and feet," Karen exclaims. "God had me in the palm of His hand. Everyone in the rehab facility was in complete awe!"

What God did for these Inspiration partners, He can do for YOU!

Contact our prayer ministers today!

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

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

inspiration.org/prayer

I Would Have Pulled Joseph Out

I would have pulled **Joseph** out. Out of that pit. Out of that prison. Out of that pain. And I would have cheated nations out of the one God would use to deliver them from famine.

I would have pulled **David** out. Out of Saul's spear-throwing presence. Out of the caves he hid away in. Out of the pain of rejection. And I would have cheated Israel out of a God-hearted king.

I would have pulled **Esther** out. Out of being snatched from her only family. Out of being placed in a position she never asked for. Out of the path of a vicious, power-hungry foe. And I would have cheated a people out of the woman God would use to save their very lives.

And I would have pulled **Jesus** off. Off of the cross. Off of the road that led to suffering and pain. Off of the path that would mean nakedness and beatings, nails and thorns. And I would have cheated the entire world out of a Savior. Out of salvation. Out of an eternity filled with no more suffering and no more pain.

And, O friend, I want to pull you out. I want to change your path. I want to stop your pain. But right now I know I would be wrong. I would be out of line. I would be cheating you and cheating the world out of so much good. Because God knows. He knows the good this pain will produce.

He knows the beauty this hard season will grow. He's watching over you and keeping you even in the midst of this. And He's promising you that you can trust Him. Even when it all feels like more than you can bear.

So instead of trying to pull you out, I'm lifting you up. I'm kneeling before the Father, and I'm asking Him to give you strength. To give you hope. I'm asking Him to protect you and to move you when the time is right. I'm asking Him to help you stay prayerful and discerning. I'm asking Him how I can best love you and be a help to you. And I'm believing He's going to use your life in powerful and beautiful ways. Ways that will leave your heart grateful and humbly thankful for this road you've been on. ❖



Kimberly Henderson is a wife, mom, and writer from South Carolina. She loves leading Bible studies and has written devotions for Proverbs 31 Ministries, Lifeway, and other publications. One of her greatest joys is using the living and powerful Word of God to help others draw closer to the heart of God. Connect with Kimberly at <https://kdhenderson.wordpress.com/>



Ben Cerullo

Choose to BELIEVE

Thirty-four years ago, my father chose to believe God *could* and *would* use all forms of media to impact the world for Christ. The choice he made and God's faithfulness created Inspiration Ministries. And now, millions have entered the family of God because Dad chose to believe and follow His Word!

Choosing to believe God is the doorway to receiving blessings for yourself and others. I want you to know today that I believe God has amazing plans and purposes for your life. But you will never be able to reach your God-given destiny until you trust Him with everything first.

The Bible describes faith not only as a gift from God (Romans 12:3; Ephesians 2:8) but also as a *choice* on our part. For example,

when God directed Noah to build the ark, he faithfully chose to humble himself and obey His Word. Not only was he fully confident in what God said, but he was also unmoved by the taunts and derision of the people around him. (Genesis 6:11–9:19).

Each of us has a moment-by-moment decision to make as well: Will we believe the promises of God, or depend on our own intelligence and reasoning instead?

HIS MIRACLE-WORKING TOUCH

Whether you need a healing in your body, or you need a financial breakthrough, God wants you to know He is WILLING and ABLE to do it.

God is still in the miracle-working business, just as He was when Jesus walked the earth during Bible days:

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever”
(Hebrews 13:8 NKJV).

This means the same life-giving power that touched lives 2,000 years ago is available to YOU and your loved ones today! And His miracle-working touch is only ONE of the fantastic promises the Lord has given you in His Word.

In Matthew 6:10, Jesus taught us to pray, *“Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven”* (NKJV). Have you ever thought about what things are like in Heaven? There is no pain, sin, loneliness, poverty, or sickness in Heaven. So, we can know that God's will is to set His people free from such things.

Will we sometimes face a battle? Of course. At such times, we must understand who we are in Christ and learn to exercise the authority we've been given by our Father. We need to know that the same Holy Spirit who was operating in the life of Jesus is operating in us (Romans 8:11).

Jesus came to *“destroy the works of the devil”* (1 John 3:8 NKJV), and this means we can have victory over sin, disease, depression, poverty, and every other attack of the enemy.

BELIEVE THE TRUTH... EVEN AS YOU WAIT

So why do people sometimes suffer from pain, lack, or frustrations even after they have been prayed for? Although I don't claim to understand each and every situation, I know that our breakthroughs sometimes are delayed because of God's timing or our need to persevere in faith. We shouldn't get discouraged if we don't see an instantaneous answer every time we pray for a turnaround.

I've also seen times when God's power was blocked by unresolved sin or disobedience. At the cross, Jesus defeated *the plans of the enemy, including sickness and pain* (1 Peter 2:24). But if we expect to access His power, we must also commit to turning from any known areas of disobedience.

Finally, it's crucial to embrace the truth about God's desire to bless us. The truth will set us free (John 8:32), yet often God's people are *“destroyed for lack of knowledge”* (Hosea 4:6 NKJV).

I encourage you today to resolve in your heart that you will believe the promises of God—for every blessing your Heavenly Father wants to give you. Use your spiritual authority over the devil's work. Keep standing in faith, choosing to believe God to fulfill His Word in His timing! ❖

Four Reasons... Every Christian Needs a Will

The Bible makes several specific references to Wills (for example, Hebrews 9:16–17), and it also offers a number of important principles that illustrate why Christians should have their Wills made:

- **Death inevitably comes to each of us and often comes suddenly and unexpectedly** (Hebrews 9:27; Luke 12:15–21).
- **We can't take our wealth with us** (1 Timothy 6:7).
- **We're commanded to make provisions for our family** (Proverbs 13:22; 1 Timothy 5:8).
- **As believers, we have an opportunity to honor the Lord in our Wills, giving a portion of our assets to churches or ministries that are effectively sharing the Gospel and winning souls** (Proverbs 11:30).

If you don't already have a Will, please don't put it off any longer. And if you do already have a Will, it's a good idea to review it every few years to make sure it still meets your needs.

Questions about including Inspiration Ministries in your Will or Estate Plan? Contact our Partner Relations Team today for **FREE** information:



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+1 (855) 702-7042
inspirationPG.org

Remember, through a properly drawn Christian Will, you may be able to win more souls for God's Kingdom than you did during a lifetime of faithful giving!

Pray with Confidence

BIBLE READING: 1 JOHN 3

The Bible makes clear that prayer is to be central to the Christian life. We are to pray about *everything* (Philippians 4:6). The Bible reminds us that the effectiveness of our prayer life is impacted by our relationship with God. There also are *impediments* to effective prayer: attitudes and actions that can clog our relationship with God and provide distractions.

As we approach God in prayer, it can be easy to be conscious of reasons our prayers might not be answered: We let our minds wander, and we focus on ourselves and our weaknesses instead of on God and His promises. The size of the problems might seem too large. Our minds can be filled with thoughts that distract us. We can wonder if God will hear us. And we can be overwhelmed by guilt.

