

NOVEMBER 2023

inspiration

M A G A Z I N E



The God Who **HEALS**

Listening
Prayer

7 Steps to
Your Healing

Plug into
His Power

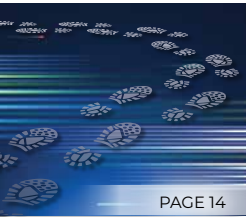
The God Who Heals



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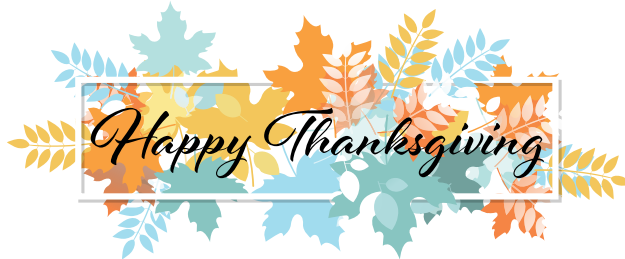
Today is your invitation to let your loving Heavenly Father draw you into His presence, heal your heart, build your faith, and release His healing power in your life. See David's article on **page 5**, "The Healing Power of Forgiveness," and get ready for His transforming touch.



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Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!
(2 Corinthians 9:15)

EDITOR'S CORNER



Roone Acree

If the cry of your heart today is "Heal me, O LORD" (Jeremiah 17:14), either for yourself or for a loved one, I have good news: God is the God of breakthroughs! Whether you need a healing in your body, your emotions, your finances, your family, or some other area, the Lord wants to reveal Himself as your Healer. On **page 17**, we invite you to contact our powerful prayer ministers to *personally* pray for your breakthrough today. We'll stand with you in prayer, believing God to step into your circumstances!

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Your Moment for Breakthrough

The Healing Power of FORGIVENESS



Spiritual
DETOX

**October 30–
November 10**

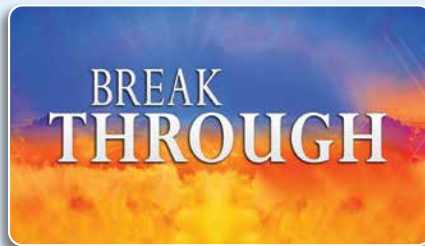
Do you ever feel sluggish... slow...in a rut? Do you long to feel invigorated...renewed... purposeful? Join Kim Crabill for her new *Strengthen Your Walk™* series on Spiritual

Detox where she teaches about the eight biblical principles that will guide you through your own spiritual detox journey: READ God's Word, RECOGNIZE where you need to detox, REPENT, REJECT, REPLACE, REJOICE, RECORD, and REFUSE.

**November 13–
December 8**

Instead of giving up when things get tough, Jesus encourages us to keep asking, seeking, and knocking until our breakthrough comes. The principles in *Breakthrough* will enable you

to break free from the Land of Not Enough and experience a new beginning in the Land of MORE Than Enough.



STRENGTHEN
your walk
with David Cerullo

The medical community is increasingly acknowledging the toll that unforgiveness and bitterness take on the body. Cancer, arthritis, chronic back pain...all these are often rooted in a lack of forgiveness toward those in our past who have knowingly or unknowingly wounded us.

Unforgiveness can lead to bitterness, which is toxic to your body and soul. Acts 8:23 talks about a man who was “*poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.*” Refusing to forgive can release toxins into our body and cripple us with disease.

God is very clear in His Word:
**WE MUST FORGIVE THOSE WHO
HAVE WRONGED US!**

If you find yourself in a place of torment today, God wants to release you. But the key to your prison cell may be in your own hand. You need to get away for some time with the Lord, asking Him to work His forgiveness in your heart. As long as it takes, spend time choosing to forgive each person who has hurt you. Tear up every IOU, and release them from their debts.

Are you signed up for our daily
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OFFENSES AND OBJECTIONS

Perhaps you've been holding on to your offenses for a long time. Someone has hurt you deeply, and you feel justified in holding an angry grudge against them. If so, there are two things you need to remember:

The main person hurt by holding on to your offense is not the other person—it's YOU!

As severely as you may have been wronged, your trauma is no greater than was experienced by many men and women of God in the Bible:

Because of the jealousy of his brothers, **JOSEPH** was thrown into the bottom of a well, became a slave in Egypt, and spent years in a dungeon. Yet he chose to forgive his brothers and welcome them into the prosperity God had given him. Instead of taking revenge against his brothers, Joseph told them, *"You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good"* (Genesis 50:20).

