

SEPTEMBER 2022

# inspiration

M A G A Z I N E



## Be Restored!

Lecrae's  
Journey

Victory in  
Kenya

Catch  
the Wave



PAGE 10



PAGE 16

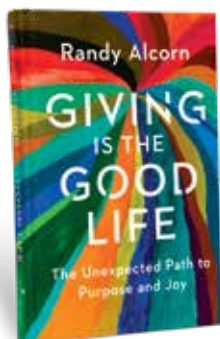


PAGE 52

## God Wants You Restored!



The foundation of our hope is God's work on our behalf! David's article on **page 5**, "**God Wants You Restored**," shows you from Scripture how God rebukes the devourer and pours out blessings on His children. Everything the enemy has stolen from you can be restored – step into God's plans for you today!



**Our THANK  
YOU GIFT for  
your partnership  
this month!**

(See page 28 for details.)

## EDITOR'S CORNER



God specializes in making broken things beautiful! It reminds me of the Japanese art form of kintsugi. Instead of throwing away broken pottery, artisans will mend the pieces with lacquer and powdered gold. The damage becomes part of the piece's unique history. When God mends broken lives, they become stronger and more beautiful than before!

My prayer is that this month's *INSPIRATION* magazine increases your certainty in God's desire and ability to bring restoration to your life! There is nothing life can bring that God cannot transform into beauty and strength. May you be filled with joy and confidence in the One who makes all things new!

## 10 **Finding My Way**

*By Lecrae*

Born into a world of gangs, guns, and drugs, Lecrae was headed for a future of destruction and violence. See how God used his love of music to restore his soul.

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Refresh yourself in the Word daily to restore your soul.

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*Exploring the Names of God*

Even amid your troubles and pain, Jesus is there to pick up the pieces and restore you.

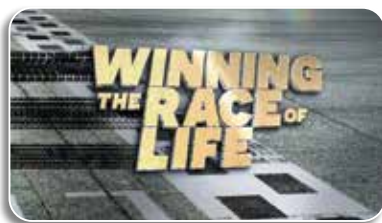
## 52 **Catch the Wave**

*By Ben Cerullo*

Ben gives you four simple steps to living fully in the excitement of God's plans for you!



# THE ROAD TO VICTORY



## September 5 – 16

Join David Cerullo at the NASCAR Hall of Fame to fuel up with the Holy Spirit. Buckle up, put the pedal to the metal, and zip in to victory lane.

## September 19 - 30

Dr. Michael Stevens brings you fresh insights and practical tips on how to appropriate the power of the Word and conquer every challenge!



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# GOD WANTS YOU RESTORED!



**STRENGTHEN**  
*your walk*  
with David Cerullo

The great prophet Jeremiah wept as he saw his city Jerusalem captured by King Nebuchadnezzar. Why would God allow His people to experience such defeat? Jeremiah knew it was because they had rebelled against the Lord and disobeyed His Word.

As we face personal trials and witness our nation's tragic departure from God, it's easy to become discouraged and lose hope. But Jeremiah saw hope during his difficult circumstances:

*This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope.  
Through the LORD's mercies we are not  
consumed, because His compassions fail not.  
They are new every morning;  
**Great is Your faithfulness.***

*"The LORD is my portion," says my soul,  
"Therefore I hope in Him!"  
(Lamentations 3:21-24)*

We need to remember these encouraging words today. As the world around us is being shaken, we need to keep our eyes on the Lord, "because His compassions fail not."

## HE HAS OVERCOME

Jesus reminded us in John 16:33, *“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world”* (NIV).

Let that verse sink into your spirit. Even as our jobs, retirement accounts, pensions, marriages, children, health, and savings are shaken at times, our faith must rest on that which *cannot* be shaken...the truth of God and His promises to us.

Jesus, our Savior, has overcome the world. When we seek His Kingdom first and build our lives upon Him as our solid Rock, we have nothing to fear when shockwaves cause things around us to crumble:

***“In this world  
you will have  
trouble. But  
take heart!  
I have  
overcome  
the world”***  
(John 16:33 NIV).

*A thousand may fall at your side,  
And ten thousand at your right hand;  
But it shall not come near you.*

*Only with your eyes shall you look,  
And see the reward of the wicked.  
Because you have made the LORD,  
who is my refuge, even the Most High,  
your dwelling place  
(Psalm 91:7-9).*

God wants to be our dwelling place and refuge during life's storms and shakings, but this means looking to *Him* as our hope – not to the world's resources or news headlines.

When we put our hope and trust in Him, we can be certain He will see us through. We don't need to fear, for *our* foundation can stand firm even when everything around us is seemingly in turmoil (Matthew 7:24-27)!

## HOPE RENEWED!

You may be saying, “But, David, you don't understand. I've lost so much. My finances have

been hit hard...my health has suffered...and my relationships are frayed.”

My friend, God wants you to know He can restore *everything* the enemy has stolen from you.

In 1 Samuel 30, David and his men returned to their homes in Ziklag and found that the Amalekites had looted the town and taken their wives and children captive. This was such a horrible situation that the men “*lifted up their voices and wept, until they had no more power to weep*” (v. 4). Perhaps this is how you’re feeling about *your* circumstances today, but David’s story doesn’t end here – and neither will yours!

Rather than being overcome by despair, “*David inquired of the LORD*” (v. 8) and sought God’s strategy for a counterattack. After he prayed and received God’s encouragement, David immediately went on the *offensive* against the enemy – the same thing we must do to overcome the schemes of the devil in *our* lives.

God restored everything David and his men had lost:

*So David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away...and nothing of theirs was lacking, either small or great, sons or daughters, spoil or anything which they had taken from them; David recovered all* (vs. 18-19).

Just as He did for David, the Lord wants to help you recover *all* that the enemy has stolen! Instead of accepting defeat, it’s time to go on the offensive!

In fact, I believe God wants to give you even MORE than you had before any loss you’ve experienced. Proverbs 6:30-31 says when a thief is found, he must repay the victim *sevenfold* what was stolen! So if the devil has stolen something precious from your life, I encourage you to boldly declare God’s Word and expect a sevenfold return!

*God wants  
you to know  
He can restore  
everything  
the enemy  
has stolen  
from you.*

## FAMINE TO ABUNDANCE

Did you know your *personal* economy doesn't have to be shaped by the *world's* economy? In Scripture, God faithfully met the needs of His people even in times of famine or pestilence.

In Genesis 26, there was a severe famine, and most people were bound by fear. Yet we read that Isaac trusted God to bless Him with a great harvest even while others were panicking:

*Then Isaac sowed in that land, and reaped in the same year a hundredfold; and the LORD blessed him. The man began to prosper, and continued prospering until he became very prosperous* (vs. 12-13).

What a great picture of the abundance God wants to give us today! A hundredfold return in a time of famine! Isaac *"began to prosper...continued prospering...and became VERY prosperous"*!

It's time to cast aside our unbelief and trust God with our lives and our resources. Like Isaac, we need to sow generous financial seeds even in times of fear and famine.

God tells us to TEST Him! How? With our finances: *"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and put me to the test now in this," says the LORD of armies*" (Malachi 3:10 NASB).

If you obey Him *"in this,"* the Lord goes on to promise that He will *"open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows."* Do you want a life marked by overflowing abundance? I know I do!

God says, *"I will rebuke the devourer for you"* (v. 11 NASB). Then He promises to restore even greater blessings than you lost!

I am grateful for your faithful partnership to win souls through Inspiration Ministries, and we're praying for God to give you a mighty breakthrough – from famine to abundance! We believe great things are ahead for you and for this ministry we share together.

Your friend and partner,



P.S. Don't forget to order your THANK YOU GIFT this month. Randy Alcorn wrote ***Giving Is the Good Life*** to help you open new doors of God's abundant blessings. See page 28 for details!





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# Finding My Way

God used Lecrae's love of music to restore his soul.



“Ayo!” The neighborhood OG’s voice cut through street-corner clowning and stopped us in our tracks. “These Crips keep comin’ ’round here...Y’all gotta get some getback. Y’all got a gun?” One of my friends swallowed hard and nodded to a tree where he hid our lone weapon of defense from rival gangs. “Cool. The next time they come around here, you *shoot first*.”

I spent summers with my uncle, getting tough, running the streets, and searching for significance. I enjoyed my time there, even though it was filled with chaos. I now know that’s all they knew. I saw shootings, drug arrests, and other things a kid shouldn’t be exposed to at that age. But I’ll never forget when that guy told us to “shoot first.”

I looked around like I was in a dream. My friends’ eyes were glued to him, drinking in his instructions and processing how they would act on them. *What is wrong with y’all?* I thought to myself as I half-listened to advice that I just knew would get one of us killed.