The Bible encourages us to pray with faith, put aside doubts, seek to be freed from guilt, and pray with *“bold confidence.”* But a lack of confidence can impede our prayers. We can be confident if we are clean in His sight, and if we are confident in our relationship with Him.

What issues do you face? As you pray about them, be sure you are not allowing anything to clog your heart and separate you from God. Remember, He is ready to cleanse you, give you the confidence to approach His presence with boldness, and make your prayers more effective.

Compose your own prayer for boldness.

THURSDAY

August

1

Dear friends, if we don't feel guilty, we can come to God with bold confidence. And we will receive from him whatever we ask because we obey him and do the things that please him.

1 John 3:21–22 NLT

PRAYER:

Father, I commit these issues to You: _____. Remove doubts and fill me with confidence. I seek to be clean in Your sight. In Jesus' name, amen.

To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.

Acts 1:3 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, help me demonstrate the reality of the Gospel. Impact lives through my testimony. In Jesus' name, amen.

How can you show others Gospel truths?

Convincing Proofs

BIBLE READING: ACTS 1

Carl Gauss was a brilliant mathematician who realized that it was not enough merely to state concepts. This German prodigy believed that results needed to be *tested* and *proven* to be sure they passed every conceivable test.

There are important parallels in our spiritual lives. Jesus demonstrated that it was important to validate what we believe, to provide proof that demonstrated that He was the Son of God, and His teachings were true. He showed that miracles still took place.

We see this when John the Baptist sent some disciples to ask Jesus about His ministry. Indicating some doubts or uncertainties, they asked Him, “*Are You the Coming One, or shall we look for someone else?*” (Matthew 11:3). Jesus responded by pointing to the evidence of His ministry.

After Jesus’ resurrection, Thomas doubted He was alive. But Jesus appeared to him (and the other disciples). He answered his doubts and proved He was alive (John 20:24–29).

This was one of the “*many convincing proofs*” provided by Jesus after His resurrection. This was a pattern His disciples were to repeat. They were to demonstrate convincing proof through their own ministries that the Gospel was true (Matthew 5:16).

Today, the world still looks for proofs that demonstrate what we believe is true, the Gospel is relevant, and Jesus still changes lives. Live in such a way that others see Jesus in you. Your life should provide proof.

Spirit-Led Decisions

BIBLE READING: ACTS 1

Judas had died, and the surviving apostles needed a replacement. But how could they fill this vacancy? They decided to cast lots, a method common in Old Testament times. The disciples assumed that when the lot fell on Matthias, they had heard from God.

But they learned that God wanted to lead them in new ways. In fact, casting lots was mentioned only once in the New Testament. Jesus’ followers had to learn new ways to receive God’s guidance. They had to learn to be guided by the Holy Spirit.

Particularly after the Day of Pentecost, they began to learn the importance of Spirit-led decisions. They had to rely on the Spirit and less on their subjective thoughts and opinions. They could not assume they knew what God wanted, and they needed to be ready to follow Him.

They needed to learn to wait on God, be absolutely surrendered to His will, and be sensitive to the Spirit’s leading (John 14:15–26). The disciples were never to presume His direction and to realize He was like the wind that “*blows where it wishes*” (John 3:8).

Don’t presume to know how God wants to direct you or how He might answer your prayers. Submit every issue to Him. Learn to wait on Him. Be open to doing things in new ways as He directs. Stay sensitive to His leading. Surrender to Him, and be ready for His guidance.

Where has the Holy Spirit been leading you lately?

They prayed and said, “You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship”...They cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias.

Acts 1:24–26 ESV

PRAYER:

Father, I commit these matters to You: _____. Direct my steps. Guide me by Your Spirit. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!"

Acts 3:6 ESV

PRAYER:

Father, I praise and worship You. I confess that Your Word is true. I believe You can do anything. In Jesus' name, amen.

What big problem are you facing right now that you need Jesus to fix?

Solving Problems

BIBLE READING: ACTS 3

This beggar had been a cripple his entire life. His condition appeared to be hopeless. Day after day, he sat outside the temple, begging for handouts, sustained by whatever donations were given to him. This had been the story of his life. He could not conceive of any other solution; he assumed healing was impossible.

But Peter knew that God's power was available to heal this man. He took him by the hand and healed the cripple. In that moment, a lifetime of suffering was erased. He was filled with joy as he walked, jumped, and praised God.

Many people today feel hopeless, feeling that their problems cannot be solved. Many don't really believe that God could solve their problems, even in situations that seem discouraging.

The Bible encourages us to realize we have access to the same Spirit that inspired Peter and John. We serve the same Savior. The same promises are true. Nothing is impossible with God.

You may face a situation that seems impossible. You may feel hopeless or find it hard to believe God could intervene in your life. But the Bible assures us that no matter what you face, God can solve your problems. He can supply your every need. He can heal you and set you free. You do not need to be content with the crumbs of life. Believe that God can meet your every need! Even big things!

Born Again

BIBLE READING: ACTS 3

An explorer and soldier, Simon Kenton became a hero to many living in the American frontier of the 19th century. He seemed fearless no matter how dire the threat was. But no one realized that there was no peace within his own heart.

In the fall of 1819, Kenton attended a camp meeting in Kentucky where he saw the miracle-working power of God at work.

Moved by what he saw, one morning, he asked a man to walk with him into the woods. Kenton confessed he knew God, but admitted he still was a sinner. As he shared these secrets, tears poured from his eyes. This hardened warrior realized he needed Jesus. He fell to the ground, crying out to God.

Suddenly, the burdens disappeared. Kenton knew he had been born again. Springing to his feet, Kenton let out a shout that could be heard throughout the woods. Like the man healed in Acts 3, Kenton began leaping and praising God.

When he arrived back at the camp meeting, his appearance had changed. The whole encampment was startled. Everyone wanted to know what had happened. He had been born again! He wanted everyone to know. "If I had all the world, I would tell of the goodness and mercy of God!"

Today, millions need to know Jesus and experience God's power and forgiveness. Dedicate your life to spreading the Gospel, so others might know Jesus! He can meet their needs.

Whom can you tell about Jesus this week?

Leaping up, he stood and began to walk; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.

Acts 3:8 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for saving me. Thank You for Your protection, forgiveness, and freedom. In Jesus' name, amen.

It is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all.

Acts 3:16 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I commit these needs to You: _____. I believe You can do more than I can ask or think. Thank You. In Jesus' name, amen.

How have you been limiting God in your mind?

Perfect Answers

BIBLE READING: ACTS 3

When God intervened in the life of this lame man, he did not become a little better. He was given “*perfect health*,” even though he “*had been lame from birth*” (v. 2).

Here was a man who had some hope, but only limited expectations. As he saw Peter and John going into the temple, he just asked them for money (v. 3). He hoped for a little money, but never considered that he could be healed and made whole.

But Peter and John were not limited. Filled with faith, they knew God could do all things. He could perform astonishing miracles, no matter what the need. Peter’s command was simple and direct: “*In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, walk!*” The results were immediate. “*Leaping up, he stood and began to walk... walking and praising God*” (vs. 6–8).

Sometimes when thinking about our problems, we can limit God. We can forget His power. But the Bible reminds us that He has no limits. He can do amazing things, just like He did in the life of that lame man. He is the God who can provide “*perfect health*,” miracles, and wonders.