JOB found a wonderful reversal of his fortunes when he prayed for his friends—even though they had spent many days badgering and criticizing him (Job 42:10–12).

NAOMI and **RUTH** faced grief and uncertainty after their husbands died, yet God gave them a wonderful new beginning when they moved back to Bethlehem (Ruth 1).

THE SAMARITAN WOMAN at the well (John 4:1–42) and the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1–11) both endured trauma at the hands of men and because of their own foolish choices—but they each received a new beginning when Jesus forgave and restored them.

THE WIDOW AT ZAREPHATH faced severe financial lack and the possibility of starvation, but she found God's provision when she sacrificially provided for Elijah (1 Kings 17:8–16).

STEPHEN forgave those who were stoning him to death: *"Lord, do not hold this sin against them!"* (Acts 7:54–60 NASB). This act of forgiveness was one of the primary factors leading to the conversion of the apostle Paul.

JESUS, while carrying the sins of the world on the cross, issued a powerful word of forgiveness that has echoed through the centuries: *"Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they do"* (Luke 23:34).

So remember this when you're tempted to throw yourself a pity party and hold on to offenses toward others: God wants you to follow Jesus' example and forgive those who have treated you unjustly.

HURTFUL WAYS

Forgiveness often is very difficult, but it's an essential key to living in right health and wholeness in Him. Your winter season may go on indefinitely unless you make a decision to forgive anyone who has hurt you.

David prayed, *"Search me, O God, and know my heart; put me to the test and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any hurtful way in me"* (Psalm 139:23–24 NASB). Make no mistake about it, unforgiveness is a *"hurtful way"* that will imprison you with torment unless you deal with it.

I know one pastor who goes away each month for a few days to spend time with the Lord. What does he do on these personal retreats? He always starts by asking the Lord to show him anyone he hasn't forgiven yet. In fact, on one of these retreats, he spent three whole days forgiving people who had wronged him!

Like this pastor, you can't just assume you've forgiven people who have hurt you. You may

The main person hurt by holding on to your offense is not the other person—it's YOU!

You will be amazed by the Lord's ability to restore all things through forgiveness.

even need to spend some time asking God to search your heart. If you're still talking about the offense—months or even years after it occurred—it's likely that you still have some forgiving to do.

Take time today to allow the Lord to search your heart and remove any "hurtful way" or unforgiveness that is keeping you imprisoned in your past.

STEPS YOU CAN TAKE

We all need to forgive, but it's not always as easy as it sounds. The enemy wants to keep us bound in our bitterness and self-seeking anger. As you look to the Lord for guidance, I encourage you to follow these practical steps in forgiving others:

1. Remove yourself as the judge, recognizing that you have a capacity to do the very same thing as the one who offended you.
2. Repent of your sinful reaction to the offense, bringing your reaction to the cross and asking the Lord to give you a new heart.
3. Finally, forgive and release the other person, asking the Lord to bless them.

But what if the other person never repents of their conduct that caused the offense? Once we have forgiven, it is the Lord's job to deal with any sins of the other person. Just like us, they are living in bondage if they continue to disobey Him, so our forgiveness is important for releasing spiritual strongholds in their lives.

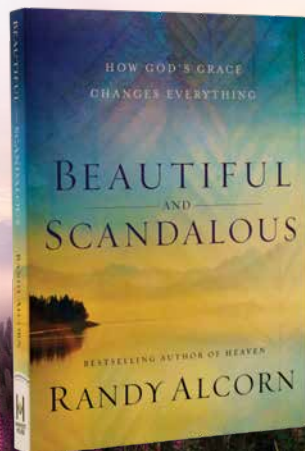
You will be amazed by the Lord's ability to restore all things through forgiveness. It's not just a matter of unlocking your own prison door, but the cell door for others as well.

Forgive, and you will free all captives. Let go of the hurts, and you will bring forth life!

God bless you!



P.S. I can't wait to send you our powerful THANK YOU GIFT this month! Turn to **page 28** for all the details.



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Listening Prayer

Before Elijah's triumphant prayer vigil, which called down the rain that broke the three-year drought, the mighty man of God had the famous showdown with the prophets of Baal, resulting in the execution of every one of them. Elijah then called down the rain, and after that we find him...running for his life from the evil Jezebel. (Don't you just love the humanity of these characters? It makes the Bible so much more real, and their example so much more accessible to us!) God then spoke to Elijah again:

The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by."

Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper (1 Kings 19:11–12 NIV).

What a lovely phrase—"a gentle whisper." A "still, small voice" as other translations have it. To hear that gentle whisper, we need to calm ourselves down. We quiet our hearts and do our best to shut out all drama. I do believe that as we grow in our intimacy with God, our ability to hear His voice grows, and we can recognize Him speaking in times of great trial. But it is not a good idea to start there or only reach out to hear from Him in urgent moments.

I will then take a simple question to bring before Him.

To be clear, I am not listening for an audible voice, as I would if you and I were talking. I am listening for His gentle voice within, for that is where Jesus dwells—within our very hearts (Ephesians 3:17).

These are the basic steps: Start with small and simple questions, yes or no questions if possible. Quiet yourself; pull away if you can to a quiet place and shut out all other distractions. Repeat the question as you pray and listen—that helps dial you in and keeps you focused. Bring your heart into a place of surrender.

Now, if I am having a hard time hearing God's voice, or being certain that I have heard, I will sometimes try on one answer, then the other. Still in a posture of quiet listening, I will add to my prayers, "Are you saying yes, Jesus? Are you saying you want us to go?" Pause. Listen. "Or are you saying no—you don't want us to go?" Often as we try on one answer or another, our spirit can feel the guidance of the Holy Spirit through a confirmation or a strong sense of reservation.

One other thing I have found helpful as I cultivate conversational intimacy is to first ask God a question I know the biblical answer to. For example, I will ask Him, "Do you love me, Jesus?" because I know the Scriptures have answered that, yes, beyond all doubt He does. It helps me warm up to the practice of listening because Jesus is able to say immediately, "Yes," or, "Of course I do." It also helps me address any fears that might come between God and me as I come back to the essential truths of our relationship. I am His son. He loves me. ❖



John Eldredge is an author, a counselor, and a teacher. He is also president of Wild at Heart Ministry.

Excerpt from *Moving Mountains: Praying with Passion, Confidence, and Authority*, courtesy of Thomas Nelson Publishing.

Lucy Shimmers

and the Prince of Peace



"Jesus loves him. Why can't we?" A sick little girl shares God's grace with a convict in this warmhearted Christmas favorite.

Saturday, November 4 at 9 p.m. ET
Sunday, November 5 at 5:30 p.m. ET
Wednesday, November 8 at 9 p.m. ET

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

Healing & Restoration



Sundays at 8 a.m. ET

The Potter's Touch

Bishop T.D. Jakes goes directly to God's Word! Get powerful answers to tough issues for your healing and restoration.



Saturdays, November 11, 18, & 25
at 2:30 p.m. ET

Lost Legacy Reclaimed

Before Islam arrived in North Africa, there was a vibrant Christian community. Discover their stories in this fascinating series.



Monday, November 20 at 9 p.m. ET

Wildflower

Recurring nightmares compel a college student to confront buried secrets and find her faith in this high-impact thriller.



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7 Steps to Your Healing

If you need a healing in your body, your emotions, your finances, your family, or some other area of your life, our prayer for you is that you **“prosper in ALL things and be in health, just as your soul prospers”** (3 John 1:2).

Here are some important steps to keep in mind if you’re seeking a healing today:

STEP #1—ELIMINATE HINDRANCES

Make sure to deal with any hindrances that could block God’s healing power or other blessings. Ask the Holy Spirit to convict you of such things as unbelief...unforgiveness...pride...sin...generational sins...poor choices...and fear.

STEP #2—WORSHIP

Worship will help you focus your eyes on the Lord and receive His perfect peace (Isaiah 26:3). Jesus is *“the author and finisher of our faith”* (Hebrews 12:2), and it’s crucial to make sure you are looking to Him instead of relying on your own strength.

STEP #3—PRAY THE WORD

Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you to Scripture promises concerning your health. Declare those promises throughout the day to strengthen you when you’re feeling sick or weary and are tempted to feel hopeless about your health.

STEP #4—WAGE SPIRITUAL WAR

Be aware of Satan’s strategies to rob you of your health (John 10:10), and make sure you put on the whole armor of God to resist him (Ephesians 6:14–18). You can overcome the enemy’s attacks by the mighty spiritual weapons God has given you (2 Corinthians 10:4). Remember, when your life is submitted to God’s authority, you can tell the devil, “Stay out of my life!”—and he must flee (James 4:7).