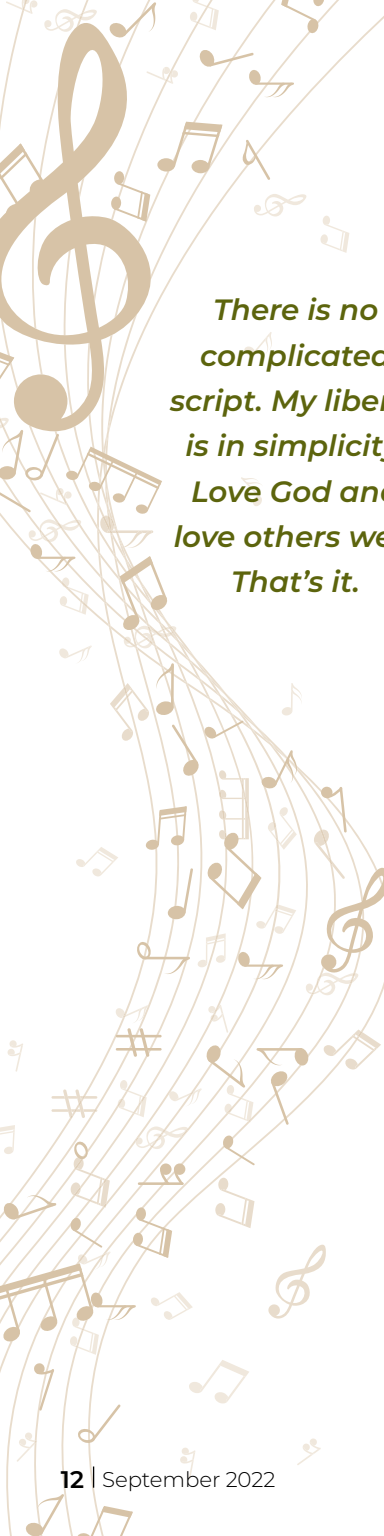
This was my moment of clarity. *Forget this tough guy act. I don’t have to live like this.* At that moment, before my conversion to Christ, before I had the privilege of a healthy community, I knew I had options. Earlier that year, my auntie had sent me a postcard from Japan. I stared at the scenery

for the longest time. It helped me to see that the world is bigger than this neighborhood pettiness. I didn’t want to be a street dude, and I wasn’t built for it.

When I found hip-hop, I felt like it was all I needed to fill in any of my life gaps. I didn’t want to excavate the problems of my past to get healed. I didn’t want to enter the chaos because I was convinced it would consume me.

When I stepped onto the stage for a talent show at the Boys and Girls Club at age eleven, I never expected any of my hood friends to love what I did. But watching their frenzied reaction made me say, “Oh, I love this.” I enjoyed hip-hop music as a consumer, but to be appreciated for performing was a different level. It felt right.

After I ran from a knife-wielding kid in the sixth grade, I had my moment of redemption. I beat a notorious tough kid in a rap battle. That was the first moment that I felt special. He was perceived as a young gangster, a tough guy just like the men in my life. I wasn’t quite sure how people perceived me, but I knew it wasn’t positive. They thought I was scared, cowardly, or unathletic. In any case, I felt like I didn’t belong. I would lash out, but not in the same way as other kids. I already felt ashamed because I had had a knife pulled on me.



***There is no  
complicated  
script. My liberty  
is in simplicity.  
Love God and  
love others well.  
That's it.***

When I beat that kid in that rap battle, something shifted in my heart. “Ohhhhh,” the crowd erupted. I was engulfed by the same people who made fun of me. I hadn’t even hit puberty yet. My voice hadn’t changed. But my consumption of hip-hop culture paid off in the admiration of my friends. Maybe I couldn’t beat anyone up, but I could beat them with my words. I won, and it kept going. I was the reigning rap champion. No one could touch me. Rap became part of the identity of my reputation. “Y’all know Lecrae can rap.” That was the identity marker I needed to ignore all this manhood chaos that I couldn’t escape.

Even after my conversion, I still clung to this part of my identity. It looked a little different at that point because people weren’t just praising my skill. They praised how my skill showcased my devotion to Jesus. The crowds surrounded me just enough to hide the chaos. I was addicted to alcohol and popping pills to numb myself from the pain of addressing my past. I came perilously close to sabotaging the beautiful family God gave me.

The pressure to prove my manhood shifted into a pressure to prove that my devotion to God was legitimate. The bloggers, the theologians, and the fans were watching like hawks to see if I would slip up. And the culture considered me a standard-bearer for this different wave of music. They

were tempting me with what they passed at parties and private events.

In the middle of navigating this broken reality, I was forced to ask myself, *Where is the script to show me what it is to be a man? Who will show me what it means to be a father? If my own father failed, how can I succeed? If my own dad was a screwup, I guess I'm destined to be that as well, right? Where's my pathway to fulfilling this role?*

I remember reading the work of a professor who specializes in the divinity of Jesus. He remarked that in the Torah there are detailed scripts of what the temple priests were supposed to do. With painful attention to detail, each of the priests had to follow the temple rules or receive strict, even fatal, consequences.

But ironically, there are no specific rules in Scripture for being a king. Sure, there are prayers that they could cling to and general principles that would be wise for

kings. But there was no script for how to rule, no script for how to lead, no script for royalty. This gave me hope because as a man, I don't necessarily have a script for how to exist in my world. I couldn't follow the script that came from the men around me or my father.

But over time, I have become convinced that God had a script for me to follow. His script is simply to love Him completely, love my neighbors faithfully, and navigate life in light of these two commands. My responsibility is to love my wife and kids well and remain faithful to them. That's what it means to be a father even when I don't have a father. For years I was convinced there was a "man script" for every contour of my behavior, and God had to show me there are all types of men in His kingdom, living different but faithful lives. There is no complicated script. My liberty is in simplicity. Love God and love others well. That's it. ❖



**Lecrae**, in his own words, is a catalyzer who does not fit any one category. He holds fast to his faith in Christ and his family and embraces his multi-faceted, influential music career.

Excerpt from *I Am Restored* by Lecrae. Published by Zondervan Books, © 2020. Used with Permission.



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# Victory in Kenya

**Ronald experienced breakthrough when he trusted the living God.**

God has a great inheritance for you, but an enemy wants to steal it. This thief blinds believers to God's goodness, but it doesn't have to be that way!

We believe you will be encouraged by this victory story from our Kenyan partner. First, some facts about the harshness of life there:

- Over 50% of the population lives below the poverty line.
- 40% of the people live on less than \$2 a day.
- Less than 3% of the population will live past age 65.

Despite the swirling turmoil in that country, however, Ronald spoke only inspiring words of thankfulness.

"My father had four wives. He was a teacher in the village, so I had to adapt to living with my siblings from other mothers to pursue my primary education. My father

could not pay school fees for his 20 children, so I could not go on to university.

"But God was on my side. I was able to get a job and a driving license. I married, and we began having children. I was faithful to my jobs and rewarded with promotions."

Through it all, Ronald gave credit to a God he didn't even know – but who was always with him. When Ronald heard the Gospel, he readily received Christ and began giving as generously and faithfully as the God he trusted – once even giving away his only vehicle.

"Eventually, we saved enough money to move from our one-room home to a two-bedroom house that we built. Our children were able to finish university – and now God has given us nine grandchildren. God is so good to us." ❖

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# It's Harvest Time!

Will you help us reach our goal?

Thank you for standing on the frontlines of global evangelism. Although many people around the world do not know Jesus, you are helping transform lives through the power of His name!

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God (John 3:16-18 ESV).*

Our goal for 2022 is for **4.8 MILLION souls** to enter the Kingdom of God. We still have more than **1.3 MILLION hearts** to touch, and we need your help! Can we count on you? Contact us to sow your seed today!

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# From Our Mailbox...

Our daily devotions impact hundreds of thousands of people!

“I just wanted to take the time to, once again, thank God for bringing Inspiration Ministries into my life! I had already given my life to Christ; therefore, my intimacy was growing with Him. However, I fell asleep with the TV on one night and awoke to a pastor asking me to sow a \$1,000 seed. My life has not been the same since the wee hours of that morning. The daily devotions are truly amazing!!

“Pastor Cerullo, you have been blessed with an AMAZING lineup of saints to bring forth the Word of God. EVERY person who brings the wisdom and guidance of the Lord through the Holy Spirit each week has inspired me. Pastor Judy Jacobs had me bawling ALL week. I LOVE HER and wish that she were my personal friend/mentor. I felt the anointing in her. What a beautiful, crisp spirit. I know this message is long, but this goes to show you how BLESSED I feel to be a part of Inspiration Ministries. To you guys I give my time, talents, and treasures. Please let me know how I may be of assistance other than sowing my seeds. Praise God!”

– Denise A., Illinois

Visit [inspiration.org/dailydevotions](https://inspiration.org/dailydevotions) to receive free, daily devotions via email.



# Mountain Men

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: HEBREWS 11

The advertisement changed history. Appearing in 1822 in the *Missouri Gazette & Public Advertiser*, the ad announced the search for one hundred men “to ascend the river Missouri on its source, there to be employed for one, two, or three years.”

The goal was to attract men who would search the American West for fur. Those who responded were among history's most important explorers. They were being asked to leave familiar surroundings to journey into the unknown, not knowing how long they would be gone. They accomplished their initial goal, revolutionizing the fur-trading industry, but they accomplished far more.