Don’t limit God, but seek His *perfect* answers for you. Remember that He is “*able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think*” (Ephesians 3:20). Have the faith to pray with bold anticipation.

Salvation

BIBLE READING: ACTS 4

John Witherspoon was a scholar, educator, and pastor. But in all things, he was known as a man of integrity. Born in Scotland, he received a doctorate degree before immigrating to America. Because of his reputation, he was recruited to be the sixth president of the College of New Jersey (later Princeton University).

Witherspoon gained respect throughout his new homeland with many widely read essays. He supported American independence and was the only clergyman to sign the Declaration of Independence. In 1776, he was elected to the Continental Congress, remaining in Congress throughout the war.

A tireless advocate for religious freedoms, he influenced many people, including James Madison, America’s fourth president. Many ideas Madison wrote as part of the Federalist Papers aided in the ratification of the US Constitution and were based on what he learned from Witherspoon.

Witherspoon passionately believed in biblical Christianity. He believed there was salvation in no one but Jesus. He warned of the consequences of life without Him: “If you are not clothed with the spotless robe of His righteousness, you must forever perish.”

Many think it is foolish to believe the Bible. But it was true for John Witherspoon and still is. As Witherspoon knew, there *still* is salvation in none other than Jesus. Renew *your* faith in Him. Stand on the truths in the Bible. Make your faith your foundation.

Reflect on truths you’ve been learning lately from the Bible.

And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among mankind by which we must be saved.

Acts 4:12 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for sending Jesus to die for me. Thank You for saving me and forgiving my sins! In Jesus' name, amen.

Grant it to Your bond-servants to speak Your word with all confidence, while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus.

Acts 4:29–30 NASB

Prayers to Shake Nations

BIBLE READING: ACTS 4

Born in 1514 in Scotland, John Knox lived in turbulent times. He was a priest before being called to the Protestant ministry. In 1553, when Mary Tudor, a Roman Catholic, became queen of England, Knox fled to Switzerland. When he later returned to Scotland, Knox became an outspoken critic of Mary Queen of Scotland’s regime.

Knox displayed a bold faith, unafraid to pray boldly. Mary Queen of Scots admitted that she feared “the prayers of John Knox more than all the assembled armies of Europe.” She knew his prayers unleashed God’s power. Knox knew how to pray with effectiveness. He prayed with a boldness that could shake the nations, all based on his relationship with God and a sense of His presence.

Knox prayed, “O Lord, give me Scotland, or I die!” God heard his prayer and mighty spiritual things happened. Knox knew nothing was impossible for those who pray. He expressed this conviction when he said, “A man with God is always in the majority.”

Today, God hasn’t changed. But how many people can say they pray with the kind of boldness characterized by John Knox? God looks for people with this kind of boldness—a boldness that is willing to take on kings and kingdoms and assault the gates of hell.

Determine to live by faith; believe God boldly. Act with a certainty that, with Him, nothing is impossible!

How can you share your faith boldly this week?

Power in Prayer

BIBLE READING: ACTS 4

The ministry of Charles Finney brought revival throughout the United States in the 19th century. Why was his ministry so powerful? So effective? He pointed to the impact of prayer.

As soon as he arrived in a town, he looked for people who could pray for his ministry, people *committed* to prayer. He knew there could be no breakthroughs without prayer. Describing the impact, Finney once said, “Nothing tends more to cement the hearts of Christians than praying together.”

In one town, he told of one woman in feeble health who “kept praying more and more” until she experienced a breakthrough. A revival broke out throughout that region, and many were saved.

In Antwerp, New York, few people had an interest in the things of God. Looking for people who would join him in prayer, Finney found only two or three women who were praying people. This might have seemed insignificant, but Finney knew that this was all he needed. They started praying, and revival broke out.

These experiences parallel the experience of the early church. When they gathered for prayer, “*the place where they had gathered together was shaken.*” Believers were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke with boldness.

The Bible reminds us that God rewards people who seek Him through dedicated prayer. Truly powerful things can happen when we pray. Today, dedicate yourself to prayer—persistent, dedicated prayer.

Write out your prayer for today.

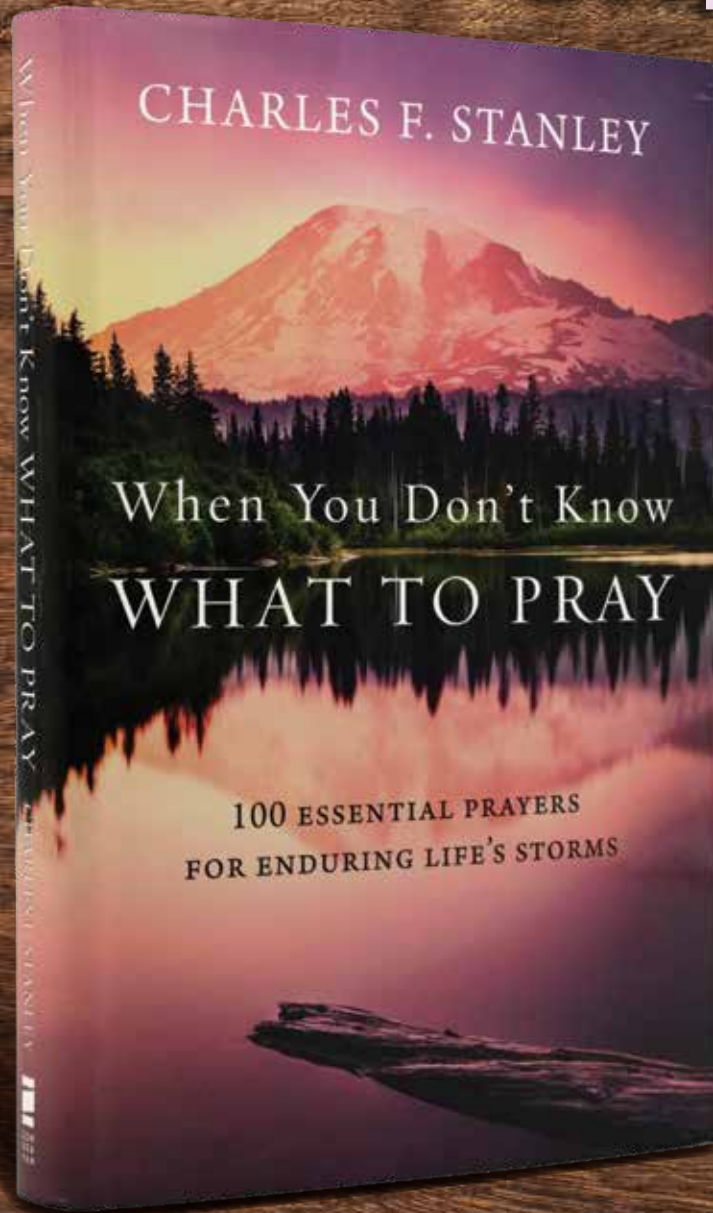
When they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.

Acts 4:31 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, give me a burden for prayer. I specifically pray for these situations and people: _____. Pour Your Spirit upon them. In Jesus’ name, amen.

