

SEPTEMBER 2024

inspiration

M A G A Z I N E



the *Harvest* Key

Is He Your
Adonai?

Learning from
the Broken

5 Steps to
Victory in Christ



PAGE 10



PAGE 14



PAGE 51

The Harvest Key



Many believers unnecessarily suffer financial lack because they don't know the biblical principles for unlocking the Lord's financial favor and abundance. See David Cerullo's powerful article on **page 5**, "The Harvest Key."



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

Act quickly—supplies are limited.

EDITOR'S CORNER



Roone Acree

I have great news today as I share this month's *INSPIRATION MAGAZINE* with you: By faith in Jesus Christ, YOU have access to ALL the covenant promises the Lord made to Abraham. It doesn't matter what your life has been like up until now. His redemptive power is real, and He is calling you to a life of blessings and Kingdom impact that is part of your inheritance. As you read this month's issue, please receive the message of hope God offers in His Word. There's an indispensable KEY to unlocking the Lord's abundant harvest, and that key is YOURS today. God bless you.

10 Is He Your Adonai?

Rabbi Kirt Schneider

When we relate to God as Adonai, the emphasis is on our need to submit ourselves to the Creator.

14 Learning from the Broken

Mary Rose McGeady

Ever wonder what it's like to be a rejected and abandoned street kid? Jesus knows.

16 I've Never Felt This Free Before!

Vineta's turnaround began one day when she cried out to God while watching Inspiration Campmeeting, "I need a breakthrough, Lord!"

19 Your September Devotions

A daily guide to spending time with the Lord and living in His covenant promises.

51 5 Steps to Victory in Christ

Ben Cerullo

If your struggles seem overwhelming today, these five steps will help you to find a place of victory in the Lord.

52 Using Wealth to Spread the Gospel

Keys to Abundant Life Series

Money can be a powerful tool to impact souls for Jesus.



The Purpose and Power of Worship

What Is Worship...Really?

September 2—September 13

Don't miss September's *Strengthen Your Walk™* series *The Purpose and Power of Worship* with KJ Scriven. This new, 10-part series explores what worship is, what it looks like, and why it's so critically important to the walk of Spirit-filled believers. As Scriven shares about the power of worship, he will explore several key Scriptures that will help you gain a fuller, better understanding of what worship is and how it can greatly empower your faith.

StrengthenYourWalk.org

Want access to all of our amazing, faith-building resources, including our *Strengthen Your Walk™* videos?



Subscribe to our **FREE** e-newsletter *Inspiration Today™* today, and be inspired with the best Bible-based resources on the web!

inspiration.org/newsletter



The Harvest Key

Six powerful principles to receiving your inheritance!



STRENGTHEN
your walk
with David Cerullo

As a believer, your very calling in this life is to inherit the blessings of God! His blessings are YOUR inheritance, and they're promised in His Word.

Look at 1 Peter 3:9, "*Knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing*" (NKJV). When you consider how infinitely wealthy your Heavenly Father is, you can hardly imagine the amazing inheritance this is meant to be.

And just think of God's promise in Genesis 12:2: "*I will bless you...and you shall be a blessing*" (NKJV). Stop for a minute and get ahold of this truth: God is saying to **YOU**, "*I will bless YOU... and YOU shall be a blessing.*"

Now perhaps you're thinking, "Wait a minute. I know that Bible story, and God was talking to Abraham—not *me*—when He promised that."

Well, that's true. But according to Galatians 3, the promises God made to Abraham, He also made to *us*. This Scripture says that Abraham...

believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham [...] that

the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith [...] Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made (vs. 6–7, 14, 16 NKJV).

Do you see why that is so significant? Abraham's promises are *our* promises. If you're a believer today...if Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior...then you, too, are Abraham's seed, and the blessings and promises of Abraham are *yours*. And like Abraham, as you receive God's blessings, you can *be* a blessing to others!

That is part of God's rich covenant with us! Everything God possesses, we also possess. We have a wonderful inheritance because of who our Father is. But keep in mind that it takes a commitment to His Word to appropriate these blessings. We have to know what His promises are.

Take a look at these six powerful principles of wealth God offers in His Word. They make up what I call the Harvest Key:

1. Giving to God must come first.

"Honor the LORD from your wealth, and from the first of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine" (Proverbs 3:9–10 NASB).

What a great promise! If we faithfully sow our seeds, God has promised to fill our barns with the resulting harvest!

2. When you seek the Lord first, He will abundantly bless you.

The Bible says concerning King Uzziah, *"As long as he sought the LORD, God made him successful"* (2 Chronicles 26:5 NASB). And Jesus declares, *"Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided to*

you" (Matthew 6:33 NASB). Instead of asking ourselves, "What am I reaping?" we should ask, "What am I seeking?"

3. Don't give the Lord your leftovers.

According to God's Word, when we choose to give Him our second best—our leftovers, the things that aren't important to us—He's not pleased, and He won't accept our offerings (Malachi 1:6–10). Whatever we give to the Lord is to be a sacrifice. This touches His heart.

4. Give with a clean, forgiving heart.

Jesus teaches that God will refuse our gifts when we bring Him an offering while we're at war with another believer: *"First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering"* (Matthew 5:24 NASB).

5. Don't give to be recognized by others.

Jesus also tells us that if we practice our righteousness before others to be noticed and applauded, then we will have no reward from our Father in Heaven (Matthew 6:1).

6. Every act of kindness is an investment in eternity.

When we decide to live for others rather than ourselves, we reap great dividends. As Paul writes, *"Knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord"* (Ephesians 6:8 NASB). Your choice to invest in the lives of others is a treasure more valuable than silver or gold, and God will bless you for your compassion and generosity.

These six principles represent God's economy—and each of them is radically different from the priorities of the world. Today, read each of them again, asking the Lord to show you how they apply to your life.

Like Abraham, as you receive God's blessings, you can be a blessing to others!

Ask the Lord to show you how to apply each of these six steps in your life today!

THE BIG AND THE SMALL

But, of course, all these truths are based on the premise that we have an intimate and growing relationship with the Lord. No inheritance is given to a person just at random. It's given to those who have a close connection with the person bestowing the blessings.

Part of our mission at this ministry is to encourage partners to walk in a loving, obedient, covenant relationship with the Lord, spending time with Him in prayer, worshiping Him, and reading the Scriptures each day. We also teach the importance of faithfully sowing seeds as they follow the leading of the Holy Spirit and wait expectantly to reap His supernatural blessings.

But sadly, we often receive letters from those who have neglected their relationship with the Lord. Some are even openly living in sin while still asking God to reward their wrong choices with His blessings. Despite their disobedience, they seem puzzled by why they don't reap harvest blessings in their lives. They don't realize that if they want to experience God's blessings, they must consistently live in a loving, faith-filled, obedient relationship with Him.

Of course, most of us do try to be obedient to God in the big things of life. We don't murder anyone, don't have an affair with our neighbor's spouse, and don't rob

any banks. But all too often, we're disobedient in small ways: being unkind to loved ones or strangers, watching lust-filled TV programs or movies, gossiping about our friends, or cutting corners on our taxes.

However, God wants us to obey Him in both the big AND the small things. When we do, we will see Him move on our behalf as His Word so beautifully promises: *"The LORD will set [us] high above all the nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon [us] and overtake [us]"* (Deuteronomy 28:1-2 NASB).

Friend, as you faithfully obey whatever God is calling you to do, you can trust Him to unlock His amazing goodness in your life. He is your loving Heavenly Father, and you are His child. Know that every act of obedience lessens the distance between you and the harvest you're waiting for God to supply!

The Lord's Harvest Key is an eternal principle, and one you can confidently stand upon. As you faithfully and obediently walk in a covenant relationship with Him, you can have great expectations for your future and the wonderful inheritance God has given you!

God bless you!



See **page 28** for details on this month's

THANK YOU GIFTS.



You Are a BIG Part of Our Mission!

Someone once asked this question of David Cerullo, founder and CEO of Inspiration Ministries:

"David, can you help me understand your vision to win souls around the world through Inspiration Ministries?"

David explained that the mission statement of Inspiration Ministries is "to impact people for Christ worldwide through media." Years before, God had given him a vision to use media as part of a powerful strategy to see His knowledge cover the earth like the waters cover the sea (Habakkuk 2:14).

This mission is carried out in a variety of ways through our websites, prayer ministers, social media, and printed materials.

Thanks to our faithful Inspiration partners, over **3.9 MILLION** souls have said "YES" to Jesus through our web-based outreaches this year, and every day, our devotions are emailed to over 430,000 people!

Just as modern technology now

gives farmers new tools to quickly and efficiently reap a great harvest of crops, God has given *US* amazing new tools to reap a harvest of lost SOULS for His Kingdom!

We receive amazing testimonies like this one from Samra, who lives in India:

"Thank you, thank you. I found you by browsing the internet. My world is upside down. I have no job, no family, no house, and no friends. But I've just listened to your salvation video, and I have committed my life to Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. Thank you so much!"

Inspiration partners, through your financial gifts, you are fulfilling the Great Commission and making spiritual history!

Inspiration Ministries is your powerful soul-winning ministry.

Your reward in Heaven will be great!

To sow a seed to reach the lost through Inspiration Ministries, contact us today!

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

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

inspiration.org/souls



Is He Your Adonai?

When we relate to God as *Adonai*, the emphasis is on our need to submit ourselves to the Creator.