These mountain men discovered countless rivers, mountains, valleys, and other landmarks. They gave names to places that are familiar today and paved the way for future generations. The risks they faced were high. Some lost their lives. In the process, they opened territory that previously had been unexplored. Many of these men are relatively unknown, but they were *real* pioneers.

In the spiritual realm, their experience is like the journey of faith. God calls us to follow Him and go where He leads. He wants us to be like Abraham who left everything to follow Him, not “*knowing where he was going*.”

All of us are called to take this journey and walk by faith, trusting God day by day. He wants us to leave everything else behind and follow Him wherever He leads.

What is God calling you to do in the next stage of your life?

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THURSDAY

September

1

*It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance. He went without knowing where he was going.*

Hebrews 11:8 NLT

## PRAYER:

Father, I trust You with my life. I will follow wherever You lead me. Thank You for Your faithfulness to me. In Jesus' name, amen.

FRIDAY

September

2

*I have been the LORD your God since the land of Egypt... I have also spoken to the prophets, and I provided many visions, and through the prophets, I spoke in parables.*

Hosea 12:9-10 NASB

## PRAYER:

Father, help me understand more of Your Word. Give me discernment. Fill me with Your Spirit. Speak to me. In Jesus' name, amen.

# Symbols and Visions

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: HOSEA 12

As God's people faced renewed problems, He reminded them of His longstanding relationship with them. They recalled how He led them out of bondage in Egypt, provided for them in the wilderness, and gave them His Word.

Through Hosea, God reminded the Israelites that He still was speaking to them. He *continued* to call prophets to guide them and provide fresh revelation. Through many visions, He reminded them of His presence, His Word, and His plans. He encouraged them to seek Him and cry out for His wisdom.

Some words God spoke were direct, but He reminded them that He also spoke in "*parables*." The Hebrew word used here can also be translated as symbols. God was saying that He may use word *pictures* to speak to us. This method helps us understand world events and His prophetic vision. We see this same commitment in the ministry of Jesus, who did not speak "*without a parable*" (Matthew 13:34).

God speaks in many ways. He speaks through His anointed servants and His Spirit. By doing so, He guides us, teaches us, and corrects us. He still speaks through symbols, parables, dreams, and visions.

It remains important to base our lives on His Word. We must make the Bible the standard by which everything is compared, so its principles provide our foundation.

Let Him speak to you. Make sure you have ears to hear.

Through what means has God guided you previously?

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# The Sting of Death

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: HOSEA 13

Hundreds of years before Jesus' earthly ministry, the prophet Hosea realized that all people live in the shadow of death. Because it is inevitable and final, death creates a sense of *hopelessness*. Its impact has a "sting" no one can escape. Through prophecy, Hosea foretold that a time would come when death would be *defeated*, and its sting would disappear.

Paul quoted Hosea when he wrote, "Where, O Death, is your victory? Where, O Death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law" (1 Corinthians 15:55-56).

We can still be *plagued* by this sting. We feel its impact through sin whenever we say or do the wrong thing or think wrong thoughts. Our lives can be *pricked* just like a bee sting. We experience this sting through disease, pain, anger, aging, fear, and worry. Words we wish we hadn't spoken sting, as do words others have spoken to or about us.

But as Paul wrote, Jesus changed *everything*. God has given us the victory through Jesus. He came to *free* us from this sting. We become free by *believing* in Him, thanking Him for dying for *our* sins, looking forward to eternal life with Him, and trusting Him as our Savior and Lord.

You can celebrate! Jesus died for *you*, and He rose again. Through Him, you are free from the sting of death. Through Him, you can live in victory.

How are you celebrating Jesus' resurrection all year long?

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SATURDAY

September

3

*Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from death? Death, where are your thorns? Sheol, where is your sting? Compassion will be hidden from My sight.*

Hosea 13:14 NASB

## PRAYER:

Father, thank You that I am free from the sting of death. I celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. Help me to live in Your power. In Jesus' name, amen.

SUNDAY

September

4

*Who is wise? Let him understand these things. Who is prudent? Let him know them. For the ways of the LORD are right; the righteous walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them.*

Hosea 14:9

## PRAYER:

Father, I commit my way to You. Guide me. Help me be an example. Use me to impact others for the Gospel. In Jesus' name, amen.

# The Ways of the Lord

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: HOSEA 14

Putting your faith into action is the key message of the last verse in Hosea's book. This prophet warned that it wasn't enough just to *hear* prophecies or *read* God's Word. We need to put His words into *practice*.

Hosea said the difference is how we react to the "*ways of the LORD*." The keys are obedience and faithfulness. We demonstrate that we are "*righteous*" by *walking* in His ways. We demonstrate wisdom when we "*understand these things*."

If we find ourselves stumbling, this can indicate we are not living in line with His Word. Stumbling suggests we are not sure or confident, that we are off balance, or that we might easily fall.

The way to stop stumbling is to place our confidence in Him, trust Him, humble ourselves before Him, let Him guide us, and focus on obeying His Word.

The New Testament provides a similar message, reminding us, "*faith by itself...is dead and useless*" (James 2:17 NLT). As we obey and are faithful, we put ourselves in a position to receive God's blessings.

How do *you* react to "*the ways of the LORD*"? Are you letting the world shape your thoughts, or have you dedicated your life to obeying God? Remember that His ways "*are right*." Walk in them. Don't be distracted or deceived by the world's short-term ideas or temporary pleasures. Commit your life to God. Seek first His Kingdom, and put His Word into action.

How can you faithfully walk in the ways of the Lord?

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# Rest from our Labor

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: MATTHEW 11

Our world is filled with pressures: the constant threat of wars and violence, bills to be paid, decisions to be made, debt, disease, divisions, and conflict. We are urged to work hard, but that can lead to increased worry and stress.

Throughout society, many voices cry for attention. Countless theories promise satisfaction and success. Stores and websites are filled with how-to books. Commercials and social media offer their solutions. Friends and celebrities give their advice. The choices seem so complex; it's hard to know what to do.

As we read the Bible, the words of Jesus can seem unrealistic. He says all we need to do is come to Him. He promises to give us rest. He offers to take our burdens away and give us peace and meaning. He will provide joy and fulfillment. How simple!

Jesus said childlike simplicity is central to the Kingdom. Unless we become like little children, we can't *enter* His Kingdom. Jesus said, "Whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3-4). Jesus offers an oasis. In Him, we find peace and answers to our questions.

Dare to take Jesus at His word. No matter how complex or stressful life may seem, come to Him. No matter how hopeless your situation may seem, He promises to take your burdens and give you rest.

MONDAY

September

5

*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you...and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.*

Matthew 11:28-30

## PRAYER:

Jesus, I come to you seeking rest for my soul. Help me learn from You. Thank You for peace and for taking away my burdens. In Your name, amen.

What burdens do you need to give to the Lord today?

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TUESDAY

September

6

*But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.*

Luke 8:15

### PRAYER:

Father, I will keep sowing seeds with the resources You have given me. I will not give up. Thank You for the harvest. In Jesus' name, amen.

## Patiently Bearing Fruit

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: LUKE 8

The parable of the sower is told in three of the Gospels. Each of these accounts explains why we must sow seeds to reap a harvest, but only Luke uses the phrase “*bear fruit with patience.*” As his account reminds us, “*patience*” is important to bearing fruit.

Jesus said that seeds that fall on “*good ground*” represent those people who, having heard the word, keep it. They *know* the Word. They don't just talk about it or believe it. They *act* on it and *put it into practice.* They get results! They “*bear fruit with patience.*”

As this verse makes clear, to receive the fruit, we must be *patient* and remember that fruit can take time to grow. We cannot give up or be discouraged when we don't see immediate results.

If you want to experience God's richest blessings, remember the importance of “*patience.*” You must do your part. Be faithful. But you also must trust God through every situation and not give up. God will reward you if you keep sowing seeds into good ground, boldly believing in Him, and persisting in every situation.

Ask God to help you continue to believe His promises and put them into practice. Be steadfast in every situation. Do not waver from your commitment to God and the Gospel. Be faithful and don't give up. Declare God's Word to be true, and continue to be steadfast and patient.

What harvest are you patiently waiting to harvest? Have you sown seeds?

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# A Generational Message

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOEL 1

Most prophets identified *where* they were born and lived, who was king, and the circumstances under which they heard from God. For example, Isaiah received visions during the reign of Uzziah (Isaiah 1:1). Jeremiah heard from God in the days of Jehoiakim (Jeremiah 25:1).

But Joel's prophecies were unique. His book has no external identification. He does not reference kings. The circumstances suggest he lived around the turn of the ninth century BC, yet his prophecies also seem *timeless*, and his words seem to apply to all generations.

As Joel asked of his readers, we need to look around and see the impact of godlessness. Then we will see what happens when people reject God and deny His Word. We will see what happens when sin is accepted.

We too need a wake-up call. Recognize the need to change and repent of our sins. Pray and seek God's face, humble ourselves before Him, and cry out for His forgiveness and mercy.