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- ◆ When others need your prayerful intercession
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Every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not stop teaching and preaching the good news of Jesus as the Christ.

Acts 5:42 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, help me stay free from distractions and focus on Your calling for me. In Jesus' name, amen.

What distracts you, and how can you minimize those things?

Total Focus

BIBLE READING: ACTS 5

The disciples knew their mission and were focused on accomplishing it, even while facing relentless opposition determined to silence them and restrict their actions.

Driven by jealousy, the high priest and other leaders had the disciples beaten and told them not to talk about Jesus. How did they respond? They did not go into hiding or flee for their lives but continued to speak, openly declaring the Gospel.

The high priest and his supporters were incensed and brought them before the Council. When the high priest questioned them and reminded them of the “strict orders” they had been given, Peter responded, “We must obey God rather than men” (vs. 27–29).

The disciples were flogged and ordered “not to speak in the name of Jesus.” And they immediately returned to their mission, preaching and teaching every day, everywhere God led them. They rejoiced “that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name” (vs. 40–41).

The disciples did not let anyone prevent them from fulfilling God’s call on their lives. They were not distracted but continued to serve Him faithfully.

This is the kind of focus that God wants in our lives. We can have a clear sense of His calling. We can also have a relentless determination to obey and serve Him, to be so focused that we do not let anything distract us.

A Life Transformed

BIBLE READING: ACTS 6

Stephen faced an angry mob intent on silencing him. They felt his message violated their beliefs. It was a message they felt was harmful and threatened their relationship with Rome.

They took steps to silence him, but no one could wipe away the look on his face. His face was so transformed that it looked like the face of an angel. He had a kind of mesmerizing presence.

Years after this event as Luke gathered words that would become the book of Acts, he must have spoken to witnesses of the stoning of Stephen, which included Paul. The Bible gives us no account of Stephen’s wardrobe or his physical attributes. But these witnesses remembered the look on his face. That was the impact it had on their lives.

The Gospel changes our lives. People should be able to see the genuineness of our faith and the real power of God. This kind of transformation should be visible and real. It should be seen in our eyes, our smile, our countenance, our demeanor.

Others may disagree with us, but there are no arguments against a life that has been transformed by the power of God. This look may do more to convince others of our genuineness than anything we might say or do. Ask God to transform your life so that others can see the reality of His presence and want to know Him.

What would others say about your life’s witness?

All who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel.

Acts 6:15 NKJV

PRAYER:

Father, so change my life so that others can see the impact. Transform my life. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed steadily into heaven and saw the glory of God, and he saw Jesus standing in the place of honor at God's right hand. And he told them, "Look, I see the heavens opened!"

Acts 7:55–56 NLT

PRAYER:

Father, I celebrate the victory I have because of Jesus. I look forward to spending eternity with You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Reflect on your eternal victory waiting for you.

A Picture of Heaven

BIBLE READING: ACTS 7

In human terms, this might have seemed like a crushing defeat. Stephen, who had been an effective minister of the Gospel, had been arrested by religious leaders. They were intent on silencing his ministry and stopping the spread of the Gospel. Stephen could have been a model of hopelessness as he was stoned to death. It could have seemed like a horrible defeat.

But in that moment of apparent defeat, Stephen was given an extraordinary picture of the ultimate victory that awaited him. While others simply saw events in human terms, Stephen was given a picture of Heaven. It was a picture of total victory. While others sought to silence him, he continued to celebrate the victory of his eternal hope and his relationship with Jesus.

Stephen was given a picture of Jesus standing victoriously at God's right hand. At that moment, the stones that were thrown to take his life hardly seemed to matter. He was at peace, perfectly prepared to experience the glories of Heaven.

As we look at the world around us, we can feel overwhelmed. It can feel like we face inevitable defeat. We can react by feeling discouraged, defeated, broken, and hopeless. These are moments to be reminded of the vision given to Stephen. Remember the eternal victory we have in Jesus. Celebrate His resurrection and the eternal life that awaits all who serve Him.

Hard Hearts

BIBLE READING: ACTS 9

For many years, a man called on the service of a Christian businessman. In their interactions, conversations often turned toward faith. The Christian made clear what he believed. When the door opened, he shared his testimony. But his client had no interest in the Gospel.

The businessman continued to demonstrate how Jesus made a difference. He focused on being responsible and a good example. Suddenly, the man asked how to be saved. The Christian businessman had the privilege of leading him to the Lord.

No one who knew the man ever would have imagined this moment would be possible. He appeared to be completely uninterested in the Gospel. Yet somehow, God had been working in his heart, using the testimony and example of this Christian businessman and others.

Many must have felt the same way about Saul. He was determined in his attitude toward Jesus. He was determined to eradicate the faith, to imprison anyone who claimed to be His disciple. Yet in a moment, Saul's life was turned upside down when Jesus appeared to him.

We must remember that no heart ever is too hard for God. His Spirit can work in the lives of even the most disinterested people. We must never give up or assume our labor is in vain. Ask God to equip you to be His witness with those you meet—even those who may seem to be closed to the Gospel.

To whom can you witness this week?

As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"

Acts 9:3–5 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I commit these people to You: _____. Do a work in their lives. Use me to share my faith with them and others. In Jesus' name, amen.

The commander... commanded the soldiers to... take him by force from among them, and bring him into the barracks. But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul... so you must also bear witness at Rome."

Acts 23:10–11 NKJV

PRAYER:

Father, thank You that You are with me. Help me be of good cheer. I trust You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Are you feeling discouraged today?

Be of Good Cheer

BIBLE READING: ACTS 23

Paul often displayed boldness, courage, and determination. Yet at the core, he remained very human. He had real emotions. He knew what it was like to be afraid and discouraged. We see his human side when confronted by Roman soldiers.

After being threatened by a mob, Paul was taken into the barracks for protection. That night, Jesus Himself spoke to Paul, telling him to “*be of good cheer*.” Jesus spoke this same Greek word to the woman who touched the hem of His garment and to His disciples after He walked on the water.

Paul needed to hear this message and the specific word that Jesus spoke to him that night. He was reassured. The next morning, Paul was calm and clearheaded, focused and decisive. If there had been any uncertainty or discouragement, it was gone. He was “*of good cheer*.”

If Paul could feel afraid and discouraged, we should not be surprised if we do too. No matter what we face, we can be of good courage. Remember that Jesus is with us. No matter what our needs are, He knows them. No matter how big our obstacles might be, He is with us to help us face them. No matter who threatens us, “*greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world*” (1 John 4:4 NASB).

Receive His Word today. Don't be afraid or discouraged. Jesus is with you. Be of good cheer.

The Way

BIBLE READING: ACTS 24

Sometime in early church history, followers of Jesus collectively began to be called “*the Way*.” This became a simple description that summarized the Christian life. It reminds us that life is a *journey*. We do not arrive instantly at our destination. We travel through places and times. We go through experiences. We learn through the places we have visited, the experiences we have gone through, and the mistakes we have made.

Describing our journey as “*the Way*” demonstrates that there are no instant cures. No one has infinite or complete knowledge. Even a man as wise as Paul knew he was on a journey, learning step by step how to follow Jesus.