Knowing God as *Yahweh Jireh*, the Lord our Provider, or *Yahweh Shalom*, the Lord our Peace, requires us to trust Him to provide for us or give us peace. The burden is on Him to meet our needs. But when we call on God as *Adonai*, the responsibility shifts to us and our need to respond to Him in loving surrender and obedience.

Adonai is found more than 400 times in the Hebrew Bible. When we call on God as *Adonai*, it means we look to Him not only as the One who can bless us but also as our master. To know God as *Adonai* is to understand that He is the rightful owner of our lives and our responsibility is to do His will.

Moses understood this. When he called on God as *Adonai*, Moses took the posture of a servant (Exodus 4:10). Even though Moses felt unqualified to lead the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt, he understood that he was responsible to submit to what *Adonai* told him to do.

Today, many believers love experiencing God's presence, but they aren't willing to truly submit to Him as *Adonai*. They love how they feel as they're worshiping God, but as soon as they leave the church building, they do whatever they want, and *Adonai* is pushed to the side.

They think of God as a means to get what they want instead of making Him their Master and Lord. It's as if they think He exists to serve them when in reality the opposite is true.

Many churches today preach the concept of love without the understanding of sin and repentance. To know that we sin and fall short of the glory of God means knowing that we must come to Christ fully, ready to surrender our life to follow Him.

Paul said, "*You are not your own...you have been bought for a price*" (1 Corinthians 6:19–20 NASB). We don't belong to ourselves. *Yeshua*, the visible manifestation of the invisible *Adonai*, purchased us for Himself, not "*with corruptible things...but with the precious blood of Christ*" (1 Peter 1:18–19 NKJV). We were bought with the shed blood of *Yeshua* and freed from the power of sin and death. And now, as Jude says, *Yeshua* is "*our only Master and Lord*" (Jude 1:4 NASB).

The Maker of the Universe wants us to relate to Him as *Adonai*. He wants to bring us to a place of submission because surrender and obedience releases His peace and blessing into our lives.

There is more to following *Yeshua* than saying the sinner's prayer. We must surrender our lives to Him. Jesus said, "*Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter*" (Matthew 7:21 NASB). Elsewhere *Yeshua* said, "*If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me*" (John 12:26 NASB). There are Christians who think they are free to do whatever they please and refuse to be submissive and obedient to God. But *Yeshua* said, "*If you love Me, you will keep My commandments*" (John 14:15 NASB), meaning our obedience to Him actually reveals our love for Him. If Messiah *Yeshua* is truly our *Adonai*, we will respond to Him in obedience. ❖



Rabbi Kirt Schneider is an author, a popular host on TV and radio, and the leader of the international movement TakingTheRainbowBack.com.

Excerpted from *To Know Him by Name*, copyright 2024 by Rabbi Kirt Schneider, published by Charisma House, available on Amazon.com.



Meet Gracie B and the Honeycombs

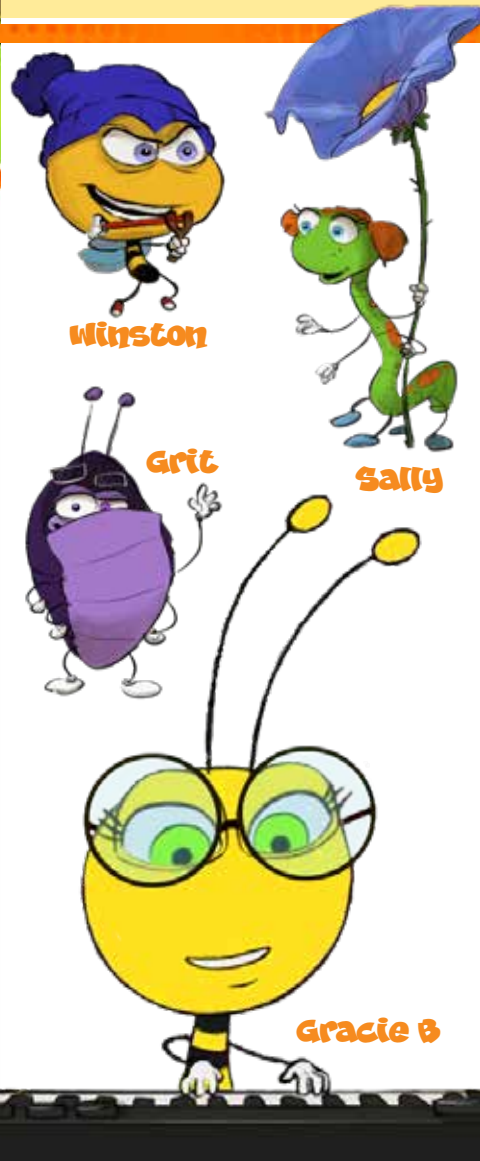
Sow the Love of God into Your Kids & Grandkids!

Too often, today's media pushes children away from the Lord. But we can make a difference—and so can you!

In Galatians 6:7, you see that you always harvest what you plant. Do you want children to grow up knowing God's love and sharing it with others? Sow a seed for that harvest!

When you sow a seed into *Gracie B and the Honeycombs*, you're helping us create new episodes for this joyful, God-honoring, animated series filled with:

- Adventures in the garden
- Fun, early-education concepts
- Catchy singalong songs like "A Promise Is a Promise"
- Characters who live out their faith



Our wholesome group of friends offers a safe place for kids to learn and grow as they fill their hearts with God's goodness.

In the first episodes, Gracie B and friends explore the fruit of the Spirit—things like love, joy, and kindness. Partner with us to create new content, like our "One in 99" Easter special that will help kids know just how much Jesus loves them.

Will you sow seeds of God's love for the next generation? Trust God to multiply the harvest for them and for you!

GracieB.Buzz





Learning from the **BROKEN**

Ever wonder what it's like to be a rejected and abandoned street kid? Jesus knows.

I looked at the young man sitting in front of me, tense, sullen, his body language shouting fear, anger, frustration, and hurt... and yet he remained utterly silent. No matter how much I told him that he was welcome here, he still looked scared, doubtful.

For some reason, I thought of Jesus.

They asked Him to identify Himself when they arrested Him. Jesus refused to answer. They questioned Him further. They asked Him why He was there and where He had come from. Jesus said little.

I tried to imagine why Jesus was so silent when so much was

at stake. Why didn't He convince them of His innocence? I have no doubt He could have.

Still, Jesus said nothing.

All His friends had deserted Him. He was accused of crimes He didn't commit. He had no reason to trust the people who interrogated Him. He had no reason to trust anyone. Even His Father in Heaven had rejected His pleas for help.

Zack wasn't the first person who felt he didn't have a friend in the world and who didn't trust those who said they were trying to help him.

"We're really glad you're here," I told Zack. "I hope you and I can

talk at some point, but it doesn't have to be now. I just want you to know you are safe here."

"I don't talk so good," he said. "I guess I'm not too smart. My teacher said I got a problem learning," he said, struggling mightily to say the words, "My dad says I'm just stupid."

He told me his mother died of cirrhosis. He said, "I loved my mom. I mean, she used to hit me, but only when she was drunk. I wish she didn't die. I really wish she was here." When his mother died, and no one would take him in, he lived in the park. He stole food to eat. He didn't eat much.

I'm convinced that every year, God sends me one extra-special kid to remind me what Christ's suffering and resurrection really is all about. This is a season of self-examination, of looking in the mirror to see if we like what's staring back at us.

It is a time to reflect on how we use the goods of the world, how we deal with our relationships... to take time to look under the hood of our souls to make sure

everything's running all right and see where the defects are.

It's never easy asking ourselves if we're really being as good as we want to be, as virtuous, as steadfast, as understanding. But it's good for us. It is when we are most in touch with God.

And kids like Zack?

They know this process better than most of us ever will. Zack lives in a perpetual nonstop life of painful reckoning, questioning, excruciating self-examination of losses.

"What is wrong with me? Why am I living like this... why doesn't anyone love me... am I suffering because I don't deserve anything better?"

Sometimes, the parallels between what kids like Zack go through and what Jesus went through are startling. Fear, abandonment, betrayal... silence.

When you and I go through suffering, we know that the resurrection life of Christ waits at the other end. Zack, however, has no idea how the story will turn out in the end. He doesn't yet believe that there will be a resurrection for him...but I do. ❖



Mary Rose McGeady served as the president of CovenantHouse.org (the nation's largest shelter for homeless and runaway kids) until her death at age 84.

Excerpted by permission from *Sometimes God Has a Kid's Face* published by Covenant House.

I've Never Felt This Free Before!



Vineta's turnaround began one day when she cried out to God while watching Inspiration Campmeeting, "I need a breakthrough, Lord!"

Sensing the Holy Spirit speaking to her, Vineta took a huge step of faith and gave a seed of \$1,000 to Inspiration Ministries. Once her decision was made, she immediately felt God flood her heart with peace. "My heart and mind were glowing from the teaching I heard during Campmeeting," she reports. "I knew God was going to intervene in my situation."

For 15 years, Vineta had suffered from anger issues, diabetes, and high blood pressure. "I was full of anger," she says, "and this really took a toll on my relationships with my husband, six children, and 13 grandchildren. And I felt great sadness about some of the things my children were doing."

Vineta's youngest son had gone to jail for a while after running from the police. He was

given a one-year sentence, but was released early because of good behavior.