STEP #5—ASK GOD FOR WISDOM

Solomon advised us to *“get wisdom”* (Proverbs 4:7). Your doctor and well-meaning friends may all have opinions about what you should do when you need healing. But instead of blindly following every offer of health advice, you must ask God for His instructions and let His peace steer your heart (Colossians 3:15).

STEP #6—TOUCH HIM BY FAITH

Remember, God *wants* to heal you! He’s your *Jehovah-Rapha*—the God who heals ALL your diseases (Psalm 103:3). Follow the example of the woman who was healed of a hemorrhage when she took a step of faith to reach out and touch Jesus by faith (Mark 5:25–34). Know that Jesus is with you right now. You can reach out and touch Him, asking for the healing you need!

STEP #7—PRAISE HIM FOR HEALING

Remember the example of King Jehoshaphat in 2 Chronicles 20:1–30: Praise the Lord in advance for the victory—even before you see it come to pass!

A PRAYER FOR YOUR HEALING:

Heavenly Father, may Your healing power mightily touch this child of Yours. Let them feel Your presence and peace. We proclaim today in Jesus’ mighty name that every healing promise in Your Word is true for them. Make them a testimony of Your love and power. In Jesus’ name. Amen. ❖

Cancer Free by the Power of God!



Essie, a Florida widow and elder in her church, knew just what to do when her granddaughter Jasmine was six months pregnant and diagnosed with breast cancer.

“I anointed her with oil, laid hands on her, and prayed over her in the name of the Lord,” Essie recalls, citing the Bible’s instructions in James 5:14–15. A firm believer in God’s power to heal, she claimed Jesus’ promise, “*They will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover*” (Mark 16:18).

As Jasmine received chemotherapy while she was still pregnant, Essie was anxious about how the treatments might affect the baby, so she called the International Prayer Center and asked one of our prayer ministers to agree with her that God would heal her granddaughter Jasmine

and keep her unborn child healthy.

The prayers were answered! Jasmine’s baby, named Taraji, was born last fall, perfectly healthy. “We were so focused on the mother that we didn’t pay as much attention to the baby’s health at first,” Essie says. “But praise God, she’s doing everything a baby would normally do!”

Jasmine is doing well too. “All the medical tests came back negative,” Essie beams. “She is cancer free, and I know it was the power of God!”

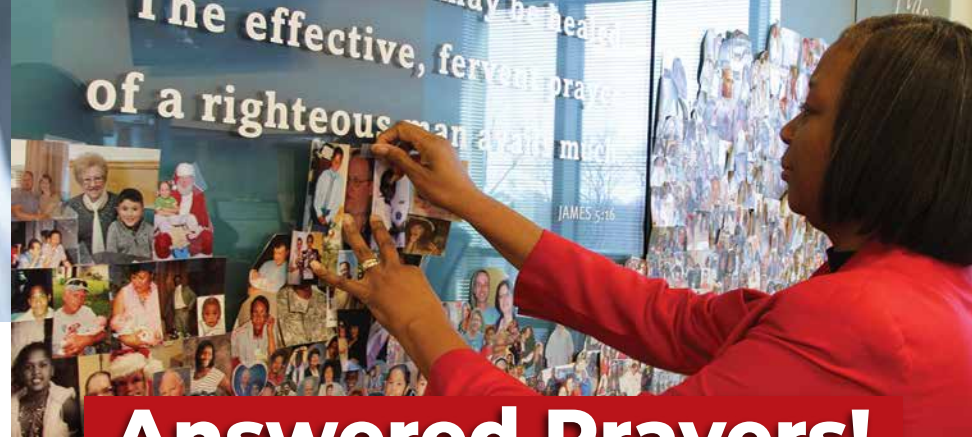
Though Essie is a bold woman of God who has seen the Lord answer many of her prayers over the years, she plans to continue to call our International Prayer Center for prayer support. “I’m so thankful to your prayer ministers for agreeing with me in prayer!”

What kind of breakthrough do YOU need from God? Contact our International Prayer Center to agree with you in prayer today!

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Answered Prayers!