The word *way* reminds us that we are on a path through life. We have choices regarding the roads we travel, the things we do, the places we go, and the decisions we make. People who are Christians have chosen a common path—“*the Way*.” They have decided to follow Jesus, who is “*the way, the truth, and the life*” (John 14:6). We obey His Word.

“*The way*” reminds us that we have a destination. Many people spend their lives wandering around, moving toward unsure destinations, or pursuing the wrong destination. But our way leads somewhere specific. We are moving toward eternity with Jesus!

Today, remember that you are part of “*the Way*” on a journey with Jesus. Let Him direct your steps. Follow Him.

Reflect on your journey so far with Jesus.

I confess this to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I do serve the God of our fathers.

Acts 24:14 NASB

PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, help me follow You. I commit my life to being Your servant. In Your name, amen.

“As I was journeying to Damascus...I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me. And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice.”

Acts 26:12–14 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for salvation and for changing my life. Use me to impact the lives of others. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Write a summary of your salvation story.

When You Met Jesus

BIBLE READING: ACTS 26

Many years later, as he spoke to King Agrippa, Paul perfectly remembered the moment he met Jesus. He remembered every word. He had told his testimony before, but his enthusiasm for the story never seemed to waver.

He remembered how Jesus knew him personally and called him by name, “Saul, Saul.” He identified Himself by name: “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.” He told Saul (later Paul) about the mission to which he had been called: “Get up and stand on your feet.” He revealed he had a special appointment and would be “a witness not only to the things in which you have seen Me, but also to the things in which I will appear to you” (vs. 14–16).

He was sending Paul to both Jews and Gentiles and called him “to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God” (v. 18). He was to announce that Jesus could provide forgiveness of sins and all who were saved would be given an inheritance.

How clearly do you remember the day you met Jesus? Look back and think about what He has done for you. What have you learned? What has He spoken to you and revealed to you? How have you changed? Where is He leading you?

Be ready to share your testimony with others. Share from your heart about Jesus and what He means to you.

Jesus in Your Heart

BIBLE READING: LUKE 19

Rufus McDaniel faced the challenge of dealing with the tragic death of his son Herschel. As he had done so often, he expressed his thoughts in a hymn, called “Since Jesus Came into My Heart.”

Dealing with this tragedy, McDaniel declared how he continued to turn to Jesus. He wrote how “a wonderful change in my life has been wrought.” Light had come into his soul, and he “ceased from [his] wandering and going astray.” His sins were “washed away.”

Jesus had given him a “steadfast and sure” hope. Doubts were gone. Instead, “There’s a light in the valley of death now for me.” He even had hope for the future as he could see “the gates of the city beyond.”

He knew he would “go there to dwell in that City.” Perhaps thinking about his son, this thought brought joy and peace to his heart. He described how “floods of joy o’er my soul like the sea billows roll.”

Lives change when Jesus comes into our hearts. This parallels the experience of Zaccheus, a tax collector hated by the common people—a man called a “sinner” (v. 7). Yet Jesus completely changed his life, so he brought Him “joyfully” to his house.

Do you know anyone who is troubled? Who is worried and afraid? Who feels rejected? Who needs salvation? Remember, Jesus still changes lives and saves the lost. He gives hope to the hopeless.

Write a prayer for loved ones who need Jesus today.

When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, “Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house.” And he hurried and came down, and received Him joyfully.

Luke 19:5–6 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I commit these people to You: _____. Thank You for changing them. Use me to impact lives for Your Kingdom. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will... Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

Matthew 10:29–31 NASB

PRAYER:

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

What situation do you need God to watch over this week?

He Watches Me

BIBLE READING: MATTHEW 10

W. Stillman Martin served several churches throughout the United States and was a professor at a Christian college. He also conducted Bible conferences and evangelistic meetings. Together with his wife, Civilla, he wrote many Gospel songs.

In 1905, while staying in Elmira, New York, the Martins became friends with a couple who experienced severe problems. The wife had been bedridden for 20 years. And the husband was an “incurable cripple who had to propel himself to and from his business in a wheelchair.” Even though facing these problems, “they lived happy Christian lives, bringing inspiration and comfort to all who knew them.”

When asked about their secret, the wife replied, “His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.” This title became the inspiration for a hymn.

They wrote, “Why should I feel discouraged, why should the shadows come, why should my heart be lonely.” They knew “Jesus [was their] portion” and “constant friend.” Confident in God’s care, they wrote words that overflowed with joy. They could sing because they were happy and free. “For His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.” They knew that what Jesus taught was true; they completely could trust in God.

Don’t let your life be plagued by worry and fear. Trust God no matter what *you* face. Commit your needs to Him. You can rejoice and be at peace. God is watching you.

We Never Know

BIBLE READING: ECCLESIASTES 11

Looking back, a former army chaplain recalled a particularly challenging time in his life when he experienced an unusual level of stress. He recalled struggling with his faith and understanding of the Scriptures. There seemed to be little fruit from his ministry.

As a result, he was surprised by the comments of a man with whom he had not spoken in years. The man described the impact the chaplain had on his life and how blessed he had been by his ministry, his teaching, and his example.

The chaplain realized this had been during a time when he had struggled spiritually, and he did not *feel* fruitful, or that he was having any meaningful impact. He realized God had used him despite his weaknesses. He learned that God works in ways we may never understand.

The Bible reminds us that we never really know the impact of our lives or what other people are going through. We must be careful not to base our conclusions on our feelings. The reality is that God can use us regardless of how we feel and our perspective.

This truth is expressed in many ways. One way is that we are to sow seeds all the time, for we never know “*whether morning or evening sowing will succeed.*” We are to trust God continually, being faithful to fulfill our calling, trusting Him to bless our efforts and bring about the harvest in His time.

Where are you sowing your seed this week?

Sow your seed in the morning and do not be idle in the evening, for you do not know whether morning or evening sowing will succeed, or whether both of them alike will be good.

Ecclesiastes 11:6 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, help me be faithful with the time, talents, and resources You have given me. Use me to impact others. In Jesus' name, amen.

May I never boast about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Galatians 6:14 ESV

Boasts

BIBLE READING: GALATIANS 6

John Bowring could have boasted for many reasons. In his wide-ranging career, he had been an economist, writer, member of parliament, and governor of Hong Kong. These successes gave him many opportunities to exercise influence and attract praise. Yet, instead, a devout believer, he gave all the glory to God.

One day, Bowring was on a ship, sailing past the coast of Macao, China, and saw on the shore the remains of an old church that had been ravaged by fire. Above the ruins, the spire of the church remained in place, with a cross standing strong and tall. That cross reminded him of what was important in his life.

Instead of glorying in the successes of his career, he provided his perspective in a hymn he wrote, "In the Cross of Christ I Glory." He described how the cross towered over every event in human history.

His life had been filled with ups and downs, but the cross changed everything. The cross never disappointed: "It glows with peace and joy." The cross provided a peace "that knows no measure, joys that through all time abide."

Bowring's tombstone is marked not by his many accomplishments but by the title of this hymn. Even in death, he pointed everyone to Jesus. Today, do not glory in your accomplishments or the praise you have received. Never boast in anything except the cross of Jesus.