"I think being in jail was the best thing that could have happened in his life," Vineta now says. "I had prayed so much for him, and he opened his heart to God in jail. Now he's in church, and I don't worry about him anymore. I gave him to the Lord, and he's a different person now."

Vineta points to the \$1,000 gift she gave to Inspiration Ministries as the beginning of many of the other changes she has experienced. In addition to working in her son's life, God has healed her from sickness, anger, and sin. "I have faith in God to always be with me," she says. "He wants me to serve Him with a good heart and strong mind and body."

The Lord has brought restoration to practically every area of

Vineta's life. "I've never felt this free before!" she says. "I no longer have to take medicine for diabetes or high blood pressure. And not only has the Lord healed my body, but He's also healed my marriage, and I don't worry about my children anymore!"

David Cerullo's books have been a major inspiration for Vineta. "After reading his inspired words, I see that God's power in me can conquer *anything!*" she exclaims. "David's message of hope really changed my life."

Praying with the prayer ministers in the International Prayer Center has also helped Vineta grow closer to God. "I believe in your ministry, and I will continue to give generously to win souls. Inspiration Ministries has been such a blessing to me, and I want to partner with you to help others find the same hope and healing." ❖

"If two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them!"

—Matthew 18:19 NKJV

We are here for You!

The prayer ministers in our International Prayer Center would love to pray for the breakthrough YOU need.

US / CAN / CAR: +1 (803) 578-1800 UK / Intl: +44 (0) 84 5683 0584

inspiration.org/prayer



EVERY 6 Seconds, a Soul Comes to Christ!

“Thank You, Jesus, I am a sinner and I want to be saved.”—PASCAL

“I thank God for giving me the privilege to know Him. I congratulate you for the way you are using social media to win more souls for Him.”—ANTHONY

“I’m giving my heart to God to cleanse me and heal me. I’m giving my whole life to God.”—VIOLET

Through the evangelistic outreaches of Inspiration Ministries, the Good News of Jesus Christ is reaching people around the world. Last year alone, people in over 200 countries let us know they had made Christ the Lord of their life through our ministry outreaches...many of them living in countries where it’s illegal to preach the Gospel.

Every six seconds, 24 hours every day on average, someone, somewhere, is saying YES to Jesus through the evangelistic outreaches of Inspiration Ministries because Inspiration Partners like you prayed and gave. Thank you so much!

One day, countless people in Heaven will thank YOU for partnering with Inspiration Ministries to point them to Jesus Christ as the only way to hope and salvation!

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.

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

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

inspiration.org/mmp

Changing Everything

TODAY’S BIBLE READING: ACTS 1

The disciples were filled with questions. After His resurrection, Jesus had been with them for 40 days. During that time, He demonstrated the reality of the resurrection and taught “*about the kingdom of God*” (v. 3). But in His last words, He focused on the Holy Spirit and the *revolutionary* impact He was to make.

This focus continued the emphasis He had placed on the Spirit before His crucifixion. As He described, other people would not be able to “*see Him or know Him,*” but the Spirit actually would be “*in*” them (John 14:17). He would be their counselor, teacher, and guide, declaring “*what is to come*” (John 16:13).

In ways the disciples did not fully understand, the Holy Spirit would *change everything*. As the book of Acts describes, the Spirit would *revolutionize* their understanding of what it means to serve God. He would show the limits of their past thinking. As Jesus warned, some people would not be sensitive to the Spirit’s revelations and would resist these changes.

This same Spirit is at work in the world today, and His impact remains just as *revolutionary*. He is with us to teach and guide us, to help us recognize the limits of our past thinking, and to disrupt us from comfortable clichés.

The Holy Spirit empowers us and enables us to experience the full potential of God’s Kingdom. And He still is changing everything today.

What has the Holy Spirit been teaching you lately?

After he had given instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen...he said...“John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit in a few days.”

Acts 1:2, 5 CSB

PRAYER:

Holy Spirit, help me to be sensitive to Your leading. I submit my thoughts to You. Teach me. Guide me. Change me. In Jesus’ name, amen.

If anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. For we hear that some among you are...doing no work at all...Such persons we command...to work in quiet fashion.

2 Thessalonians 3:10–12
NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I dedicate my time, talents, and treasures to You. Help me to be faithful with all that You have given me. In Jesus' name, amen.

How does what you do contribute to the good of society?

Diligent in Labor

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 2 THESSALONIANS 3

Even as a young boy, William Bradford hungered for a fresh experience of God. Born in 1590 in England, he became a leader of the Pilgrims, Christians who decided to immigrate to America in order to worship God in freedom.

They faced incredible dangers. Bradford experienced personal tragedy when his wife drowned in Provincetown Harbor in 1620 while he was exploring the New World. Yet he remained convinced that he was obeying God's call. Problems continued after they landed in what is now Plymouth, Massachusetts. They struggled, and many died.

A recent book about the Pilgrims describes a breakthrough that occurred in April 1623. Bradford "decided that each household should be assigned its own plot to cultivate." It was understood "that each family kept whatever it grew." The change in attitude was "stunning." Suddenly, families worked harder than before. They still struggled, but "never again starved" as they had during the first few years in the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

In his interaction with Christians in Thessalonica, Paul, too, stressed the importance of hard work. Some were "*leading an undisciplined life*" and being bad examples to other Christians. Paul urged them to realize, "*If anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat*" (vs. 10–11).

Today is a day to celebrate the importance of our labor. Make sure that you are being faithful with the resources He has given you. Be a faithful worker, doing everything unto the Lord.

Waiting

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ACTS 1

Jesus promised the disciples that they would be given the gift of being "*baptized with the Holy Spirit*." But He did not explain what this meant, what the impact would be, or how they might experience this gift. He simply told them to *wait*. They must have had questions, but they were left to wonder and wait.

When the Day of Pentecost came, "*They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance*" (Acts 2:4). Having waited, they received the gift Jesus had promised. But it was given in God's way and in His time.

We, too, may find it necessary to wait for promises to be fulfilled, for the help we need, or for answers. As we wait, we easily can become discouraged and feel impatient. In spite of our prayers and the promises in the Bible, the answers may not seem to come soon enough.

We need to remember that waiting does not mean that God is displeased or that His promises are not true. It simply means that the time is not right, and we must wait for God's time.

Today, do not be impatient but trust in God. Keep praying and believing that He will answer your prayers. As you wait, prepare your heart and mind and be faithful to His Word and His direction for your life.

For what have you been waiting and praying recently?

He commanded them... to wait for the Promise of the Father... "for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

Acts 1:4–5 NKJV

PRAYER:

Father, help me be sensitive to Your guidance. Help me listen and not make presumptions. In Jesus' name, amen.

When he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.

Acts 1:9 ESV

PRAYER:

Father, I wait on You. Help me be sensitive to Your Spirit. I welcome Your presence. Change me. Transform me. In Jesus' name, amen.

In what ways do you actively seek a relationship with the Holy Spirit?

Confidence

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ACTS 1

As they followed Jesus, the disciples always could turn to Him. Wherever they went, He was there. When they didn't know what to do, they called on Him. When they failed, He rescued them.

Then He was crucified. Facing life without Him, they gathered together with doors locked. But when He appeared to them, His post-resurrection presence gave them peace (John 20:19–21).

After He spent 40 days with them, the time came for Jesus to ascend into Heaven. As He was taken up before them, they realized that He *really* was departing. They had many questions and uncertainties. What did this mean? What were they to do?

When they returned to Jerusalem, they began praying in earnest. As they sought God, the Holy Spirit fell on them. His presence changed everything. He gave them the power they needed. Confidence replaced fear. They no longer were timid but acted with boldness.

Before His crucifixion, Jesus told them that it would be *“to [their] advantage”* for Him to go away. He meant that *“the Helper”* would come to them after He left (John 16:7). The Day of Pentecost proved that this was true (Acts 2).

In similar ways, we must seek God in more intense ways, listen for His voice, experience His Spirit, and grow in confidence.

New Guidance

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ACTS 1

After Judas died, the disciples felt someone should take his place. The question was how to fill this vacancy. They followed a traditional method: After a short prayer, they cast lots.

In the days to come, they were to learn an entirely *new* way of being guided. As they experienced on the Day of Pentecost, this new way was based on being *led by the Spirit*.

Jesus told them that they were to *“wait for the promise of the Father”* (v. 4). They just didn't know how long they were to wait. But they kept waiting, wondering what would happen next.

Suddenly the Holy Spirit fell on them, and they were ushered into an entirely *new spiritual* dimension. As Jesus had promised, the Spirit became their comforter and companion. As they submitted everything to Him, they trusted Him to guide and lead them (John 14:16–26).

We see this new guidance in operation when the Holy Spirit told the church in Antioch, *“Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them”* (Acts 13:2).

These same principles are still true. The Bible is clear: God still urges us to know His Word and follow His principles. But we, too, need to stay sensitive to His Spirit by waiting on Him and listening to Him.

Stay in tune with God's Word; always be sensitive to His Spirit. Trust Him.

Compose a prayer asking the Holy Spirit to guide you.

They put forward two... They prayed... They cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

Acts 1:23–26 ESV

PRAYER:

Father, help me be sensitive to Your guidance. Help me listen and not make presumptions. In Jesus' name, amen.

When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven...it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

Acts 2:1-2 NKJV

PRAYER:

Father, I wait on You. Help me be sensitive to Your Spirit. I welcome Your presence. Change me. Transform me. In Jesus' name, amen.