Every year, the prayer ministers in our International Prayer Center intercede for *hundreds of thousands* of people seeking breakthroughs from God. Here are just a few of the awesome testimonies we receive every week:

Healed of breast cancer... “God has miraculously healed my body from breast cancer! He is so awesome.” —RUTH

Deliverance from the occult... “I was a skeptic when one of your prayer ministers called. I had been heavily involved in the occult. But now I’ve smashed and burned everything of the occult—even my most precious glass witch balls. As your prayer minister told me, it was time to turn my life around and believe in the miraculous power of prayer.” —FRANCES

Family Reconciliation... “I had not heard from my mother in years, but after we prayed, she contacted me!” —ELVIN

Born again at age 87... “Thank you for praying for me on the telephone. I am 87 years old. I have given my heart to Jesus, and I want to live for Him.” —GENEVIEVE

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

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Plug into HIS Power



by Ben Cerullo

Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8) and to heal the brokenhearted, to recover sight to the blind, and to set the oppressed and captive free (Luke 4:18). He came to bring freedom, wholeness, healing, and provision.

He wants us to be full of the power and authority of the Holy Spirit to do the same.

In Acts 1:8, Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would come with power. But the promise is not about power to achieve our aims or desires in life or to become rich or comfortable or popular.

The power is given for only one purpose—*so we may be witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus.*

It sets the context and purpose for all the other amazing signs that followed throughout the book of Acts—the gift of tongues, the help to the widows, the sharing of goods, the healings, the missionary journeys, the many fillings with the Spirit, and the prophecies.

God put His Spirit inside of us so that everyone we come in contact with—every sick body, every demon-possessed person, anyone in the chains of the enemy—can see the power of God. It's meant to spread like wildfire. The Spirit of God fills the temple of our lives so we can show the world and spread the fire as the power to heal, the power to deliver, and the power to restore.

God says, “I’m going to use you. I will release My power in your life if you seek Me. I will charge your life with fire, so that when you stand, you will ignite the atmosphere around you. When you walk into impossible situations, My power will shine.”

Forget about changing the world without the power of the Spirit. Forget about changing your city and your community. You’ll never be able to do God’s work without His fire. His power transforms us... and His love...sets us free. ❖

Intercession

BIBLE READING: EPHESIANS 6

These were dark days. Nazi armies had vanquished Belgium and driven the British forces to the French coast. It seemed inevitable that the British army on the continent would be crushed.

Many were afraid and unsettled. But while politicians and military leaders debated strategy, some turned to God, like the people of the Bible College of Wales.

Throughout the war years, “The whole college was in prayer every evening.” They also had other times of prayer and days of fasting. This was a commitment that began before the war, and they continued praying throughout the war. They prayed even when circumstances looked hopeless. After both defeats and victories, they continued to seek God.

One day, Nazi planes passed overhead as the college leader Rees Howells began to speak. Despite the sounds, Howells delivered a spell-binding message. The students and faculty sensed God’s presence and the “certainty of victory.” Fear had lifted. Suddenly the place was filled with praise.

These dedicated believers were fighting in the Spirit, demonstrating true intercession, and praying even when circumstances didn’t seem encouraging, or it may not have seemed their prayers would be answered.

The world needs intercessors and prayer warriors. Ask God to give *you* a burden for prayer—for nations, leaders, the lost, revival, physical and financial needs, God’s intervention in world affairs...yes, *you* can be an intercessor!

Write out a prayer for the lost people you encounter today.

With every prayer and request, pray at all times in the Spirit...be alert with all perseverance and every request for all the saints, and pray in my behalf...that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

Ephesians 6:18–20 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, give me a burden for souls. I specifically pray for these people: _____. Use me to impact lives for the Gospel. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.

James 1:2–3 NIV

PRAYER:

Father, I commit these trials to You:

Thank You that I can be joyful and confident You will take care of me. In Jesus' name, amen.

Write a prayer of praise for who God is and what He's done for you.

Joyfully Trust Jesus

BIBLE READING: JAMES 1

What brings us joy? Naturally, we think of pleasant experiences and happy moments. Certainly, God wants us to have joy in these situations, but He also wants us to experience a *different* kind of joy.

This happens when we face challenging situations and problems. These are situations in which it can seem natural to be filled with fear or worry.

But the Bible urges us to have a different attitude, to be *expectant*, and to know God is with us, no matter how hopeless we might feel. When we face various trials, God wants us to renew our faith in Him and be confident that He will look after us. Through these situations, He will teach us, strengthen us, and help us mature.

Are you facing trials? Are you burdened with problems that seem to have no solutions? Are you going through circumstances that seem overwhelming? Do not give in to doubt or worry. Instead, renew your relationship with Jesus. Turn to Him.