It's not too late. God's Word tells us His *compassions* never fail but "*are new every morning*" (Lamentations 3:23). As Joel reminded us, God is ready to heal us, forgive us, and restore us. But as in the days of Joel, He waits to see our response.

Listen to Joel's message. Humble *yourself* before God. Seek His face. Cry out for His mercy. Pray for an outpouring of His Spirit. Pray that our generation will return to Him!

WEDNESDAY

September

7

*Hear this...all you inhabitants of the land! Has anything like this happened in your days, or even in the days of your fathers? Tell your children about it, let your children tell their children, and their children another generation.*

Joel 1:2-3

## PRAYER:

Father, I humble myself before You. Be merciful to my country. Forgive our sins. Pour out Your Spirit on us. In Jesus' name, amen.

What's your response to God's calling in your life and your nation?

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THURSDAY

September

8

# The Spirit Poured Out

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOEL 2

Watching the news, we can find ourselves riding an emotional rollercoaster, going up one moment and down the next. We are happy when the news is positive and discouraged when the news seems gloomy.

Riding this rollercoaster, some place their hope and confidence in the economy, government, or politicians. They depend on investments and jobs. They worry about wars and rumors of war and find reasons to be concerned about the future.

For those who truly know God, these can be *extraordinary* days, filled with anticipation. Nonbelievers may see uncertainty, but Christians see prophecy being fulfilled. Conditions can seem unsettling, but Christians see God pouring out His Spirit, reminding us of His sovereign control and His plans, which have been fixed since the beginning of time.

We are seeing the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy about a day when God will pour out His Spirit on all flesh in a time of unprecedented evangelism: *"Whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."*

Millions of people are looking for hope and peace. The exciting news is that we have the answers! We have Jesus, and we have the Holy Spirit!

Ask God to give you a new revelation of His Spirit and fill you anew. Let Him take away your burdens, give you His peace, and reveal more of His wisdom. Be His witness, a vessel of His power.

*It shall come to pass...  
that I will pour out My  
Spirit...your sons and  
your daughters shall  
prophesy, your old men  
shall dream dreams,  
your young men shall  
see visions...whoever  
calls on the name of the  
LORD shall be saved.*

Joel 2:28-32

## PRAYER:

Father, pour out Your Spirit on me. Let me experience more of His presence and power. Use me to bring salvation to the world. In Jesus' name, amen.

Compose a prayer asking for peace and wisdom from God.

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# Energetic Commitment

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 1 PETER 4

Thomas Coke was filled with boundless energy. John Wesley affectionately described him like a flea, for it seemed he was constantly in motion serving God.

Coke was born on this day in 1747 in Wales. He later graduated from Oxford University with a doctorate in civil law. After a brief career in politics, he laid everything aside to focus on ministry. In August 1776, he told John Wesley he was willing to go *anywhere* to spread the Gospel.

He became the first Methodist bishop in America, traveled to the West Indies, and arranged ministry outreaches in Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. On the other side of the Atlantic, he preached in France, traveled to Sierra Leone, established a mission in Gibraltar, and oversaw missions work in Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.

In December 1813, Coke set sail from England to establish a mission in India but died at sea. To the end, he dedicated his life and resources to the Gospel.

Francis Asbury preached a memorial sermon paying tribute to Coke as “the greatest man in the last century.” He inspired people throughout the world, devoting his life to spreading the Gospel “*with all the strength and energy that God supplies.*”

Whatever gifts God gives you, think about the example of Thomas Coke. Invest your life in serving God. Do it with *energy!*

What talents and treasures has God given you to invest in service to Him?

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FRIDAY

September

9

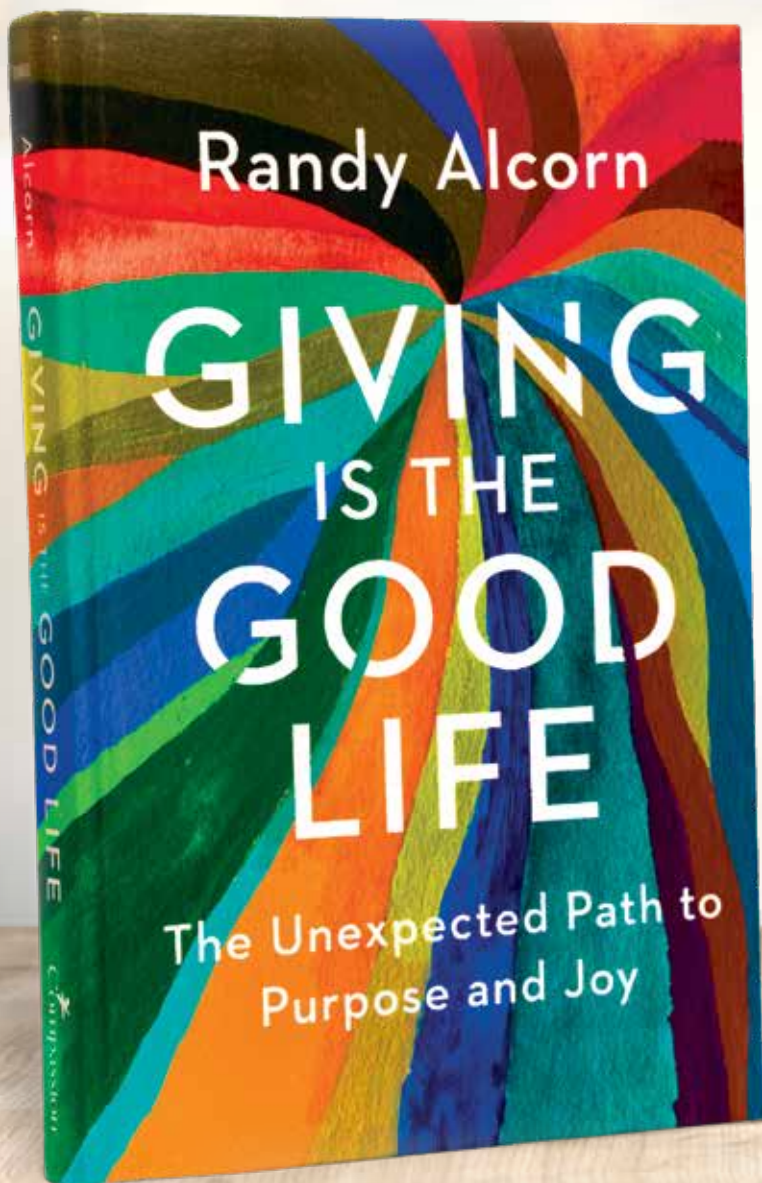
*Speak as though God himself were speaking through you. Do you have the gift of helping others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ.*

1 Peter 4:11 NLT

## PRAYER:

Father, I dedicate my life to serving You. Use me to impact lives for the Gospel. In Jesus' name, amen.

# Are You Living **Your Best Life?**



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## What if everything you've been told about living the good life is wrong?

Jesus didn't just say He came to give you an abundant life – He gave specific instructions on how to experience His blessings. Don't let the world's definition of *good* keep you away from living His *best!*

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SATURDAY

September

10

*Prepare for holy war;  
stir up the warriors!...  
Beat your plowshares  
into swords and your  
pruning hooks into  
spears; let the weak  
man say, "I am a  
warrior." [...] Let the  
nations be awakened...I  
will sit to judge all the  
surrounding nations.*

Joel 3:9-12 NASB

## PRAYER:

Father, I am a soldier in Your army. Keep me from distractions. Help me focus on serving You. Give me a burden for souls! In Jesus' name, amen.

# A Spiritual War

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOEL 3

The prophet Joel received a message: God's people needed to wake up! They needed to take a fresh look at the world and see the problems caused by sin and the results of ignoring God's Word.

God called them to *repent*. He told them to humble themselves and cry out to Him. He wanted them to become serious about their spiritual lives. As they repented, God promised to intervene in the conflicts they faced, fight for them, restore all that had been lost, and bless them.

His people needed to realize that they faced a *real war*! One day, a great conflict will take place as nations will be drawn into battle in the valley of Jehoshaphat.

God told Joel each of us needs to make sure our lives are right in His sight. Is there sin for which we need to repent? Are we seeking Him first? Are we obeying His call? Are we serving Him?

Ask God to help you see the needs in the world and give you a burden for souls. Billions of people have never heard the Gospel. Millions more need to return to Him.

You are a soldier in God's army. Be ready to serve Him and obey His call. Always listen for His commands. Be filled with His Word. Seek first His Kingdom, be armed and ready to use spiritual weapons to tear down the strongholds of the enemy (2 Corinthians 10:4).

Are you heeding the Holy Spirit's prompting? How are you serving God?

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# The Toughest Men

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: HEBREWS 11

Some called them the toughest men in the mountains. They were not trappers, hunters, soldiers, or explorers. These were circuit-riding preachers. These fearless men braved terrifying storms. They suffered hunger and endured extreme climates to spread the Gospel. Some survived swamps filled with alligators. Others battled highway robbers and diseases.