How has the presence of the Holy Spirit influenced your spiritual journey?

Getting Ready

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ACTS 2

The disciples probably thought that they understood the things of God. After all, they had spent three years with Jesus. But there was so much they did not know, including the nature of the work of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus had told them that they would be "baptized with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:5). The Spirit would come upon them and give them new power. But what did this really mean?

Suddenly, the Spirit moved among them with "a sound from heaven," filling the "whole house." As they were to discover, He changed everything.

This same Spirit is still at work. The Bible assures us that He is available to help us overcome problems, bring victory, and change us just like He changed those disciples in the upper room. But we must remember that the Spirit is "from heaven." He is sovereign and moves on His own timetable.

The example of the disciples shows us how we can be prepared for His presence. In the Upper Room, He came when they were united, waiting, listening, and focused on God.

The Bible assures us that the Spirit can do a new work in your life too. Aim to be ready. Cry out to God, and seek Him with your whole heart. Submit your life to Him. Worship Him. Wait on Him. Then be ready for the power of the Spirit to fall on you!

Pay Attention

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PROVERBS 7

Paying attention always has presented challenges. Distractions abound, making concentration difficult. Recent studies have demonstrated that this problem has increased in recent years, particularly from social media.

A study conducted by the Technical University of Denmark concluded, "Our collective attention span is narrowing." Time spent on social media has a negative impact on the ability to focus in the long term.

People simply don't remember as clearly as they did in years past. Many people feel caught up in the frenzy of sharing opinions and "the fierce competition for novelty." As a result, they more quickly lose interest in topics and find it harder to retain information.

Many believers experience these patterns in their spiritual lives as well. They find it more difficult to concentrate while reading the Bible. Their attention wanes during times of prayer. They quickly forget the insights from a sermon.

The Bible reminds us of the importance of listening and paying attention. And we are warned of the consequences when we don't listen carefully. When we focus on novelty, we don't have the sensitivity to remember what we read in the Bible as we study God's timeless principles.

Today, ask God to help you become a more careful listener and reader, to help you concentrate and remember. Seek to minimize distractions and make it a priority to focus on His Word while staying sensitive to His Spirit.

How can you make your quiet time free from distractions?

Listen to me, and pay attention to the words of my mouth. Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways, do not stray into her paths. For many are the victims she has cast down.

Proverbs 7:24-26 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, help me to pay greater attention to Your Word. Help me to be a better listener. In Jesus' name, amen.

When the day of Pentecost had come... suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind.

Acts 2:1–2 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, open my eyes to the power of the Holy Spirit. Keep me from placing limits on You. I believe You can do all things. In Jesus' name, amen.

Can you identify moments when the Holy Spirit guided your actions?

The Power of the Spirit

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ACTS 2

Who exactly is the Holy Spirit? What is He like? The disciples must have asked questions like these when Jesus told them they would receive power when the Spirit came. They must have wondered *what* would happen. Would He be a quiet force, just providing them with gentle reminders?

Their questions were answered on the Day of Pentecost when the Spirit came without warning. He came with a *noise* like a “*violent, rushing wind*.” He came not in meekness, but in *power*.

He came in a rush with an *overwhelming force*. The disciples may not have seen His presence, but they *heard* it and felt it. He changed their lives and enabled them to perform miracles and disrupt the world.

This is the same Spirit that God has sent into your life. Yes, He is gentle and sometimes speaks in a still, small voice. But do not minimize His power or the impact He can make through you!

He can come with power, shaking things up, and empowering you in ways you cannot imagine. He can disrupt armies, stop storms, heal diseases, open doors that seem permanently closed, and enable you to do what seems impossible.

Today, ask God to open your eyes to the power that He has given you through His Spirit. Believe Him for miracles. Do not hold back, but allow Him to change you in order to touch lives and impact the world.

Schemes

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: EPHESIANS 6

Order Number 191. General Robert E. Lee thought this might contain the key to victory in the American Civil War. His Army of Northern Virginia was about to invade the North for the first time. When issued on this day in 1862, Order 191 detailed troop movements and strategies.

Little did he know that three of his men decided to use his military order to wrap their cigars. Purely by accident a few days later, one of these cigars was found by the opposing Northern forces. When George McClellan, their commanding general, saw the document, he knew that this might bring *them* victory.

In the ensuing Battle of Antietam, the North emerged as the qualified victor, but the outcome was not clear cut. Why? Even though McClellan knew the enemy's plans, he did not act *decisively*.

In the spiritual realm, many Christians fail to experience the total victory God wants for them, in part because they don't realize that we know the plans and schemes of *our* enemy! We don't have to be defeated.

Today, believe God for the complete victory He wants for you. Act decisively! Be strong in the Lord. Put on His full armor. Stand on His Word. Don't compromise. Seek first His Kingdom. Take up the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

Remember, you are in a spiritual war.

What are you doing to ensure you're clothed with the full armor of God?

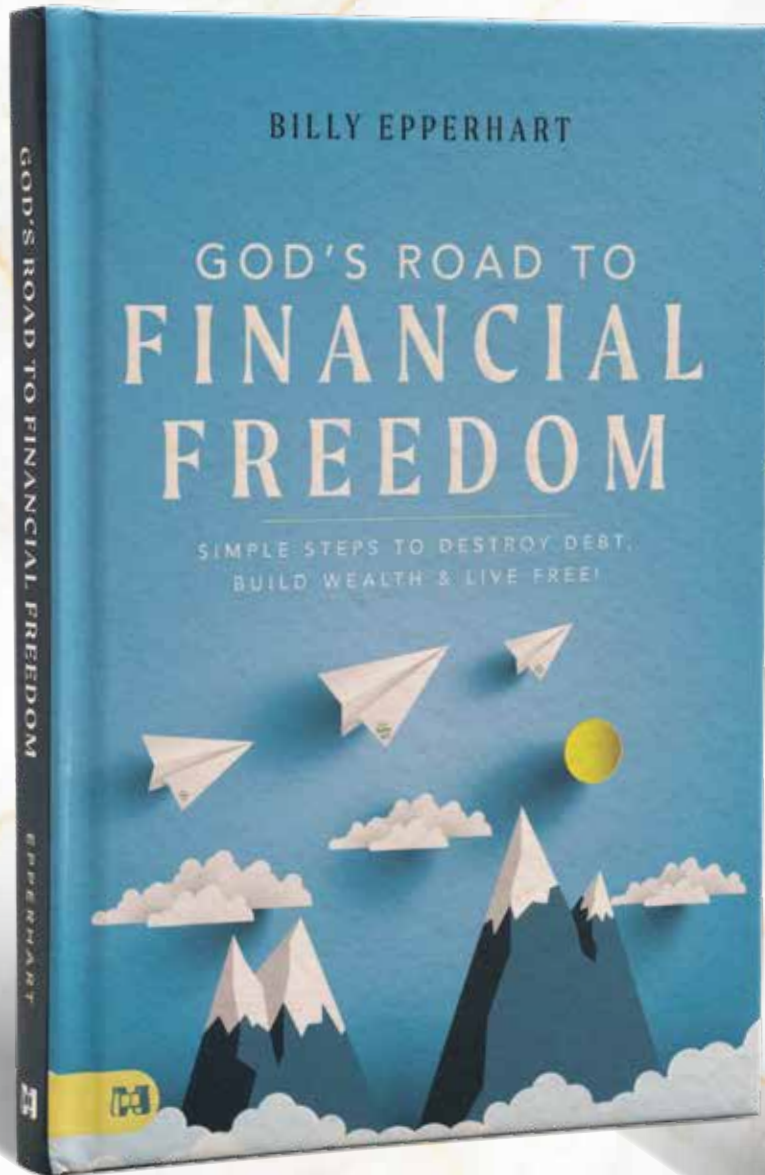
Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

Ephesians 6:10–11 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, help me to be prepared for spiritual attacks. Help me to stand firm! Thank You for the victory I have in Christ. In Jesus' name, amen.

Build Wealth and Live Free!



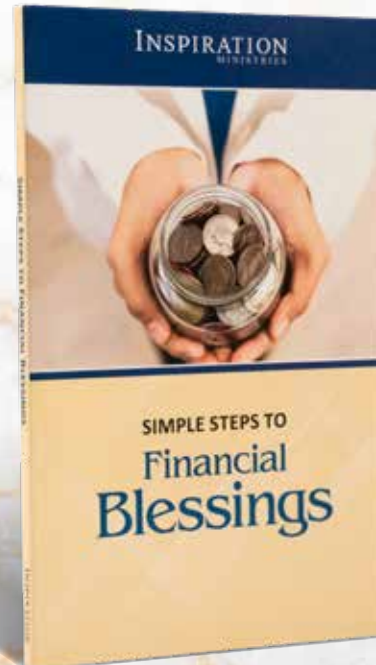
*Supplies are limited—
request your gifts TODAY!*

Did you know that the average American household earns \$76,000 a year but faces a staggering \$104,000 in debt? Jesus warned about being a slave to money, but that isn't just for the ultrarich. Anyone can be consumed by their finances. But you don't have to be! Financial freedom can be achieved if you learn how.

In his book *God's Road to Financial Freedom: Simple Steps to Destroy Debt, Build Wealth & Live Free!*, CEO, former pastor, investor, and serial entrepreneur Billy Epperhart shares the truth about freedom from financial worry and strategies for building wealth and security.