Remember all He has done for you and the promises in His Word. Declare these promises to be true in your life. Recall all the ways He has blessed and delivered you in the past.

Place your trust in Him. Instead of complaining, praise and worship Him. Start confessing His promises. Let Him take your burdens away. Be confident that He has not forgotten you. He will use the trials you face to produce priceless rewards.

Unstable

BIBLE READING: JAMES 1

Many of Claude Monet's paintings focus on serene scenes, tranquil gardens, and wispy clouds. But Monet had different thoughts when visiting the English Channel in north-west France. Monet stayed at this location frequently, finding the views so inspiring that this became the focus of more than 50 of his paintings.

One of these paintings was called *The Stormy Sea in Étretat*. This reflected the scene from the hotel where he stayed in that town. In the background, cliffs hover over the scene. In the foreground, two observers stand near their crippled boat, seemingly helpless in the face of the stormy sea.

But the sea dominates the painting. As the painting's title suggests, the sea is turbulent, even violent. We can imagine how unsettling this must have seemed.

The painting is a reminder of how violent the sea can be and how helpless it can make us feel. We are reminded of the word picture painted by James: Some people are "*double-minded*" and unstable. They are tossed about by their circumstances, just like people shaken by the sea.

The message is clear. We need to have clear minds and hearts if we want to hear from God. We need to stop looking around and shift our focus. Focusing on Him will end the turbulence we may feel. Approach Him with confidence. Trust Him. Stand on His Word. Ask Him for wisdom.

In which area do you need God's wisdom currently?

If you need wisdom, ask...God...be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind.

James 1:5–6 NLT

PRAYER:

Father, I need Your wisdom. I am confident in You. Thank You for giving me Your peace. I trust in You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

James 1:12

PRAYER:

Father, help me to stay faithful. Help me persevere and not give up. I trust in You. In Jesus' name, amen.

What trials are you trying to persevere through right now?

Blessed in Endurance

BIBLE READING: JAMES 1

“Temptation is the devil looking through the keyhole,” said legendary evangelist, Billy Sunday. But he added, “Yielding is opening the door and inviting him in.”

Believers can find temptation defeating, puzzling, and discouraging. But the Bible tells us being tempted doesn't mean we have failed. Everyone faces some kind of temptation. Jesus Himself was tempted (Matthew 4:1).

Since we all will face temptations, the question is how we respond. Will we open the door to let the devil in? Will we resist (James 4:7)?

The Bible promises if we overcome these temptations, we will receive the “*crown of life*.” This is a symbol of the victory we can experience right now. Those who endure are overcomers, crowned with fulfillment and joy.

But to receive these blessings, we must *overcome*. This means recognizing when we are being tempted and not *yielding*, remaining steadfast and firm, and being calm and faithful.

You may go through various temptations with many challenges, questions about direction, or baffling crossroads. Being tempted doesn't mean you have failed or that God is displeased.

Remember, God has a crown for you. But to receive this reward, you must *persevere*. Go through these challenges and stay faithful.

If you feel tempted, don't give up. Remember God's promises. Stand on His Word, and seek to endure; always trust Him.

No Variation

BIBLE READING: JAMES 1

In this verse, James used three key words to describe the nature of God. These are the words here translated as “*variation*,” “*shadow*,” and “*turning*.” These particular Greek words are used here for the only time in the Bible.

James used these words to help us understand that there is no *variation* with God. He Himself declared, “*I am the LORD, I do not change*” (Malachi 3:6).

With God, there is no “*shadow of turning*.” As we think about shadows, we realize they never remain constant but change from moment to moment. They change with the movement of the sun or how objects move.

In contrast, there is no *variation* with God. People may disappoint us or fall short. They may ignore or reject us. Circumstances might change. We might have needs that seem overwhelming. But in every situation, we can count on God.

What challenges do you face? What needs do you have? The Bible reminds us that God does not waver. People may disappoint you or fall short, but you can always depend on Him. He *never* changes. His Word is timeless and perpetually true. His principles always apply.

Right now, remember these fundamental truths. These are timeless principles. God always is for you. He is always on your side. He longs to take your burdens, meet your needs, and fill your life with peace and joy. He is waiting to hear from you right now.

What variable circumstances are you facing right now?

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

James 1:17

PRAYER:

Father, thank You that there is no variability or shadow of turning with You. Your Word is true, and I depend on You. In Jesus' name, amen.

So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.