They set out on horseback, preaching wherever it was convenient, like in courthouses, fields, meeting houses, and barns. Settlements were often separated by miles, and churches were very rare. It could take many weeks for these preachers to visit all the believers in a region. Of necessity, they spent much of their lives roaming from town to town, sometimes from home to home. Many battled feelings of loneliness.

Circuit riding preachers gained a reputation for being strong and unyielding. They had to be ready for every kind of challenge and prepared physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Their dedication and enthusiasm provided an inspiring example.

These men were following in the footsteps of believers throughout the ages who dedicated their lives to spreading the Gospel. These people gave up everything to serve the Lord and completely depended on Him.

They provide an example to us, reminding us that God has a special calling for each person. He calls us to follow Him, confident that He will provide whatever we need: endurance, stamina, protection, guidance, courage, and strength.

What do you need God to provide to fulfill His calling?

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SUNDAY

September

11

*They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two...killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated – the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains.*

Hebrews 11:37-38 NIV

## PRAYER:

Father, I desire to serve You. I commit my life to You. Thank You for providing all I need. In Jesus' name, amen.

MONDAY

September

12

*Now Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel.*

1 Chronicles 21:1

## PRAYER:

Father, Your promises are true for me. Thank You for victory in every area of my life. I praise and worship You. In Jesus' name, amen.

# Distractions

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 1 CHRONICLES 21

What does God desire for us? As the Bible makes clear, He desires to bless us *abundantly* (John 10:10). He wants us to be *healthy* and *prosperous* (3 John 1:2), and He wants us to be overwhelmed with peace and joy, not dominated by worry (Matthew 6:25).

God wants us to *trust* Him completely for everything and for our lives to be filled with *praise*. He calls us to *fellowship* with Him. He doesn't want us to feel defeated, discouraged, or uncertain. We should be *confident* He will "*supply all our need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus*" (Philippians 4:19).

In contrast, Satan wants to *prevent* us from experiencing God's blessings. He tempts us and spreads *confusion*. He makes us feel discouraged, worried, and defeated. As he did with Israel, he encourages us to do things that displease God.

We need to think His thoughts, confess His truths, and be aware of the "*strategies of the devil*" (Ephesians 6:11 NLT). We should never be "*ignorant of his devices*" (2 Corinthians 2:11). We need to understand how he thinks and be on guard against his influence, never believing his deception.

Don't allow Satan to steal from you. Confess God's promises. Make sure you have a strong defense, taking up "*the whole armor of God*" and standing firm against the enemy. (Ephesians 6:13). Don't allow Satan to confuse or discourage you. Be filled with the Spirit. Live in victory.

What devices is Satan using to try to keep you from living victoriously?

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Experienced musicians, eager to advance their careers, can find themselves concentrating on difficult music, feeling that basics are just for beginners. But as many experts testify, fundamentals are essential for advancement and development. They are just as important for experienced professionals as they are for beginners.

Underscoring this point, one legendary trumpeter stressed the importance of warming up and practicing long tones. A celebrated trombonist said that aspiring musicians must practice *slow* scales. Like many skilled professionals, these experts taught students to concentrate on playing clearly and with a better tone. They taught them never to overlook the basics and to realize the way to *advance* is to *slow down* and keep *concentrating* on fundamentals.

These same principles apply to our spiritual lives. We can easily take for granted basics, such as reading the Bible, and forget the importance of Bible study at every stage of life. We must continually dig deeper into the Word, memorize it, and pray.

God has not made it complicated. We simply need to trust Him with all our hearts and not lean on our own understanding. As we do these things and acknowledge Him, He promises to make our paths straight (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Have you neglected the basics? Remember that they are key to avoiding mistakes, staying on the right path, and moving toward maturity. Stay humble before God and foster an intimate relationship with Him. Talk with Him, and never tire of studying His Word.

Do you need to slow down and go back to spiritual basics?

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*How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word...do not let me wander from Your commandments. I have treasured Your word in my heart, so that I may not sin against You.*

Psalms 119:9-11 NASB

### PRAYER:

Father, help me remember to stay grounded in Your Word. Never let me forget Your truths. I humble myself before You. In Jesus' name, amen.

WEDNESDAY

September

14

*I heard as it were  
the voice of a great  
multitude, and as the  
voice of many waters,  
and as the voice of  
mighty thunders,  
saying, Alleluia: for the  
Lord God omnipotent  
reigneth.*

Revelation 19:6 KJV

## PRAYER:

Father, I stand in awe  
of Your presence,  
Your power, Your  
glory. I worship You.  
Hallelujah! In Jesus'  
name, amen.

# The Lord Reigns!

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: REVELATION 19

George Frideric Handel achieved fame writing operas, oratorios, and instrumental compositions. But by 1741, the popularity of opera had declined. He was in debt, depressed, and plagued by sleeplessness and rheumatism.

That summer, he accepted an invitation to produce a series of concerts in Dublin. He also received a letter from a man who had previously written librettos for him – lyrics that contained Bible verses. As he read, Handel felt impressed to set these words to music to fulfill that Dublin commitment. Handel locked himself in his study and within three weeks finished an oratorio he called *The Messiah*.

It is said that while writing *The Messiah*, Handel saw visions. While composing the “Hallelujah Chorus,” he saw Heaven open and the hosts worshiping God.

From the music's first performance, this composition was special. At the first London performance when King George III heard the “Hallelujah Chorus,” he was so overwhelmed that he stood and remained standing until the chorus concluded. This began a tradition that continues to this day.

Handel's life was transformed by God's Word and overwhelmed by a vision of Heaven. God's Word and an awareness of Heaven can transform your life too.

Ask God to give you a sense of the glory of Heaven and the greatness of our God. Join the multitudes of the ages singing, “*Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.*”

Describe the glory and awesomeness of Heaven.

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# Preaching Christ

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 1

Born in England in 1708, William Grimshaw grew up in a Christian home. However while in college, he adopted a worldly lifestyle. He became a minister primarily because of the good salary.

Although a pastor, he spent much time playing cards, hunting, fishing, and drinking. Then tragedy struck when a young couple in his church lost a baby. His only guidance was that they enjoy themselves and forget their sorrow.

Disappointed by his own counsel, he began to examine his life. During those months of struggle, his wife died. Sinking deeper into despair, Grimshaw turned to prayer and Bible study. As a result, his life was changed, and he began pointing people to Jesus.

He moved to a village where most people were indifferent to the Gospel. Here, Grimshaw recommitted his life to Christ. His preaching began to have greater power, and people began flocking to church. Word spread that a revival was happening. His messages were often marked with practical illustrations, but, he vowed always to preach Christ.

Looking back, he only regretted that “he had done so little for Jesus.” His greatest joy was that Jesus had done so much for him. After meeting with Grimshaw, John Wesley observed, “A few such as him would make a nation tremble. He carries fire wherever he goes!”

Grimshaw is a powerful example of how God can transform lives. Ask Him to transform *your* life.

What was a turning point in your life when you embraced God more fully?

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THURSDAY

September

15

*We preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness.*

1 Corinthians 1:23 NASB

## PRAYER:

Father, use me to impact others with the Gospel. Thank You for Your protection, power, and blessing. In Jesus' name, amen.

FRIDAY

September

16

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

Genesis 12:1 NASB

## PRAYER:

Father, give me the courage and boldness to believe You in every situation I face. I am willing to step out in faith. I trust You. In Jesus' name, amen.

# The Difference

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: GENESIS 12

The Bible provides an honest account of Abraham's life, including his mistakes and moments of doubt. Even though he was imperfect, God used and blessed him because he was willing to obey God and live by faith.

When God called him, He did not reveal any details about the journey ahead. Abraham did not know his destination, how long the journey would take, or what challenges he would face. He was just called to move forward by faith.

He had to leave his homeland and everything he knew, dedicating everything he had to follow God. Then, and only then, would God show him the land.

Abraham arrived at his destination years later. God kept His promises. He directed him, protected him, and blessed him – all because Abraham was willing to live by faith.

The Bible assures us that God has a plan and destiny for each of us, but, like Abraham, we must be willing to step out in faith and put our faith into action. We too need to be willing to move forward day after day, even when we cannot see clearly what lies ahead.

Are you willing to step out in faith? With your decisions? Your priorities? Your money? Your family? Your time? Remember, God has a destiny and a direction just for you. Live by faith. Let Him lead and guide you and show you the way He has prepared.

In which areas of your life is God calling you to step out in faith?

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# Satisfied

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: GENESIS 25

The Bible says at the end of Abraham's life, he was *satisfied*. He did not just live a long time. His life was *full, complete, and rewarding* in every sense of those words. He did not die with any kind of discontentment or regret.

Many people are obsessed with prolonging their lives. The Bible reminds us that long life by itself does not necessarily result in satisfaction. The complete *satisfaction* Abraham found was a life in which he had *enough* of everything and maximum *contentment*. His life was filled with peace because it was a life spent trusting God.