PRAYER:

Father, I glory in the cross of Christ. Thank You that He came to die for me. Thank You for forgiving my sins. In Jesus' name, amen.

Reflect on what the cross of Christ means to you.

A Firm Foundation

BIBLE READING: DEUTERONOMY 17

God knew that, eventually, Israel would want to be ruled by kings. So before Israel entered the Promised Land, He provided instructions to help guide the preparation of their kings.

As a primary training commitment, kings were required to write their own copy of the Law and read it every day. It was not enough just to know about God's Word. It had to be central to their personal lives to shape their thoughts and actions.

God knew that His Word would provide focus, keep kings humble, and give them wisdom to make the right decisions, and a firm foundation.

Each of us needs this same commitment. Many Christians are filled with fear and worry and fail to experience victory. To be protected, blessed, and guided by God, we need to read, study, and think about His Word, and make the Bible a central part of our lives every day.

The Bible gives us practical principles that apply to our relationships, finances, and personal lives. It keeps us on the right path, helps us stay focused, and prevents mistakes, presumptions, and sins.

Today, remember the Bible's promise that God wants to bless you and give you wisdom and guidance. How can you stay grounded? By filling your life with His Word, reading it, studying it, and applying its principles. It will be a lamp to your feet and a light to your path (Psalm 119:105).

What is your current Bible reading plan (not just a devotional)?

When he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law...He shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God.

Deuteronomy 17:18-19
ESV

PRAYER:

Father, fill my heart and mind with Your Word. I seek to receive Your wisdom, guidance, and blessing. Thank You. In Jesus' name, amen.

And Jacob saw the countenance of Laban, and indeed it was not favorable toward him as before.

Genesis 31:2 NKJV

Moods

BIBLE READING: GENESIS 31

Just looking at the face of his father-in-law Laban, Jacob could tell that their relationship had changed. Changes could be sensed in the atmosphere.

Divisions had formed between the families of Jacob and Laban. Jacob felt deceived by Laban, who was not happy that Jacob had taken Laban's daughters and some of his flocks. He was taking them hundreds of miles away.

As this story reminds us, we communicate through our moods. Sensitive people can read us. A recent study proved that people are capable of catching the mood of others. In this study, changes were recorded over six months. The study found that the strength of relationships was influenced by the time people spent together, through their emotions. We communicate through our moods.

Moods can influence families and marriages. Moods can reflect relationships and friendships. Moods can be an important part of our testimony, helping demonstrate our deepest emotions and the depths of our sincerity.

Think about the many ways you can impact others. People all around are reading you through your moods. You are communicating what is going on in your heart and mind.

The Bible reminds us that our moods can influence our relationships. You are communicating through your countenance, words, attitudes, actions, and emotions. Your relationship with Jesus impacts all these things.

What mood is your face reflecting to those around you today?

Are You Able?

BIBLE READING: MARK 10

While on the faculty at the Boston University Theological Seminary, Earl Marlatt was asked to write a hymn for a consecration service. Thinking about his audience, Marlatt wrote music that focused on the ministry and obstacles his students would face.

He urged his listeners to think about the apostles James and John, who asked Jesus for special positions in His Kingdom. Instead, Jesus told them they had to be willing to die to self. In the same way, Marlatt asked whether we are able to relinquish dreams of power and fame. Are we able to forgive those who wronged us?

Marlatt realized that Jesus speaks to each of us about our willingness to trust God. We are asked if we are able to be crucified with Jesus, to die to self, and be determined to follow Jesus wherever He might lead.

In every situation, Marlatt urges us to realize we become able when we submit our lives to God. His prayer: "Lord, we are able. Our spirits are Thine. Remold them, make us, like Thee, divine." Depending on Jesus, we can become "a beacon to God, to love and loyalty."

In your life, remember God has a special assignment just for you. But you cannot depend on your abilities. Instead, humble yourself before God. Commit your life to Him. Allow Him to mold you into His image and be a vessel for His power to change lives.

Write a prayer of surrender.

Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?

Mark 10:38 NKJV

PRAYER:

Father, show me the assignments You have given me. Remold and make me. Fill me with Your Spirit. I surrender my life to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.

Genesis 18:14 NKJV

PRAYER:

Father, I commit this situation to You: _____ . I believe You can solve this problem. Nothing is too hard for You. In Jesus' name, amen.

What seemingly impossible situation are you facing currently?

Too Hard?

BIBLE READING: GENESIS 18

Lord Kelvin, William Thomson, was a giant of science. Among his many contributions, he introduced a temperature scale that begins at absolute zero, still known as the Kelvin scale. But his understanding was not perfect.

In 1895, as he considered the idea of flight, Kelvin stated that “heavier-than-air flying machines are impossible.” Time would prove him wrong. This brilliant man could not conceive that human flight was possible. Yet within just a few years, the first airplane flight took place.

Sarah and Abraham, too, thought they faced an impossible situation. She had “*passed the age of childbearing*” and laughed when they were told that she would have a son (vs. 11–12). But the Lord said, “*Is anything too hard for the LORD?*” What seemed inconceivable to Sarah and Abraham was possible for God. Just as was foretold, the miracle took place, and she gave birth to Isaac.

How easily we can allow our understanding of the world to restrict what we think God can do. How often do we limit Him and assume that there are things too hard for Him? We can easily forget He has no limitations!

You may be facing situations that seem hopeless. But the Bible reminds us that God can do anything. Do not limit your expectations of what He can do for you. Declare His promise to be true. Pray with boldness. Believe His infinite power is available for you. Remember, nothing is impossible for God!

What You Should Know

BIBLE READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 6

Paul wanted to make sure his readers had a clear understanding of what they knew. The words here translated as “*do you not know*” are repeated six times in this chapter. Paul wanted it to be clear that there was a gap between what these Corinthians should know and what they were doing. They had received instructions and been taught the truth. But they were not living according to what they *should* know. This gap caused many problems.

Gaps like these can cause trouble for us as well. To experience victorious living and God’s blessings, we need to know His promises and put them into practice. We may experience problems because we are not living according to the promises of the Bible, what we *should* know. These gaps may be the source of conflict and anger, confusion and uncertainty, frustration and bitterness, and other mistakes.

Today, remember that God wants to bless you, answer your prayers, and give you victory. He wants you to experience the blessings of a covenant relationship with Him. But this requires that you be *sure* of what you know and *confident* in Him. Have you filled your mind and heart with the promises in His Word? Make sure that the Bible is the foundation of your life.

How sure are you about what you believe? Make sure you know His truths and put them into practice.

What can you do today to increase your knowledge of the Word?

Do you not know that the saints will judge the world... Do you not know that we shall judge angels? [...] Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?

1 Corinthians 6:2–3, 9
NKJV

PRAYER:

Father, help me to be sure of what I know. I seek Your truth. Help me live according to Your Word. In Jesus' name, amen.

Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.

1 Corinthians 10:11–12 ESV

PRAYER:

Father, help me learn the patterns and principles You have revealed in Your Word. Give me insights. In Jesus' name, amen.

What have you learned from history?

Examples

BIBLE READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 10

A dedicated student of history, Edward Gibbon discovered patterns that were repeated throughout the world and every generation. Many of these discoveries emerged after he visited Rome in 1764. Through his studies, he was inspired to write a history of this city. He hoped that others would benefit from his insights.