James 1:19

Listening

BIBLE READING: JAMES 1

According to a recent survey, 96% of people think they are good listeners. But the facts tell another story. Most people retain only about half of what others say. Instead of listening, people are often distracted, thinking about what to say or just not paying attention.

Research demonstrates how easily we can take listening for granted. People may talk, but how often do we really hear what they say?

One problem is that many people don't realize the importance of listening. We are more interested in having others listen to us than in hearing what others are saying. We often spend listening time focusing on our own point of view or our own interests. Our minds often drift as we're thinking about something else entirely.

If we want to be better listeners, we need to put distractions aside and focus on the people with whom we are interacting. We need to not just be talking but paying attention to what others say, giving people our undivided attention.

These habits apply to our relationship with God too. Many people just don't spend time focusing on Him. Their prayer time is filled with their own thoughts and concerns, and they hardly pause to listen.

If you want to be a better listener in your spiritual life, seek to spend quality time with God. Eliminate distractions. Attentively read His Word, thinking about each phrase. Be sensitive to what He wants to communicate.

PRAYER:

Father, help me be a better listener. Speak to me. Help me discern what You are trying to teach me. In Jesus' name, amen.

How are you listening to God today?

A Doer

BIBLE READING: JAMES 1

How well do you know yourself? A recent study revealed that most people have a good sense of evaluating others. They observe their actions and, generally, can detect their character.

In contrast, people often are unrealistic about their understanding of themselves. People consistently *overestimate* themselves. They spin stories that help them excuse past mistakes and focus on the good things they have done. They put too much stock in themselves while judging others harshly.

James recognized similar tendencies. He said that many Christians "*merely listen to the word*" (v. 22 NIV). They may read the Bible and go to church but lack a dynamic relationship with God. Many deceive themselves. James compared this to a "*man who looks at his natural face in a mirror.*" Once he goes away, he immediately *forgets* "*what kind of person he was*" (v. 24).

The key, James said, is being a *doer* of the Word, not just *knowing* the Word but *applying* biblical principles in our lives.

God's Word has real power. It is packed with promises that can *transform* your life. As you read and study the Bible, *look* for these principles. Memorize them. Confess them. Believe they are true for you. Let them change you in practical ways. They can impact your attitude, actions, relationships, and habits.

Don't deceive yourself. Be a *doer* of the Word! Let God pour out His blessings on you.

How are you going to put today's devotion into practice?

Prove yourselves doers of the word, and not just hearers who deceive themselves.

James 1:22 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I want to live victoriously. Help me to know Your Word and put it into action. Thank You for blessing me. In Jesus' name, amen.

Someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

James 2:18

Faith in Action

BIBLE READING: JAMES 2

It was an intense time. The prospect of victory seemed unlikely, and many were discouraged. As supreme allied commander during World War II, Dwight Eisenhower wrestled with many questions and faced enormous problems. Some felt he was not qualified for the job.

US Army Chief of Staff George Marshall stressed to Eisenhower that he needed to focus on *solving* problems, not just talking about them. Eisenhower understood this mission and the attitude that was needed. He wrote, “I have observed very frequently that it is not the man who is so brilliant [who] delivers in time of stress and strain, but rather the man who can *keep on going* indefinitely.”

He realized how many people did much talking but little doing; there were very few doers and many complainers. He only wanted people involved who had something to do with winning the war—and no complainers.

Eisenhower refused to be paralyzed by doubt. He wanted to approach their situation as an opportunity with faces that were cheerful and determined, not dark and gloomy. He realized that people could do amazing things under pressure.

The Bible urges us to have this kind of *determination* and *persistence*. We’re to be people of faith, not just *talking* about what we believe but putting our faith into action. We’re not to be complainers but doers, confident in God and His Word, believing Him for victory.

How are you persevering under pressure?

Chain Reactions

BIBLE READING: JAMES 3

It starts with something microscopic, even just a fragment of an atom. But then some catalyst sparks a chain reaction, and everything changes. This change can happen *rapidly*—in less than a thousandth of a second.

This is the impact of a *chain reaction*. We see these reactions in science as well as in practical matters. One thing leads to another. Breakthroughs can take place; doors that seem closed can open; new revelations can emerge.

The Bible reminds us of the many ways chain reactions can take place in our spiritual lives: A tiny spark can develop into a raging fire. Just a few words can lead to massive consequences. We need to guard our tongues, be careful of what we say, and remember that even a few words can explode into conflicts.