How did Abraham become so satisfied? By examining his life, we realize he was willing to follow God where He led him, even if this meant leaving everything behind. He recognized God had a call on his life and tried to follow that call, putting God above everything and everyone else. Abraham always sought to do His will.

When Abraham made mistakes, he allowed God to correct him. When given a choice between accumulating wealth or following God, he chose to follow God. Most importantly, he learned to walk by faith (Hebrews 11:8-10), trusting God to meet his needs and direct him.

If you want maximum *satisfaction*, seek to follow Abraham's example. Dedicate your life to serving God. Surrender your life to Him. Trust Him. Walk by faith, and trust Him to direct your steps.

Are you satisfied and content with your life? Why or why not?

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SATURDAY

September

17

*These are all the years of Abraham's life, 175 years. Abraham breathed his last and died at a good old age, an old man and satisfied with life.*

Genesis 25:7-8 NASB

## PRAYER:

Father, help me to be satisfied with my life. Take away any worry or fear. Give me contentment. I trust in You. In Jesus' name, amen.



SUNDAY

September

18

*The LORD bless you, and keep you; the LORD cause His face to shine on you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His face to you, and give you peace...invoke My name...and I then will bless them.*

Numbers 6:24-27 NASB

## PRAYER:

Father, thank You for Your blessings and Your presence. Thank You for shining Your face on me. Thank You for Your peace. In Jesus' name, amen.

# God's Blessing Prayer

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: NUMBERS 6

As Israel's first high priest, Aaron had the responsibility to *pray* for God's people. His prayers were so important to God that He gave Aaron the *specific* words to pray.

First, he was to pray that God would *bless* and *keep* the Israelites in every situation. No matter what problems they faced, He was with them and wanted to bless them.

They did not need to be discouraged, for His face would *shine* upon them. This was a promise of *direction* and *guidance*. It assured them He knew every situation and the road ahead. If they had needs, He wanted them to know He would be "*gracious*" to them.

The Hebrew word here demonstrates how much God wanted to bless them and be merciful to them. It was as if He were pleading with them to believe Him, to realize just how much He wanted to help them.

God wanted Aaron and his sons to pray this prayer, so they would *invoke* His name in Israel. By speaking this prayer, His name would be placed on His people. Then He would bless them.

This prayer expresses God's desire for you. No matter what you face, you do not have to be discouraged, afraid, worried, or anxious. May these words help you realize just how much He wants to bless and keep *you*. His face is shining on you, and He wants to give you His peace.

Write a personalized prayer for your loved ones based on this blessing.

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# Praise the Lord

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PSALM 150

We don't know the conditions that inspired this psalm. There are no references to the author, his struggles, or his problems. We don't know his biography or testimony. There are no references to kings or their families. We're not given world conditions or history. No nation is named, nor are the actions of God's people, their failures, successes, mistakes, or victories.

The psalmist simply had one message: a command for *everything* and *everyone* to praise God. If we have breath, we are to praise Him.

We are to praise Him when we are in His house with His people or by ourselves, indoors or outdoors. We are to praise Him for His mighty deeds and according to his excellent greatness.

We are to praise Him with our voices and any instruments we can play in any combination. We are to praise Him with trumpet, lute, and harp, with strings and pipes. We are to let our bodies respond and praise Him with dancing and tambourines, cymbals, and all manner of rhythm and movement.

Praise is to be a *lifestyle*, a response to *any* condition. Praise is *appropriate* any time, day or night, whether we feel like it. Praise Him because of all we owe Him, all He has done, and His promises for the future.

Regardless of what is going on in the world or your life, spend time praising God. Praise Him because He is worthy.

Compose your own psalm of praise to God.

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MONDAY

September

19

*Let everything that has  
breath praise the LORD!  
Praise the LORD!*

Psalm 150:6 ESV

## PRAYER:

Father, I praise You for all You have done. Thank You for all Your blessings to me. I praise and worship You. In Jesus' name, amen.

TUESDAY

September

20

*Have nothing to do with pointless and silly myths...train yourself in godliness...training of the body has limited benefit, but godliness is beneficial in every way, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.*

1 Timothy 4:7-8 CSB

## PRAYER:

Father, give me insights into Your Word. Help me be prepared for the battles I will face. In Jesus' name. Amen.

# Training

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 1 TIMOTHY 4

A survey conducted before World War I found that 95% of officers in the British army had never read a military book of any kind. As this suggested, many army leaders had little of the training they needed when they went into battle. They didn't know what to expect or how to respond. They didn't grasp strategy, planning, or troop motivation.

A post-war analysis described how this lack of training produced leaders who were "willfully intolerant of change and incapable, for the most part, of innovative thought or action."

Training is central to being a soldier, but it's also vital to the Christian life. To be equipped for spiritual warfare, to understand our enemies, and to be prepared, we must learn how to be victorious. Like the study of British leaders, the Bible urges us to be *readers*. Then we may know the Word and practice the insights we find there. We must seek God's help to be *prepared*.

The Bible particularly urges us to be *trained* in *godliness*. This means having the right attitude toward God, not taking Him for granted, but being serious about applying the principles in His Word.

The Bible also warns us to be careful about what we allow into our minds. We can be distracted if we focus on things like "*pointless and silly myths*." We need God's discernment and His training.

Ask God to help you prepare for life's challenges.

What's your plan to spend more time reading and meditating on the Bible?

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# God's Secrets

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: AMOS 3

God's prophets had a special calling. Their assignment was to be *His* servants, delivering the messages He gave them. They needed special sensitivity to know when God was speaking and to understand what they were to do and say.

This required having a special relationship with Him, one of intimacy and trust. Amos was one of those people. He spoke *only* in designated moments when he felt compelled to speak the message God gave him to deliver.

God even entrusted *secrets* to servants like Amos. These were *private* things not readily apparent to others, things known only to God and those to whom He chose to reveal them.

We can see why God was so pleased with Amos. He was trustworthy, faithful, and committed to Him. Amos was sensitive to God's voice and the leading of His Spirit, ready to serve Him, regardless of consequences or circumstances.

Who are God's servants today? They are people who develop an intimate relationship with Him, *listen* to Him, fill their minds with His Word, are *sensitive* to His voice, and are ready to do what He asks. These are people to whom God reveals His secrets. These are His *trusted* servants.

Seek to develop a more intimate relationship with God. Be *committed* to serving Him. Listen to His voice. Be ready to hear and sensitive to His Spirit. As He speaks to you, be faithful to do what He asks.

What do you hear God saying to you today?

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WEDNESDAY

September

21

*Certainly the LORD GOD does nothing unless He reveals His secret plan to His servants the prophets. A lion has roared! Who will not fear? The LORD GOD has spoken! Who can do anything but prophesy?*

Amos 3:7-8 NASB

## PRAYER:

Father, I will serve You and do Your will. Speak to me. Reveal more of Your secrets to me. Guide me by Your Spirit. In Jesus' name, amen.

THURSDAY

September

22

*I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and lack of bread in all your places, yet you did not return to me.*

Amos 4:6 ESV

## PRAYER:

Father, thank You for loving me. Help me respond when You call. Keep me clean and pure. In Jesus' name, amen.

# God's Cry to Return

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: AMOS 4

God's people had drifted away from Him. They violated His Word and embraced foreign gods. They oppressed the poor and crushed the needy. His continual cry was that they *return* to Him, a request repeated five times in this chapter. Yet in each case, they did not return.

He sent rain on one city and one field but not another. Yet they did not return. They had problems with their food, experiencing blight and mildew. The locusts devoured their gardens, vineyards, and trees. They did not have the bread they needed. Yet they did not return (vs. 8-9).

God was forced to send the kind of plagues that struck Egypt. Yet they did not return. He had to overthrow some in the same way He overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. Yet they did not return (vs. 10-11).

Throughout the chapter, we feel His love and desire to bless His people. It pained Him to allow them to experience problems. Yet they continued to go their own way and *refused* to return.

God still desires to bless us. If we have drifted away, He calls us to *return*. If we have sinned, He calls us to *repent*. If we need direction, He calls us to seek Him.

Ask God to sift through your life, your thoughts, your time, and your resources. If you have drifted away, make it a priority to return to Him. Be forgiven, cleansed, and in tune with Him.

Write a prayer asking for forgiveness for specific sins in your life.

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Many people in the time of Amos were “*at ease*.” They were lounging in luxury and feeling secure. They were not concerned about God, the condition of the world, or the presence of sin – either in their own lives or in the world. They were simply *preoccupied* with their own interests.

Instead of focusing on God, they trusted in “*notable persons*,” famous people who held important positions. God warned about the dangers of being “*at ease*” and trusting people just because they were famous.

Many people are not serious about their relationship with God or the impact of sin. They are complacent and satisfied as long as their own needs are met. They do not pray or seek God but allow their beliefs to be shaped by *famous* people who are doing what seems popular. Others are influenced by cleverly produced advertisements or the thoughts of friends and neighbors.

It is so much more important to seek God and focus on His eternal Word. We should let *Him* shape our standards and attitudes. God looks for people who are *not complacent* but *committed* to Him, people with a passion for His Kingdom.