The first volume of this work, which was titled *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, was published in 1776. The impact of his research and writing was overwhelming. His book continues to be read to this day and is packed with insights into the trends that strengthened Rome, but also those that led to its fall.

Near the beginning of this book, he stated his conclusion that history is “little more than the register of the crimes, follies, and misfortunes of mankind.” He hoped younger generations would benefit from his studies and avoid the mistakes of older generations.

Gibbon also observed, “It is the peculiar felicity of youth that the most unpleasing objects and events seldom make a deep or lasting impression; it forgets the past, enjoys the present, and anticipates the future.”

The Bible tells us that God has given us examples to help us recognize patterns and learn from history and the experiences of others. Learn from the examples provided by men and women. Learn from the warnings given in His Word. Learn from the insights He has provided.

Manipulation

BIBLE READING: 1 JOHN 2

Colonel Wilhelm Stieber was a master manipulator. Described as “one of the nastiest men who ever lived,” he revealed his character while a young member of the Prussian police. Even they dismissed him because of his abuses. However, the Russian government liked his methods and hired him.

Stieber learned that by *controlling information* he could *shape* reality to his own design. He doctored telegrams and spread false rumors. Typical of his methods, during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, he planted a story that French troops were panicking and suffering “appalling losses.” The story was complete fiction, but his fabricated account accomplished his purposes.

In our time, many in business and politics have applied similar techniques. Believers need to realize the many ways information is manipulated by the media. The Bible warns us to be alert, so as not to be deceived “*with empty words*” (Ephesians 5:6) or well-crafted arguments (Colossians 2:4). We even deceive ourselves sometimes (1 Corinthians 3:18).

Most seriously, we must remember that Satan desires to *deceive* us by planting ideas in our minds and manipulating our thoughts. As Jesus warned, Satan “*is a liar and the father of lies*” (John 8:44).

Remember, in the world you will face many forms of manipulation. This is why you need to base your thoughts on God’s Word. Stay grounded in His Word. Be filled with the Spirit and sensitive to His leading. Always be alert.

How are you guarding your mind against the lies of the enemy?

These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you.

1 John 2:26 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, guide my thoughts. Help me guard what I allow into my heart and mind. Help me stay free from deception. In Jesus' name, amen.

Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.

1 Samuel 16:7 ESV

PRAYER:

Father, give me an attitude that pleases You. Thank You that You are with me. I trust You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Check your current heart attitude.

Your Heart

BIBLE READING: 1 SAMUEL 16

David seemed to lack the qualifications needed to be a king. Not even his father, Jesse, thought he was worthy of consideration. He was young and inexperienced. Yet, to God he was perfectly equipped and prepared. Why? Because God was looking at his heart.

David could have been unsettled by his critics. But he was willing to trust God in every situation. He realized His principles always applied. At a time when others were timid or afraid, David had faith and was willing to trust God.

Of all the people in the kingdom, David was most ready to be king. Others may have been intimidated by the giant Goliath, but David trusted God and knew that He would give him victory.

David had learned key biblical principles when he was a shepherd. They worked whether he faced an army, a giant, or a wild animal. He simply applied what he learned and trusted God.

The Bible reminds us of the importance of having the right attitude in the sight of God. This was central to David's success. He was willing and humble. He trusted God and applied the insights he had been given. Most of all, God's anointing was on him, and he was blessed and called by Him.

Today, trust God to help you in every situation you face. Don't be afraid or intimidated. Have faith and believe. Remember, God is looking at your heart.

Honest Cries

BIBLE READING: PSALM 18

How do we respond to problems? We can learn much from David's example.

He faced many kinds of problems—some serious, some minor, and some life threatening. But in each case, he learned to turn to God. He prayed fervently and intensely, regardless of the severity of the problem.

He was not afraid to cry out to God and seek Him with a boldness that reflected the concerns of his heart. When feeling panic, he cried to God for His mercy and help (Psalm 31:22).

At a time when his heart was overwhelmed, he waited patiently for God's help. *"And he turned to me and heard my cry"* (Psalm 40:1). Wherever he was, David turned to God: *"From the ends of the earth, I cry to you for help when my heart is overwhelmed."* He felt that God provided him with a *"towering rock of safety"* (Psalm 61:2).

What needs do you have? Do you face problems that don't seem to have solutions? The Bible encourages you to pray. Don't hesitate to cry out to Him. Don't hesitate to pray with a sense of desperation, passion, and intensity. Be persistent in prayer no matter how serious the situation might seem, how strong the opposition, or how hopeless the problem might seem.

Pray with persistence and intensity. Pray with faith and honesty. Cry out to God.

Compose a heartfelt prayer for protection and provision.

But in my distress I cried out to the LORD; yes, I prayed to my God for help. He heard me from his sanctuary; my cry to him reached his ears.

Psalm 18:6 NLT

PRAYER:

Father, I commit this situation to You: _____. I urgently need Your help. I cry out to You. Please help me. In Jesus' name, amen.

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

Matthew 11:28 ESV

Come To Jesus

BIBLE READING: MATTHEW 11

As a boy growing up in Boston, George Root was a trained pianist. Later he taught music and played the organ at a church. Born in 1820, Root was also a prolific composer, writing and editing many hymns.

Gaining respect, he toured Europe with much success. After returning to the States, he spent increasing time writing his own music. Influenced by America’s Civil War, Root’s focus was drawn to songs about the war. In 1864, he published “The Battle Cry of Freedom,” which served as a kind of war anthem for many.

While gaining significant commercial credibility, Root also continued to focus on his Christian faith, composing hymns that pointed people to Jesus. We see his priorities clearly in the hymn “Come to the Savior.”

He urged sinners to come to Jesus without delay. Realize that He tenderly calls people to come to Him. Root knew there were many reasons to hold back. But he assured doubters that we can be confident in Jesus and know that this relationship would be joyful. He can cleanse our hearts from sin and make us pure and free.

As we face challenges, we never should be reluctant but “leap forth and rejoice.” And “make Him your choice.” Realize Jesus is ready. As Root imagined, He tenderly asked, “Will you, My children, come?”

Today, come to Jesus. Don’t hesitate or be reluctant. He promises to give you peace and rest.

What are you bringing to Jesus today?

Shaping Your Life

BIBLE READING: 1 KINGS 12

Rehoboam could have had the best advice possible. The grandson of David and son of Solomon, he became king of Israel at a time when sensitive issues were being debated.

He could have prayed, sought God’s leading, and examined the principles found in God’s Word. He could have sought God for discernment or examined decisions made by others, learning from their experiences. He could have sought the recommendations of Israel’s elders and studied examples from history. He could have applied insights taught by his father and grandfather.

Instead, he turned to friends who guided him in the wrong direction. The result was disaster and the division of the kingdom.

The Bible provides many examples of the importance of having the right influences. We need to be careful who we allow to advise us and to whom we listen when we need to make decisions.

Who are the people helping shape your life? Where are you turning when you need to make decisions? Books? The examples encouraged in the media? Advice you receive from social media?