In this teaching, you'll discover:

- ◆ Nine steps to get out of debt
- ◆ How to accelerate your passive income through investing
- ◆ Seven attitudes you need to excel
- ◆ God-given tools to make money work for you



PLUS, AS A BONUS, you'll also receive our *Simple Steps to Financial Blessings*. Discover the truth of God's Kingdom principles that open the storehouses of Heaven.

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



Call +1 (855) 331-4585



Go to inspiration.org/SEP2024



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

Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.

Acts 2:43 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I commit these situations to You: _____. Thank You for performing miracles! I believe that with You, all things are possible. In Jesus' name, amen.

How are you faithfully serving God today?

Awe, Wonders, Signs

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ACTS 2

Were the disciples superhuman? No. They were ordinary people. But because the Spirit had transformed them, through them “*many wonders and signs were taking place.*”

Jesus had said that those who believed in Him would do “*greater works than these... because I go to the Father*” (John 14:12). The apostles proved that this *really* was true!

As they witnessed these transformed men and women, the crowds were amazed, and filled with “*awe.*” Seemingly unsolvable problems were solved. People with incurable diseases were healed. These untrained men spoke articulately with supernatural wisdom.

What would the disciples do if they were alive today? Would they be content with the ordinary? We can almost hear them tell us not to limit what God can do! In fact, we should expect “*many wonders and signs*” in our lives!

Is this possible for you? Absolutely! But what will it take?

Like the disciples, start with your personal relationship with Jesus. Spend time with Him. Pray. Listen to His voice. Grow in your knowledge of the Word. Be a faithful servant. Like the disciples, wait for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit! Let Him guide you.

Don't be content with a mediocre faith. Be like those early disciples: humble, filled with faith, unafraid. Always be ready and available for the leading of the Spirit. You serve the God of miracles! For Him, *nothing* is impossible! He has not changed. He never will!

Hopeless?

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ACTS 3

People feel hopeless for varied reasons. They may have tried to find solutions to their problems, but despite their efforts, nothing seems to have changed. Giving in to despair, they feel overwhelmed. Not knowing what to do, they give up.

This was the attitude of the lame man who sat by the gate of the temple. The *beauty* of the location may have been part of his attraction to it. There, he could stare and dream. Perhaps he imagined he was not lame.

Day after day, friends carried him to the same spot. He had become so comfortable in his discomfort that he spent his time begging for just enough to survive.

But Peter and John recognized that the man didn't need sympathy or money. He needed to be healed. Peter spoke with boldness, “*In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk*” (v. 6)! In a moment, he was healed.

Are there people today like this lame man? People who have given up? Stopped trying? People who have assumed that their condition is hopeless? That there is no way to turn around their situation?

The answer is yes. But all of these people need to realize that there is hope! God cares for them and can help them. Encourage others to seek God, to have faith, and to believe Him for answers, even in situations that seem hopeless.

Reflect on the hope you have in Jesus.

A man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple.

Acts 3:2 ESV

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for giving me hope. I commit these people to You: _____. Thank You for meeting their needs. In Jesus' name, amen.

Men of Israel, why are you amazed at this, or why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk?

Acts 3:12 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I commit these needs to You: _____.
Deliver me from doubt.
I believe that all things are possible with You.
In Jesus' name, amen.

What kind of vessel are you for God's power?

The Source

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ACTS 3

In the mid-nineteenth century when mountain men first experienced the geysers and bubbling springs in what we know as Yellowstone Park, they were completely mystified. Some referred to them as “vents of hell.”

They didn't know that these thermal features simply were vessels for pressurized water that had been heated to the boiling point by volcanic rocks. They didn't know that geysers have no strength of their own but simply release power from forces deep within the earth.

They wondered why some geysers were small while others were large. They could not have understood that the pressures and forces were the same for all geysers, but each geyser gave expression to these forces in different ways.

When the people in first-century Jerusalem saw Peter and John performing miracles, they reacted much like these mountain men. They were “*full of amazement*” (v. 11) and mystified by the power that the disciples demonstrated. But Peter and John knew the true source of their power. And they knew that God could do anything through them.

Each of us has a choice of what kind of vessel we want to be: a tiny geyser that erupts a little or a massive geyser that allows God's power to flow in mighty ways. Do not limit His power in your life. And don't worry about how others might react. Let His power flow through you without limits.

Faithful

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: REVELATION 2

Located in Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming, Old Faithful is the most famous geyser in the world. Like other geysers, it erupts when the base of a column of water resting in the earth is vaporized by hot volcanic rock.

This geyser gained fame in part because of its *consistency*. It erupts on average every 75 minutes for up to 5 minutes, shooting a column of steam and hot water as high as 170 feet.

This *consistency* is a perfect picture of the kind of faithfulness God desires in our lives. He wants us to be so consistent that others can set their clocks by our lives. They know how we will act. They know the fruit of our character. We also can be sure that they continue to watch to see if we have any inconsistencies or mistakes.

The Bible also says that we need to be faithful because we will be tested and face problems. At times like these, some people yield to fear and worry. Others allow doubt to fill their lives and start giving in to compromise. But God promises great rewards for those who remain faithful. They will receive “*the crown of life*.”

Ask God to help you be faithful today. Seek to be faithful even when you are tested and face unfavorable circumstances. Ask Him to allow His power to flow through your life in mighty torrents.

Why is faithfulness so important in the life of a Christian?

Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Revelation 2:10 NASB

PRAYER:

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

As they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.

Acts 4:13 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I commit these needs to You: _____. Thank You for the answers! I believe that with You, all things are possible! In Jesus' name, amen.

What's your plan to spend more time with Jesus this week?

Who Can Perform Miracles?

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ACTS 4

To the Jewish leaders, it was clear that Peter and John were not educated or trained. (They used a Greek word that is the source of the English word idiot.) They felt they were not qualified to understand the Law, the Prophets, or their traditions. These Galileans had been just fishermen.

Yet they could not deny that amazing things had happened through these men. Thousands had responded to Peter's Pentecost sermon. Miracles had been performed. Standing next to them was a beggar who had been healed. These leaders recognized two important things about Peter and John. They had been *with* Jesus. And they were *confident*.

Right now, how confident are you? Are you skeptical, placing limits on what God can do? You may feel your problems are too big and that God can't help. You may think miracles can't take place. Do you *really* believe that God can perform miracles through you?

You may even feel inadequate or unworthy like you don't have the right skills or background. But as Peter and John proved, God can use *anyone*.

What should you do? Like Peter and John, spend time with Jesus. Make Him your Lord. Read God's Word. Seek to be filled with the Holy Spirit and depend on *His* power. As you do these things, you will gain *confidence*. Never limit God. Be bold. Believe that *all* things are possible. All things.

Denial!

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ACTS 4

The Jewish leaders had a problem. A miracle had taken place through the lives of Peter and John. This undeniable fact was particularly "*noteworthy*." It was "*apparent to all who live in Jerusalem*."

Yet these leaders were determined not to consider the evidence. They were so *hardened* in their beliefs that they could not accept that this irrefutable miracle had taken place. They resolutely clung to their *preconceived* conclusions, refusing to change. Their only concern was limiting the impact of the Gospel.

Yet their opposition could not stop the spread of the Gospel. Miracles continued taking place. Lives were changed.

The same patterns continue to exist today. Those who have been impacted by the Gospel *know* that it is real. Breakthroughs have taken place. Lives have been changed. Changes are so dramatic and real that they cannot be denied.

Yet some people are not moved. Not just skeptical, they seem determined not to change or consider that the Gospel is real. Denying facts, they are concerned with perpetuating their own interpretations. They try to limit the impact of the Gospel, even going as far as trying to discredit Gospel messengers.

Like Peter and John, we should not be surprised by these reactions. But we should not allow this opposition to impact our ministry. We should continue serving God, sharing the Gospel, and using the power He has given us to change lives, meet needs, and perform miracles.

How is God using you to impact lives for His glory this week?

What shall we do with these men? For the fact that a noteworthy miracle has taken place through them is apparent to all who live in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.

Acts 4:16 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, use me to impact lives. Demonstrate Your power through me. Change lives. Convince skeptics of the truth. In Jesus' name, amen.

“Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit... You have not lied to men but to God”... Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and great fear came over all who heard of it.

Acts 5:3–5 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, search my heart. Forgive my sins. Help me to be pure in Your sight and pleasing to You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Have you ever been tempted not to tell God the complete truth?

Real. Not a Religion.

TODAY’S BIBLE READING: ACTS 5

Many people’s faith is largely a set of rules or traditions. Some bring this perspective when they respond to the Gospel.

Consider the attitude of Ananias and his wife, Sapphira. On the surface, they might have seemed like model believers. But in their hearts, they were deceptive.

Believers demonstrated the depth of their convictions by sharing resources during this time. Some sold land *“and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet”* (v. 2).

Ananias and Sapphira appeared to share that commitment. But other believers did not know that Ananias *“kept back some of the price for himself”* (v. 3). However, Peter, inspired by the Spirit, knew that they had been under satanic influence.

The price they paid was severe: Both Ananias and Sapphira died as a result of their deception. The church was shocked. And with their death, *“great fear came over all who heard of it.”*

Believers were learning that following Jesus was not a religion or a set of rules. This was not about appearances or getting praise. This was about a real relationship with God. He was serious about their lives. Lying to other believers and to the Holy Spirit was, and is, a serious sin.