Be on guard against trusting people just because they are well known. Focus on God's Word, be sensitive to His Spirit, and dedicate your life to Him. Ask Him to give you wisdom and show you what you can do to serve Him.

Are you more passionate about God or celebrities?

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*Woe to you who are at ease in Zion, and trust in Mount Samaria, notable persons in the chief nation, to whom the house of Israel comes!*

Amos 6:1

### PRAYER:

Father, give me a passion for souls. Use me to reach the world with the Gospel. I place my trust in You. In Jesus' name, amen.



SATURDAY

September

24

*Amos answered, and said to Amaziah: "I was no prophet, nor was I a son of a prophet, but I was a sheepbreeder... Now therefore, hear the word of the LORD.*

Amos 7:14-16

## PRAYER:

Father, I want to serve You. Guide me. Help me have the courage to obey you and not worry about the opinions of others. In Jesus' name, amen.

# Courage to Obey God

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: AMOS 7

Amaziah was offended. As a priest, he was expected to have special spiritual insights. Amaziah was *far* from God and more interested in his own opinions than in serving Him.

After listening to the prophecies of Amos, Amaziah concluded that this prophet was wrong and that Amos' words were inappropriate. Amaziah felt that Amos should focus on his homeland of Judah, not on Israel, so he told Amos to stop delivering his prophecies.

Amos should not have been surprised by these accusations. By *human* standards, he seemed like an unlikely person to deliver prophecies. As he admitted, he was simply a sheep breeder, a man who didn't seem qualified or trained to be a prophet.

But there was *one difference*: God had called him, and he was delivering the messages He had given him. Amaziah did not want to hear this answer, but in the sight of God, this was the *only* perspective that mattered.

We might find parallels in our own lives. If God calls us, we may be criticized. Others may question our background or qualifications. They may reject our message. But we have only one recourse: *We must obey God* and do what He calls us to do.

God looks for people like Amos who will obey Him and not worry about how others react. Ask God for the courage and faith to follow Him, regardless of what others say.

How worried are you about what others think instead of what God thinks?

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# The Call of the Trumpet

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: NUMBERS 29

Today at sundown, *Rosh Hashanah*, the Jewish New Year, begins. God made clear that this was a day to be *celebrated* and *remembered* each year. It was *important* to Him, a day when His people were to bring a special offering.

This was one of His appointed feasts (Leviticus 23:4-25). During his last days as their leader, Moses made sure that Joshua and the people understood the importance of this day.

This day was also known as “*the Festival of Trumpets*” because of the symbolic role played by trumpets. The day was filled with the sound of trumpets calling the people to shake off their spiritual drowsiness. A precise number of notes were sounded, and each note had a specific symbolic meaning.

Everything led up to the Day of Atonement, which took place 10 days after Rosh Hashanah. During this time, the people searched their lives, repented of their sins, and prepared themselves for that day.

All of us need a trumpet sounded in our lives. We could all use a new beginning. Too easily we adapt to the world's standards and tolerate darkness and sin. We need God to shine His searchlight into our minds and hearts, and we need to repent of our sins.

Ask God to search *your* heart. Humble yourself before Him. Ask Him to cleanse you from sin, unclean thoughts, impure motives, and pride. Ask Him to help you be clean in His sight.

Write a prayer asking God to search your heart and repent of unconfessed sin.

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SUNDAY  
September  
**25**

*Celebrate the Festival of Trumpets each year on the first day of the appointed month in early autumn... call an official day for holy assembly... do no ordinary work. On that day... present a burnt offering as a pleasing aroma to the LORD.*

Numbers 29:1-2 NLT

## PRAYER:

Father, sound a trumpet in my life. Show me if I have done or said anything that displeases you. I want to be clean. In Jesus' name, amen.

MONDAY

September

26

*Behold, days are coming...when I will send a famine on the land...for hearing the words of the LORD. People will stagger... they will roam about to seek the word of the LORD, but they will not find it.*

Amos 8:11-12 NASB

## PRAYER:

Father, thank You for Your Word. Help me put Your principles into action. I seek first Your Kingdom. In Jesus' name, amen.

# Famine

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: AMOS 8

Faced with the devastating consequences of famine, people can become desperate. The Israelites faced such conditions after departing from Egypt. Remembering the food they enjoyed there, they began complaining. God challenged them to walk by faith and trust Him. He rained bread from Heaven, giving them manna that provided daily nourishment for forty years.

Later, Moses reminded them of that experience. He also explained that God had humbled them and let them be hungry. He fed them with manna, so they would understand that we don't live by food alone, but *"on everything that comes out of the mouth of the LORD"* (Deuteronomy 8:3). Jesus cited those words when He was tempted by the devil (Matthew 4:4). He knew how much we need God's Word.

During the time of Amos, many people were ignoring God's Word. Many cheated and took advantage of others. When they faced problems, they turned to God, but it was too late. They would realize just how much they needed His guidance, wisdom, direction, and protection. They would experience a *famine* of hearing His Word.

Many people take God's Word for granted. They violate His principles, not realizing the consequences. He warns that the day may come when they need to hear God's Word but will not be able to find it.

Don't wait for a crisis to seek God. Fill your mind with His Word and apply His principles.

Are you spiritually prepared for a crisis?

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# Arrogance

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: OBADIAH 1

The people of Edom were confident, arrogant, and closed-minded. Trusting in their resources, they felt secure, like they were dwelling safely beyond the reach of any attacks. They were bold to take advantage of God's people, even gloating whenever they had troubles, and they did nothing to help.

God wanted them to realize He *knew* their plans, no matter how secretly they had been made. No matter how secure they felt, *everything* upon which they depended could be taken away in an instant.

He knew everything about them and recognized the arrogance in their hearts. This pride had *blinded* them from the truth. They did not know that confidence was misplaced. They could be brought down from any place no matter how secluded or secure it might seem.

Other people and nations have fallen into the same trap. Looking at temporary circumstances, we can lose perspective. Trapped by our own limited understanding, we can become proud and arrogant. We can easily place our confidence in the wrong people and things, depending on ourselves and the things in this world rather than God.

The mistakes of Edom demonstrate why it is so important that we stay *humble* and trust in God, not in ourselves, our resources, our abilities, or anyone else.

Remember that God is sovereign over everyone and everything. He is your Heavenly Father, and He loves you! You can trust Him!

Journal about a time when your pride got in the way of following God.

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TUESDAY

September

27

*The arrogance of your heart has deceived you...on the height of his dwelling place, who says in his heart, "Who will bring me down to earth?" Though you make your home high like the eagle...I will bring you down.*

Obadiah 1:3-4 NASB

## PRAYER:

Father, forgive me for pride. I place my life in Your hands. Thank You for directing my steps and guiding me. In Jesus' name, amen.

WEDNESDAY

September

28

*The LORD designated a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish for three days and three nights.*

Jonah 1:17 NASB

### PRAYER:

Father, give me a vision of Your purpose for my life. I pray for wisdom. Help me be faithful to Your assignment for me. In Jesus' name, amen.

## Running Away

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JONAH 1

From our perspective, it seems obvious that it was futile for Jonah to run from God. But we can wonder how *we* might have acted if we had been in *his* position. There may have been times when *we* have run from Him and been reluctant to follow His leading, resisted His will, or made excuses.

Ask God to consider your life right now. Are you truly listening to His voice? Are you reading His Word with ears to hear? Are you seeking first His Kingdom? Are you obeying Him *willingly*, or are you clinging to your own will?

As He did with Jonah, God may speak to you in dramatic ways. If you resist or go your own way, He may use the stormy seas of life to get your attention.

If you, like Jonah, ever find yourself backed into a corner, turn your mind and heart to God. Stop listening to voices in the world and seek Him anew. Let Him speak to you through His Word.

If you sense that you have been running away, realize that God stands ready to give you another chance, just as He did with Jonah. The answer is not to run or make excuses but to return to Him. Obey and trust God for the outcome.

Humble yourself before God. Be honest with Him. Trust Him. Serve Him. Whatever He calls you to do, follow His leading.

Are you running from or toward God's will right now?

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# Backed into a Corner

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JONAH 2

THURSDAY

September

29

Jonah had been confident. He knew what he did and did not want to do. One thing was clear: He did not want to go to Nineveh. When God called him to go there, Jonah went in the *opposite* direction on a ship traveling west, away from Nineveh.

Then a storm arose, and his plans changed. In an effort to still the storm, the ship's crew threw Jonah into the sea where a great fish swallowed him. Trapped with no way of escape, his only hope was to turn to God.

There in "*the deep*," in "*the heart of the seas*" (v. 3), God spoke to him. When he cried out, God gave him a clearer perspective on life itself. He would no longer seek his own way, but he would obey God regardless of the cost.

God often needs to bring us to these points to give us perspective. He needs to back us into a corner and place us in situations in which we are forced to seek Him. Then we cry out to Him for help, realize how much we need Him, and seek His direction. Our understanding is limited, but God's ways are best.