Think about the decisions you need to make. Be careful to whom you listen and what you are reading. Remember, place your confidence in God. Seek the wisdom found in His Word. Pray about problems you face and seek His guidance. Stay sensitive to His Spirit. Trust Him to help you make wise decisions.

What situation are you seeking advice for currently?

Rehoboam rejected the advice of the elders 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 You to guide me. In Jesus’ name, amen.



The Lord Is with You

Take comfort in knowing God is by your side, ready to stand with you in your struggles and battles.

If fear is keeping you from living God's absolute best for your life today, the Lord wants you to know an important truth: He is with YOU. In Isaiah 41:10 God reminds us, "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand" (NKJV). Today, we pray peace for you, knowing God is by your side.

But notice He also promises something just as amazing in that same verse. He says that He will STRENGTHEN and HELP you, upholding you with His mighty right hand. Isn't that incredible?

Throughout the Bible, God's people learned to use these two

important truths to overcome their fears. In Psalm 118:6 (NASB), the psalmist said, "The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?" If Christ truly lives in you, and you've surrendered your life to Him, rest assured that He is with you, and He's on your side to fight your battles.

Isaiah 54:17 says that no weapon formed against you will prosper. So what do you have to fear with God on your side? Perhaps you're thinking at this point, *But you don't know what I'm going through. I'm walking through some VERY scary circumstances!*

Our hearts go out to you if you're dealing with situations today that are making you

afraid—maybe in your health, your finances, or your family. But remember King David's powerful statement in Psalm 23:4, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me" (NKJV).

Even if you find yourself walking through what seems to be "the valley of the shadow of death," you can be confident that God is with you! The Bible says in His hand is power and might, and none can stand against Him. That's your Heavenly Father. He loves you. His angels watch over you. If God is for you, who can stand against you?

Romans 8 says that the Spirit is praying for you! And nothing can separate you from His love...not tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword.

You overcome all these things through Him. Paul wrote he was convinced, "Neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39 NKJV).

No matter what your circumstances today, He will fight as a mighty warrior on your behalf. You can be confident of His love for you. Don't be afraid...He is with you! ❖

Scriptures to meditate on this month:



Week One

"Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."

Matthew 1:23 NKJV



Week Two

Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

Matthew 28:20 NKJV



Week Three

*Where can I go from Your Spirit?
Or where can I flee from Your presence?*

Psalm 139:7 NKJV



Week Four

For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

Ephesians 2:18 NKJV

Trading Despair for Delight

A seemingly small step of faith led to amazing breakthroughs.



Henry and Bukola moved from Nigeria to the US in hopes that American doctors could find a cure for their son's chronic asthma. Just six years old, their son Ade loved soccer, but his severe asthma made running very difficult. To their disappointment, the American doctors just recommended more breathing medications for Ade.

Henry and Bukola were discouraged. "Without a steady job, our finances were very low, and we wondered if we had made a great mistake by coming here," they recall.

But things began to turn around when they watched Inspiration Ministries' "Uncommon Harvest" special one day. They began sowing monthly financial seeds into God's Kingdom, even though it didn't seem like they could afford to do so.

Bukola told her husband, "We cannot do this...but we MUST do this!"

Soon their breakthroughs came. A local sports organization

offered Henry his dream job, training young soccer players. Then an even greater miracle happened when Ade was completely healed.

"We sensed the Lord telling us to throw away all of our son's inhalers and medications," Henry says. "Since that day, Ade needs no medications at all! He's a great soccer player and also represented his school on a mile run this year. Praise Jesus!"

Grateful for how God has used Inspiration Ministries in their lives, Henry and Bukola write: "These are just a few of God's blessings as we continue to partner with you to win souls. Your encouraging words and resources have made us feel at home in a strange land!"

If you need a breakthrough in your finances, health, emotions, or family, follow the example of Henry and Bukola—take a step of faith to sow a seed into God's Kingdom, giving it a specific assignment for the turnaround you need! ❖



A Merry Heart...

does good, like medicine. – Proverbs 17:22

Put that on a Bumper Sticker!

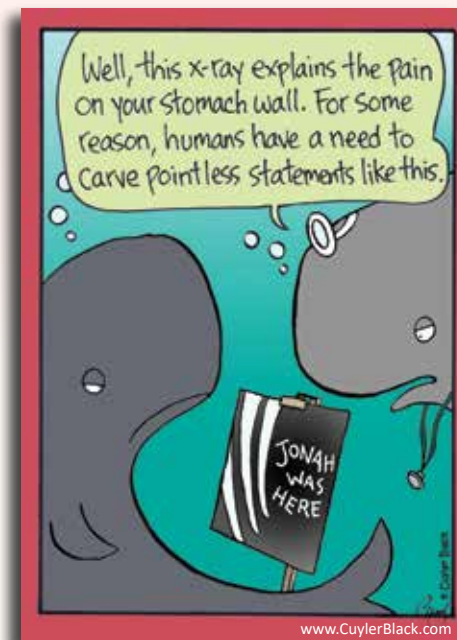
Our church is like fudge: sweet with a few nuts.

I want to be so full of Christ that if a mosquito bites me, he flies away singing, "There's power in the blood."

Honk if you love Jesus; text if you want to meet Him.

I may not be perfect, but Jesus thinks I'm to die for.

Jesus said, "I'll be back" way before Arnold did.



When we keep God in first place, everything else falls into place.

God recycles. He made you from dust.

God is interested in spiritual fruit, not religious nuts.

Acting perfect in church is like dressing up for an X-ray.

Adam and Eve: The first people not to read the Apple terms and conditions.

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

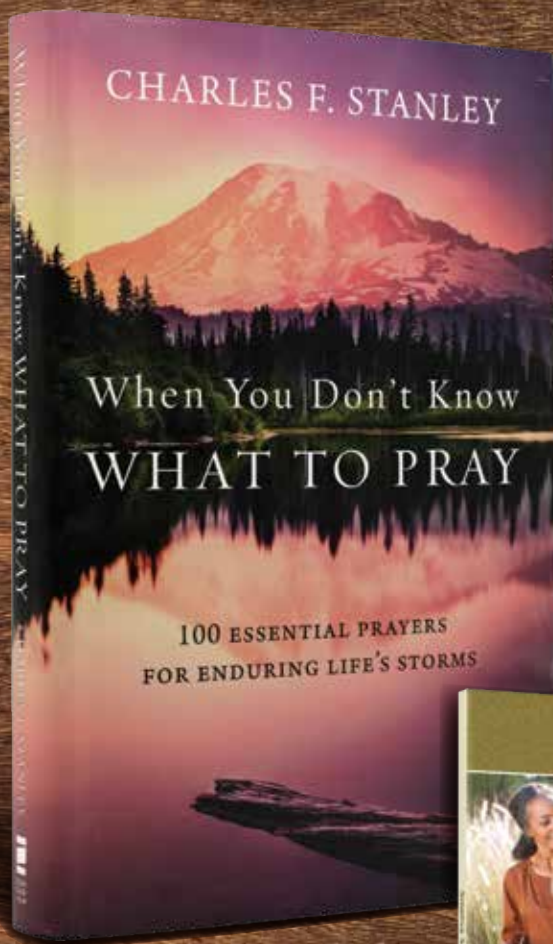
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