These are critical lessons every believer should learn today. Always remember to be honest with God. Be humble before Him. Develop a personal relationship with Him. Be sure that you are in tune with His Spirit.

Changed in a Moment

TODAY’S BIBLE READING: ACTS 9

It would be hard to imagine a person more opposed to Christianity than Saul of Tarsus. He sought to destroy the church and throw believers in prison. He took his quest to Damascus, seeking to arrest any followers of Jesus.

Yet in only a moment, this determined anti-Christian *completely* changed. All it took was a supernatural encounter with Jesus Himself. Without warning, he realized that all of his assumptions had been wrong.

No one, in fact, had been expecting a change, certainly not the Christian community. They had been hounded by Saul and scattered in an attempt to escape persecution. They must have wondered if the persecution ever would end. Their lives, and the history of the world, changed the moment Saul met Jesus on the road to Damascus.

If God can change a man like Saul, surely He can change men and women today. He can change even the most hardened atheist and the most bitter opponent of Christianity. He can change people who are headed in the wrong direction and who have no sympathy for the things of God.

Today, think about people who need Jesus in their lives. Do not be discouraged if they reject the Gospel at first. Pray for them. Continue to commit them to God persistently and relentlessly. Continue to believe that the same God who suddenly changed Saul will suddenly change them!

Write a list of people for whom you are praying concerning their salvation.

Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord... asked for letters... so that if he found any belonging to the Way... he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

Acts 9:1–2 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I commit these people to You: _____. Change them. Speak to them. Turn their lives around. In Jesus’ name, amen.

The apostles and the brethren...heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. And when Peter came up...those who were circumcised took issue with him.

Acts 11:1–2 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, give me greater sensitivity to Your Spirit. Help me hear from You. Free me from stereotypes and prejudices. In Jesus' name, amen.

What is one change you've welcomed recently?

God in a Box?

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ACTS 11

These early disciples thought they had everything figured out and understood God's plans. Then they heard that Peter had eaten unclean food with Gentiles. They "took issue" with him. The Greek word here suggests that they *opposed* and separated themselves from him.

They felt the rules were clear and could not understand why he had even spoken to Gentiles. How could Peter have declared "the word of God" to them?

All Peter could do was tell them that he heard God clearly telling him, "What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy" (v. 9). Forced to rethink his traditions, he asked himself how he could "stand in God's way" (v. 17).

Peter felt compelled to cooperate with God. The other disciples agreed that they, too, needed to put aside their prejudices and be open to this new understanding.

Is it possible for us to be like those first-century apostles, convinced that we know everything? Have we put God in a box, placing our own limits on what we think He can do? Are we creating our own narrow interpretations of His Word? Are we standing in His way?

Today, make sure that you have not put God in a box. Seek to stay open to the leading of the Spirit. As He leads, let Him challenge your stereotypes and preconceived ideas. Open your heart. Listen. Be ready to change as He directs.

Two Reactions

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ACTS 13

Herod Antipas and Manaen shared similar backgrounds, yet their lives had dramatically different outcomes.

First, we see Herod Agrippa, the grandson of Herod the Great. His power led to a life dominated by pride. Sitting on his throne, the people described him as having "the voice of a god and not of a man!" His actions were so offensive to God that he was struck by an angel and died (Acts 12:22–23). Then Herod Antipas came to power.

In contrast, we read about Manaen, a man who "had been brought up with Herod." Unlike Herod, Manaen believed in the Gospel. He became so committed that he became a leader of the early church, facing all the risks.

The paths of these two men illustrate the choices each of us must make. We may have similar experiences, see similar things, have similar backgrounds, and have similar points of view. But each of us responds to the Gospel in our own way.

Will we be like Herod Agrippa, who was curious but determined to live life his own way? He got his riches, honor, and power on earth. But in death, he was a miserable, lost soul. Or will we be like Manaen, who followed the call of the Gospel and served God faithfully? He may not have been written about in history books, but he is a star in God's Kingdom.

The choices are ours to make every day.

What kind of choices are you making?

In the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers...Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

Acts 13:1 NKJV

PRAYER:

Father, I commit my life to You. I will seek first Your Kingdom. Show me how I can serve You. In Jesus' name, amen.

The Jews who disbelieved stirred up the minds of the Gentiles and embittered them against the brethren.

Acts 14:2 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I declare that Your Word is true. Help me to put Your Word into action. Deliver me from fear and worry. In Jesus' name, amen.

Who have you been witnessing to who still needs to be persuaded?

Not Persuaded

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ACTS 14

When Paul and Barnabas were in Iconium, they went to the synagogue to share the Gospel. As a result, many Jews and Gentiles believed. But some resisted. These were people who had an opportunity to hear about Jesus, but for whatever reason, they were not persuaded.

The Bible calls them people who “disbelieved.” As Kenneth Wuest wrote in his translation, they “were *unwilling* to be persuaded.” As a result, they “withheld belief.”

These people made a decision. They had the same opportunity as other Jews and Gentiles. They heard the same Gospel message. But by an act of their will, they determined that they would not be persuaded and would not believe.

All of us have opportunities like this every day. God has given us His Word and made promises to us. But He also has given us choices. And there are rewards based on the decisions we make. This applies to Christians as well as non-believers. All of us have been given wills, so we can refuse to be persuaded and withhold belief.

You have many opportunities to believe and to put God's Word into action in your life. Now the choice is up to you. Will you decide to act in faith and believe in God? Or will you withhold faith and allow your life to be dominated by doubt? Are you willing to be persuaded by God? Or have you already made up your mind?

Bound by Tradition

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ACTS 15

Everything should have changed for Jesus' followers. The Spirit had arrived and given them *fresh* insights. Yet some continued to be bound by the old ways.

Over and over, the Spirit revealed new dimensions God had prepared for believers—a life beyond the limits of the flesh. No longer were they to feel boxed in by traditions, but liberated to live a dynamic faith.

But some *refused* to change. The old ways were so deeply ingrained that they resisted the liberating work of God's Spirit. They were bound by traditions and past interpretations of laws.

Many people today have similar limitations. The same Holy Spirit is present and available to us. The Bible provides numerous examples of ways He can impact our lives. But to experience the fullness of the Spirit, we cannot allow the limits of the flesh to put a stranglehold on our faith.

We should be always rooted in God's immutable Word, so we can follow the leading of the Spirit. We must ask God to open our eyes and teach us His ways. We need to move past our limits to grasp the full dimension of His Kingdom.

Dare to believe God. Dare to believe His Word. Dare to be open to the leading of His Spirit. Dare to leave the past behind. Ask Him to help you see the world in light of His limitless power and His timeless revelations.

What issues are you having trouble laying aside?

Some of the sects of the Pharisees who had believed, stood up, saying, “It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses.”

Acts 15:5 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I lay aside my own thoughts. Show me if I am stuck in old habits that limit Your Spirit. Teach me Your ways. In Jesus' name, amen.

A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold.

Proverbs 22:1 ESV

PRAYER:

Father, help me to be faithful and responsible, a person others can trust. Help me to be a good witness for the Gospel. In Jesus' name, amen.

Who or what do you allow to influence your thinking?

A Good Name

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PROVERBS 22

When do we start being influenced by others? Caring what other people think? A recent study provided some startling news. Even by the time they are two years old, children can change their behavior when they know they are being watched. They can even react differently to different kinds of comments.

Researchers concluded that this demonstrates how concerned human beings of all ages tend to be about their reputation.

As the Bible reminds us, our reputation is very important. A good name is more valuable than riches! Our reputation demonstrates the kind of life we have lived. It reflects our character and what others think of us.

How do we secure a good name? We secure a good name by being surrendered to the Spirit, by making Jesus the Lord of our lives, by living according to God's Word, by acting with integrity, by keeping our promises and being trustworthy, and by being faithful in little things (Luke 16:10-12).

Think for a moment about people we respect. The mere mention of their names fills us with appreciation and confidence. We aspire to be like them. But we react differently toward people whom we do not respect.

Today, remember that other people are watching you. Your choices will impact how they think about you and how they think about the Gospel. Remember, you are called to seek a "good name." Be careful in your choices.

The Benefits of Change

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ACTS 15

Paul and Barnabas had a partnership that helped spread the Gospel and led to the growth of the church. Many were surprised when a disagreement arose that caused them to be "separated from one another." As we examine the results of this separation, though, we can see that it accomplished many positive results.

First, this separation increased the number of people who were involved in spreading the Gospel. By splitting into two groups, they were able to go in different directions, visit separate believers, and accomplish more for the Kingdom.

Second, Paul's ministry entered a new phase after being paired with Silas when they embarked on a journey that led to Europe. Silas may have been the partner Paul needed for this new outreach.

Third, this separation may have helped Paul and others renew their focus on God and not follow previous patterns. They were learning more about being led by the Spirit.

We don't know many details about Barnabas' life after this split. But we know much about John Mark. This man, who was so seemingly insignificant at the time, came to write one of the most important books in history, the Gospel of Mark.

Remember how easy it can be to be stuck in ruts and habits in your own life. God may allow change in order to accomplish His purposes for you. Stay sensitive to His Spirit; always be ready to follow His leading.

How can you cultivate a community of unity in your church?

There occurred such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him... Paul chose Silas and left.