Think about your life. Are you trusting God completely? Are you resisting His will? Surrender your life anew to Him. Commit your energies and resources to serve Him fully, completely, freely, and without reservation.

*I called out of my distress to the LORD, and He answered me. I called for help... You heard my voice [...] You have brought up my life from the pit [...] I will sacrifice to You with a voice of thanksgiving.*

Jonah 2:2, 6, 9 NASB

## PRAYER:

Father, I realize how much I depend on You. I trust You with my life. Guide me. I surrender my life to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Reflect on a time when God had to send a storm to get your attention.

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FRIDAY

September

30

*All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.*

2 Timothy 3:16 NLT

## PRAYER:

Father, give me a hunger and thirst for Your Word. Help me to trust You. Thank You that I can depend on You. In Jesus' name, amen.

# The Inspired Word

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 2 TIMOTHY 3

The early church faced disunity in part because they did not have an accurate translation of the Bible. Some copies that circulated were corrupt. The answer was to produce an official translation that would be accurate and trustworthy.

This sensitive assignment was given to a man we know as Jerome, who died on this day in 420 AD. He dedicated himself to this project, pouring over manuscripts and mastering Greek and Hebrew. After spending three years in the desert working on this project, he moved to Bethlehem, where he lived the rest of his life.

The result of his work was the Vulgate translation (in Latin), which he completed in 405 AD. This served as the authorized translation of the Bible for more than a thousand years.

The Bible reminds us that God's Word is *settled* in Heaven forever (Psalm 119:89). His Word was true in the time of Jerome. It is true today. It has the power to *change* lives, *correct* us, and *guide* us.

More than 2,700 years ago, Isaiah wrote that everything on earth is subject to change. The grass may seem green, but it eventually withers. Even beautiful flowers fade. Great experiences can seem timeless, but they all end. However, God's Word stands forever (Isaiah 40:6-8).

Remember, people may disappoint you. Even brilliant thinkers are flawed. Leaders and friends make mistakes, but you can trust God and His unchanging Word.

Are you trusting only in the truth of God's Word?

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# The Restorer

God makes all things new.

We all know something of the heartaches that come from living in a world broken by sin – families who bicker more than love, bodies that betray us, evil that steals innocence and sometimes lives. Even creation cries out for restoration (Romans 8:22).

**The Restorer** is our glorious hope. The heart of God is generous and loving, continually calling all – even the rebellious souls suffering from the consequences of sin. He promises to **restore** all who will come to Him.

**Losses?** Covered! *“I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten”* (Joel 2:25 NIV).

**Grief?** Relieved! *“But I will restore you to health and heal your wounds, declares the Lord”* (Jeremiah 30:17 NIV).

**Devastation?** Double **restoration!** *“Return to your fortress, you prisoners of hope; even now I announce that I will restore twice as much to you”* (Zechariah 9:12 NIV).

**Brokenness?** Healing! *“Behold, I am going to bring to it healing and a remedy, and I will heal them; and I will reveal to them an abundance of peace and truth”* (Jeremiah 33:6 NASB).

But the difficult reality is that the biblical promises of restoration are not for everybody. **The Restorer** serves the redeemed – those who recognize and receive Jesus’ death on the cross as payment for their sin. God doesn’t want anyone to remain at the mercy of the thief who steals, kills, and destroys (John 10:10), but He leaves the choice up to each of us.

Freedom from the presence and penalty of sin and abundant harvests from the land – without thorns, thistles, and sweat – were man’s intended destiny. God’s good desires for you remain unchanged. Will you accept God as **The Restorer** and embrace His plans for you? ❖

# Catch *the* Wave



by Ben Cerullo

Living for Christ is *the*  
extreme sport!

Surfing has a special place in my heart. Standing on top of a mountain of water surging with power makes me feel totally alive. But I've found something even better by following Jesus' teaching and being obedient to God's Word.

*If you hold to my teaching, you are truly my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free (John 8:31-32).*

Have you ever experienced God's ultimate freedom by obeying His instruction and discovering His truth? Instead of chasing your own desires, you can discover His supernatural power by

moving into the flow of His joy and goodness!

I promise you – that kind of life is more thrilling than any extreme sport. Like a surfer in the water, you will be completely focused on the moment with Him...ready to take on the perfect wave.

Not only will you know God's freedom to pursue His plans for you, but He will also cause you to be a soul rescuer to surf through life for those He seeks.

Can you imagine a more exciting life? The rush is like nothing you've experienced before, but first you must take a few steps of faith:

## ENGAGE YOUR MIND

*“Be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:2).*

God created you for a relationship with Him, and He communicates continually – through His Word, others, and your circumstances. He’s even provided His Holy Spirit to live within you and give you Christ's thoughts – who is always aligned with the written Word of God.

## FOLLOW THE SPIRIT

*“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the LORD of hosts” (Zechariah 4:6).*

You are destined for a life of supernatural blessing and breakthrough. When you allow the Holy Spirit to reign over your heart, you are set on fire for His will, ready to do the good works He has planned for you to do.

## SEIZE THE MOMENT

*“As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (James 2:26).*

With the Word and Spirit empowering you, riding the wave of God’s will becomes your lifestyle. Take hold of God’s promises for your life, and you will experience more joy and purpose than you could ever imagine.

## SURF THE WAVE

*“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).*

God has made you to do good works and enjoy the thrill of living in communion with Him. Nothing less will ever satisfy you! Let yourself be drawn to God as He carries you along on the glory of His goodness!

Are you ready to do His will and swim out to the deep for the perfect wave? I'll meet you there! ❖

# You Can't Outgive God!

But you can transform lives for eternity.

*"I will bless you...and you shall BE a blessing...  
and in you all families of the earth shall be blessed."*

– Genesis 12:2-3

An **Inspiration Ministries Monthly Partner** joins hands with us by automatically sowing *monthly* seeds for the cause of the Gospel. Together, we impact people around the globe 24/7! And as the old saying goes, **"You can't outgive God!"**

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– Galen, Pennsylvania

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# A Merry Heart...

does good, like medicine. – Proverbs 17:22



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

Email it to: [MerryHeart@inspiration.org](mailto:MerryHeart@inspiration.org)

After the service, a stranger approached the pastor and said, "I'd like you to pray for my hearing."



The pastor placed his hands on the man's ears and said a passionate, earnest prayer.

"How's your hearing now?" the pastor asked.

Looking surprised, the man said, "Well, it's not until tomorrow."

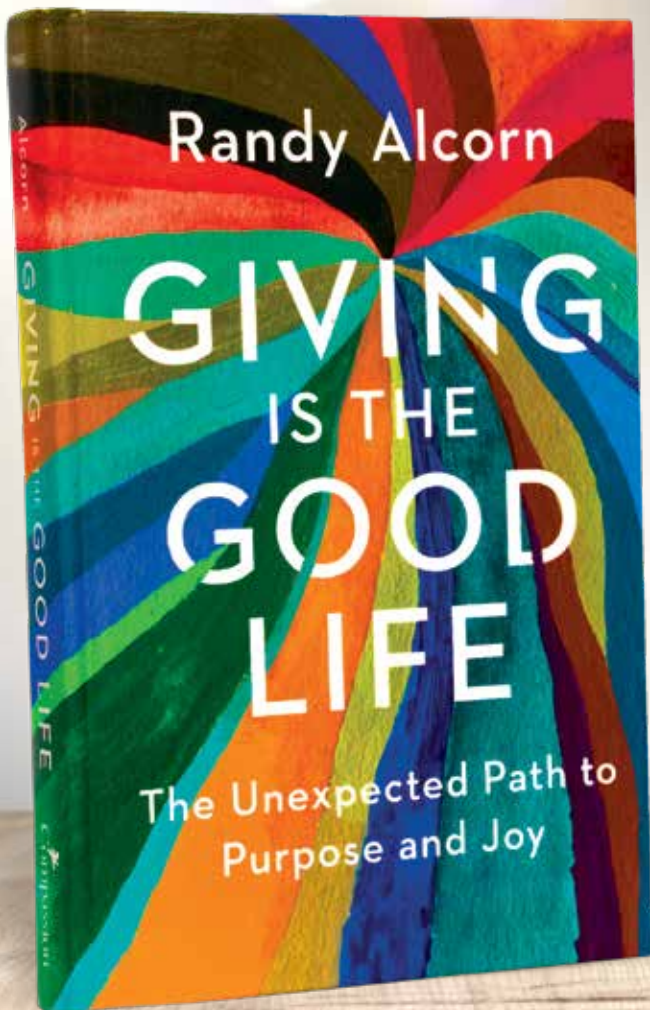
A little boy in church for the first time watched as the ushers passed around the offering plates. When they came near his pew, the boy said loudly, "Don't pay for me, Daddy, I'm under five."





# When the **Good Life** isn't best...

The world today would have you believe the good life comes to those with sophisticated friends, sporty cars, and fat wallets. The Bible describes a **better** good life, and this month's THANK YOU GIFT tells you all about it!



Turn to page 28 for details on how to receive *Giving Is the Good Life*, and begin living your best life now!