Acts 15:39-40 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I commit my life to You. Keep me from being stuck in negative habits. Lead me by Your Spirit. In Jesus' name, amen.

Men of Athens, I notice that you are very religious...one of your altars had this inscription on it: "To an Unknown God." This God...is the one I'm telling you about.

Act 17:22–23 NLT

PRAYER:

Father, these are questions I face: _____ . Thank You that You have all the answers I need. I trust in You. In Jesus' name, amen.

What questions have you been pondering lately?

Mysteries

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ACTS 17

Charles Ives was a kind of maverick. A full-time insurance executive, he also became an important American composer. Born in 1874, he was a kind of revolutionary, pioneering approaches to music no one previously had considered.

Perhaps his most performed composition has been "The Unanswered Question." Originally composed in 1906, this brief piece leaves listeners pondering their existence and their lives. The work is dominated by a trumpet solo playing a simple melody that asks questions over a background of strings. All but the last question, the unanswered question, are answered by a flute quartet.

Throughout time, people have pondered the seemingly *unanswered* questions of life. Paul witnessed this perspective when he was in Athens. A central part of their community was an altar dedicated to "an unknown God." Paul urged them to realize that God did not need to be unknown. He wants to be known.

You will face many unknowns: questions that don't seem to have answers, events that don't seem to make sense, and things you don't understand.

These are reminders of how much each of us needs God in our lives. We need to realize our own human limits and depend on Him. We need to foster our relationship with Him, to know His Word, to seek Him for the answers we need, and to find meaning and purpose in serving Him.

Self-Interest

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ACTS 19

What do people talk about? It should be no surprise to learn that we spend much of our time focused on *ourselves*.

According to a recent study, people talk about themselves about one-third of the time. In their social media and other similar activities, that number jumps to 80%! People just love to talk about themselves.

This pattern has been true throughout history in every culture. Paul discovered that the people of Ephesus were so concerned with themselves that many were closed to the Gospel. All that mattered were their culture, their traditions, their business interests, and their religion. They only cared about what they felt was best for themselves at that moment.

Self-interest remains a primary motivation for people in the world—not what is best for eternity, but what seems best for them right now. People aren't motivated by God or His Word, or even by doing what is right. Sadly, this pattern is also true for many believers.

Think about *your* life. To what degree are you focused on yourself? Are you *really* living for God? Is your conversation filled with talk about yourself? Or are you talking about God and His Word? Are you talking about the impact of serving Jesus?

Make a definitive decision to follow Jesus and seek first God's Kingdom. Talk more about the Gospel and less about yourself. Serve Him regardless of what other people may do or say.

Is your conversation filled with talk about yourself or God and His Word?

Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade...this trade of ours [is] in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised.

Acts 19:25–27 NKJV

PRAYER:

Father, I surrender my life to You. Direct and guide me. I seek first Your Kingdom. In Jesus' name, amen.

The city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed with one accord into the theater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia.

Acts 19:29 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I commit my life to serving You. Show me the role You want me to play. In Jesus' name, amen.

How are you serving Jesus in this current season of life?

Paul's Support Team

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ACT 19

It took a high level of courage and commitment as well as a sense of calling to bring the Gospel to the first-century Roman world. Paul was trained and chosen for this task. But he did not travel alone. One of his companions was Aristarchus, a believer from Macedonia.

While in Ephesus, a huge disturbance erupted after Paul shared the Gospel. Paul was the center of the confusion, but Aristarchus was there with him, facing the same dangers.

Aristarchus was one of Paul's "traveling companions." Some might have abandoned the journey because of the hazards. But Aristarchus remained loyal, traveling with Paul after leaving Ephesus (Acts 20:4).

For a time, others traveled with Paul, but along the way, some abandoned him. But months later when Paul boarded a ship that was to take him to Rome, Aristarchus was one of the few to accompany him (Acts 27:2).

In the introduction to his letter to the Colossians, Paul described Aristarchus as "my fellow prisoner" (Colossians 4:10), which demonstrated their developing partnership.

Paul recognized that followers of Christ were like a body with many members, each of whom was important (1 Corinthians 12:14).

Aristarchus was a powerful example of this principle in action. He did not get attention himself, but he supported Paul. He was a man of encouragement and partnership, totally committed to the Gospel, a faithful servant, and an example for all of us.

Is Custom Our King?

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ACTS 22

As he compiled the first thorough study of world history, Herodotus (writing in the fifth century BC) was struck by the dominance of *traditions*. He concluded, "Everywhere custom is king."

We see this pattern during the ministry of Jesus and the early church. Determined to protect their heritage and the purity of their faith, religious leaders allowed customs and traditions to *dominate* their lives and shade their interpretations and beliefs.

Over and over, audiences were closed to the Gospel as presented by Jesus and His disciples. In effect, people were fighting against God and distorting His plans and purposes.

We see this pattern when Paul addressed a crowd in Jerusalem, sharing what God had revealed to him. But the crowd rejected his message. They were closed to the possibility that he was declaring the truth.

Paul himself might have reached the same conclusion earlier in his life. But he could not deny God's revelations to him. He had been forced to look at God and His Word in a new light.

We can be critical of those people in Jerusalem, but the fact is that the same patterns are true today. We, too, can find our attitudes shaped by *customs* and *traditions*. We can be closed to God's attempts to open our hearts to help us understand His Word more accurately.

Ask God to open your mind and heart to His understanding.

Do you find yourself stuck instead of being open to the Spirit's leading?

Up to this word they listened to him. Then they raised their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth! For he should not be allowed to live."

Act 22:22 ESV

PRAYER:

Father, I seek Your wisdom and understanding. Teach me Your ways. In Jesus' name, amen.

I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, but kept declaring...that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance.

Acts 26:19–20 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for Your plan for my life. Help me focus on completing this assignment. I dedicate my life to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

What assignment from God are you working on right now?

Your Heavenly Vision

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ACTS 26

Saul's life was changed by a vision. When Jesus appeared to him as he approached Damascus on a mission to persecute Christians, Saul was transformed from a persecutor to the apostle Paul.

To help Paul understand this vision, Jesus sent Ananias so that Paul could understand that he was "a chosen instrument" who would "bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel" (Acts 9:15). Paul needed to be prepared for difficulties he would face.

Paul never forgot this vision. Wherever he went, its message was a constant reminder of God's call and his personal ministry.

By focusing on this vision, Paul showed the consistency of his message. He was not motivated by the reactions of people but by his obedience to God. He spent his life fulfilling that call, going wherever God called him to go. By staying faithful to this vision, he had boldness, confidence, and clarity.

This message applies to all who have made Jesus their Lord. All believers, through this relationship, have been given a *personal* assignment that may include particular places to go and special things to do. We are prepared, trained, and equipped in special ways to accomplish these assignments.

Today, remember God's call on *your* life. Do not be disobedient to *your* "heavenly vision." Dedicate yourself to finishing your task, running your race, and winning the prize set before you (Hebrews 12:1–2).

Ready to Hear and See

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ACTS 28

As Paul spoke to leading Jews in Rome, some were persuaded by his message. But "others would not believe" (v. 24). In his comments, Paul gave them a parting word, quoting from the prophet Isaiah. These were important insights that apply to anyone who fails to grasp God's message.

Isaiah provided a vivid description of people who had an *opportunity* to receive but *refused* to listen. Isaiah said that their heart "has become dull." The Greek word here means to be thick or fat. It was a word of symbolic importance. These hearts were *burdened* and *preoccupied* with other things.

Isaiah also said that this people "scarcely hear." The Bible uses a Greek word that means heavy or with difficulty. In truth, *heavy* ears cannot hear, and *closed* eyes cannot see. And *burdened* hearts cannot receive.

All of us, even mature believers, can find it difficult to hear from God when many things are on our minds and when our thoughts are *cluttered* with the things of the world. How easily habits are formed that block the flow of God's Spirit in our lives.

Remember, if you want to receive from God, you need to have *open* eyes that are ready to see and ears that are ready to *hear*.

Don't allow worldly cares to weigh you down. Ask God to help you eliminate things that keep you from having an intimate relationship with Him.

What is hindering you from having an intimate relationship with God?

The heart of this people has become dull, and with their ears they scarcely hear, and they have closed their eyes.

Acts 28:27 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, help me have eyes that are ready to see what You want me to see. Help me to be sensitive to Your Spirit. In Jesus' name, amen.

Nevertheless the centurion was more persuaded by the helmsman and the owner of the ship than by the things spoken by Paul.

Acts 27:11 NKJV

PRAYER:

Father, I commit my life to You. I seek Your will. Speak to me. Guide me. Direct my steps. I trust in You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Compose a prayer asking for God's guidance in your next season.

Whom Do You Trust?

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ACTS 27

The ship carrying Paul toward Rome faced dangerous conditions. He warned passengers and crew that the voyage ahead would be a disaster. There would be economic loss. And some would die.

Pondering his options for the voyage, the centurion in charge of prisoner transportation could have listened to the ship's captain, who had experience steering a ship, or he could have trusted Paul.

From a human perspective, there was no reason to trust Paul. He had no experience piloting a ship. And he was just a prisoner. But Paul knew God. Paul had spiritual discernment and was sensitive to God's leading.

Nonetheless, the centurion believed the captain. It was a dangerous choice.

Each day we face many crossroads. As we ponder our options, we can be caught up in the pressure to think like the people around us and rely on human logic. But the Bible reminds us that we always need to trust in God and allow Him to guide us, to fill our minds and hearts with His Word, and to stay sensitive to the Holy Spirit.

Right now, think about the decisions you face. Whom do you trust? The people of this world? Or God and His Word? Are you basing your decisions on the world's wisdom, or following the leading of His Spirit?

In every situation, be sure to seek God. Cry out for His wisdom. Stay sensitive to His Spirit. Trust Him.



Ben Cerullo

5 STEPS TO Victory in Christ

I've met many believers who become disappointed when things don't go their way. They have fallen prey to the common misconception that all their problems and struggles would vanish once they started a relationship with Jesus.

However, let's be honest: Life can be tough. Even as Christians, we'll face many challenges—including some *new* ones we didn't have to deal with as unbelievers.

You see, before we were saved, we were no threat to the devil. But when we accepted Jesus into our hearts, something changed. We took up a new residence in the *spiritual battlefield* and immediately became an enemy of Satan.

If your struggles seem overwhelming today, these five steps will help you to find a place of victory in the Lord:

1. Quit relying on your own strength. Realize that the only way to experience lasting victory is through the power of the Holy Spirit and reliance upon what Jesus

accomplished for you on the cross.

2. Cry out to God, and repent of any known sins.

Ask God to forgive you and deliver you. Turn away from your chains, sin, and bondage, and run into the arms of your loving Father, Savior, and Deliverer.

3. Be accountable. Surround yourself with solid believers to lean on for prayer and support to help you during times of temptation or struggle.

4. Passionately pursue God. Commit yourself to spending daily time with Jesus, and get to know Him intimately. Press into His Word and His presence until He's your everything.

5. Fight the good fight. The Bible says there's a fierce spiritual battle for your soul (Ephesians 6:10–18). The devil is a thief and a liar, and he wants you to be bound and destroyed (John 10:10). You must stand in the victory Jesus has already won for you. Defend it, stand on it, and walk in it! ❖



Using Wealth to Spread the Gospel

Money can be a powerful tool to impact souls for Jesus.

Wealth is an extremely powerful tool, which can be used either for good or evil. Godly people will use their wealth to spread the Gospel and bless others. Unrighteous people will use money as a tool for sin and self-gratification.

In 1990 when Inspiration Ministries was born, we took a great step of faith to launch a ministry dedicated to impacting the lost through media. Today, hundreds of millions of people around the world have access to the Gospel of Jesus Christ through our life-giving outreaches. In fact, every six seconds, we are hearing of someone, somewhere in the world making Jesus Christ their Lord through this ministry's efforts!

Of course, none of this would have been possible if it hadn't been

for the sacrificial giving of our partners. While salvation is a gift from God, it takes LOTS of money to reach the world with the Gospel.

But whenever you think of the large cost of sending the Good News to the ends of the earth today, remember the interesting story that took place after Jesus' resurrection:

Some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened. When they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, saying, 'Tell them, 'His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept.' And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will appease him and make you secure.'

So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day (Matthew 28:11–15 NKJV).

You see, the opponents of the Gospel were willing to pay "a large sum of money" to spread lies discrediting Jesus' resurrection. And the same is true today; powerful financiers invest enormous sums of money to create movies, TV programs, and books to spread lust, obscenity, and lies that propagate evil or ridicule the cause of Christ. As God's people, shouldn't we, in return, be willing to spend large sums to spread the TRUTH?

We live in sobering times. Now more than ever, the body of Christ needs to rise up and finance the end-time harvest of souls. We need to sow sacrificial financial seeds to send the light of the Gospel to the nations while it's still day—because the night is coming when no one can work (John 9:4).

This is just another example of how money can be a powerful tool to impact souls for our Father God. You can invest your money for fruitless endeavors and follow your desires, OR you can expand the Kingdom by sharing the power of the Gospel. The choice is yours.

As the old saying goes, when you get involved with what concerns God, HE gets involved with what concerns you. ❖

Scriptures to meditate on this month:



Week One

Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

Matthew 19:21 NKJV



Week Two

So the people asked him, saying, "What shall we do then?" He answered and said to them, "He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise."

Luke 3:10–11 NKJV



Week Three

No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

Matthew 6:24 NKJV



Week Four

And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.

Deuteronomy 8:18 NKJV

TREMENDOUS Peace of Mind!

Are you concerned about how to provide for your loved ones after you go to be with the Lord? Do you want to continue partnering with Inspiration Ministries to win souls through your estate?

Our Planned Giving representatives can help—just as they helped this grateful partner:



“The Inspiration Ministries Planned Giving Department helped me lay a strong foundation for my estate, giving me tremendous peace of mind!”—AMANEE, Illinois

If you have questions about your long-term financial plan or Christian Will...we are here for YOU!



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

Discover new peace of mind about your financial future—and know you're helping others make Jesus their Lord, even after you are in Heaven!



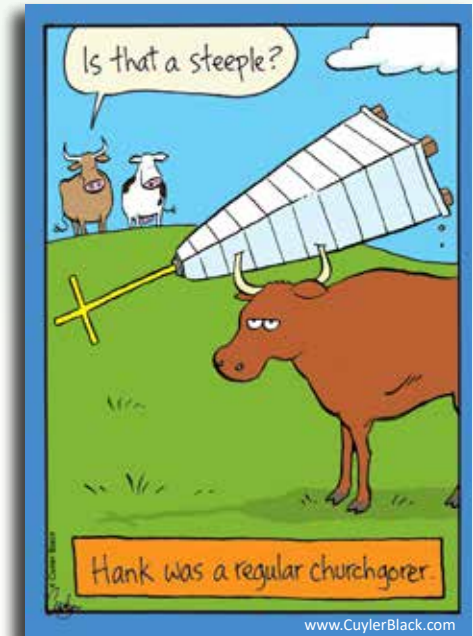
A Merry Heart...

does good, like medicine. – Proverbs 17:22

The newlywed wife said to her husband when he returned from work, “I have great news for you. Pretty soon we’re going to be three in this house instead of two.”

The husband started glowing with happiness and, kissing his wife, said, “O Darling, I’m the happiest man in the world.”

But then she replied, “I’m glad you feel that way since Mom will be here in the morning.”



A dirty little boy came in from playing in the yard and asked his mother, “Who am I?”

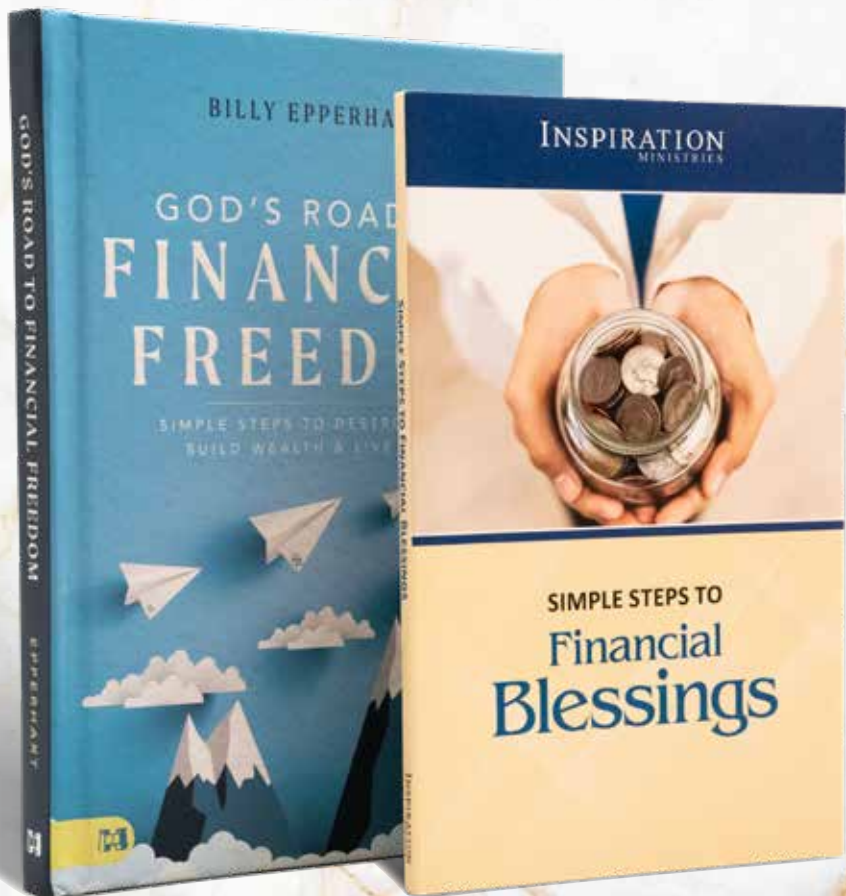


Ready to play the game, she said, “I don’t know! Who are you?”

“WOW!” cried the child. “Mrs. Johnson was right! She said I was so dirty, my own mother wouldn’t recognize me!”

Got some clean, Christian humor you'd like to share?
Email it to: MerryHeart@inspiration.org

Make Your Money Work for YOU!



Want the time, resources, and headspace to fully devote yourself to God's calling for your life? MBA and serial entrepreneur Billy Epperhart lays out easy-to-implement, God-given, power tools to help you make your money work for you. You can eliminate debt, build wealth, and live in the blessings of God!

PLUS

Our *Simple Steps to Financial Blessings* reveals the Kingdom principles that will open the storehouses of Heaven in your life.

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