This same pattern is true for everything in our lives. What we *see* can cause chain reactions in our minds. What we *think about* can help us to grow spiritually or lead to ruin. What we *do* can open or close doors.

These are reasons why we need to be careful what we think about (Philippians 4:8). We’re to focus on heavenly things (Colossians 3:2), fill our minds with God’s Word, and be careful what we say and do. Remember, chain reactions can start with just a few words or the smallest actions, and the impact can be enormous.

Recount the last time you sparked a chain reaction and its consequences.

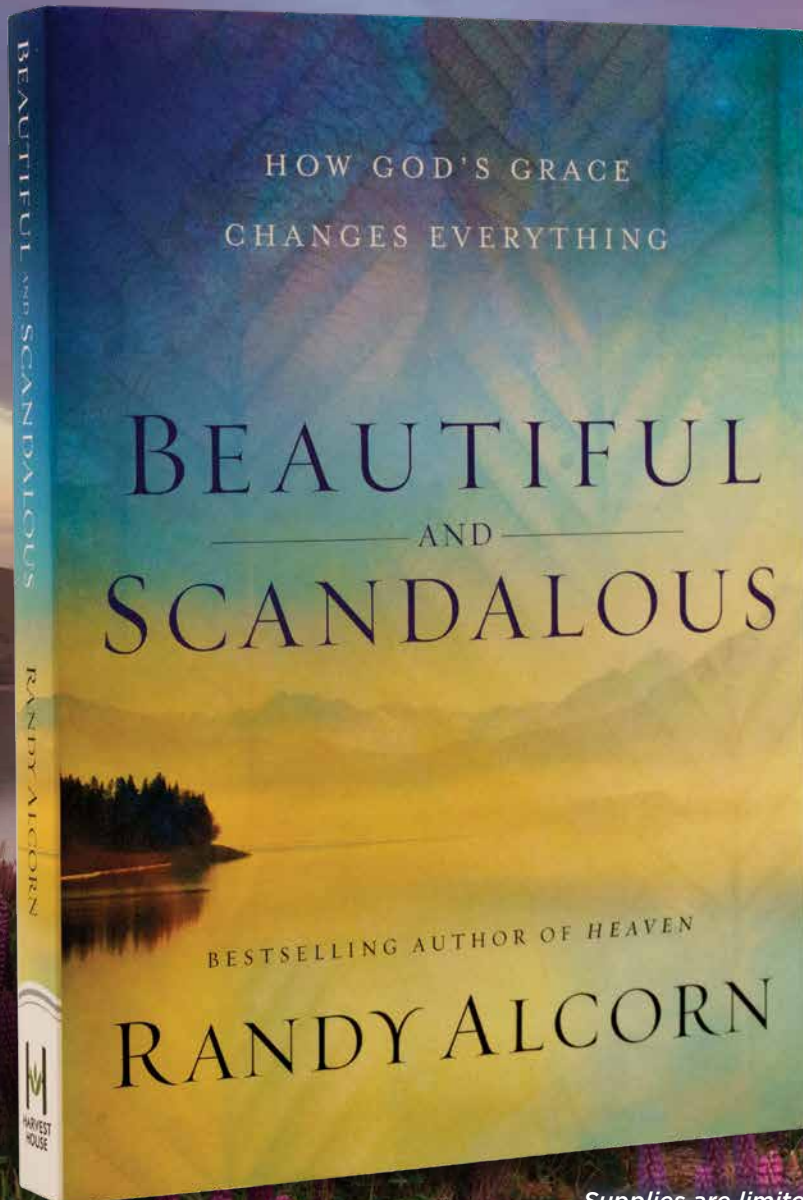
See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, the very world of unrighteousness; the tongue is set among our body’s parts...and sets on fire the course of our life.

James 3:5–6 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, help me be careful what I allow into my mind. Help me speak words that please You and bless others. In Jesus’ name, amen.

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Be patient, brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it... You too be patient... Do not complain... against one another, so that you may not be judged.

James 5:7–9 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I commit my time, talents, and treasures to You. I will sow seeds into Your Kingdom. Thank You for an abundant harvest. In Jesus' name, amen.

What seeds are you sowing into God's Kingdom this week?

Patiently Waiting

BIBLE READING: JAMES 5

James knew that the followers of Jesus had much to learn from farmers. When we think about farmers, we realize that they have clear *goals* to produce abundant harvests.

Farmers also realize that this takes time and careful planning. They need to be *patient* and understand the principles of sowing and reaping. If they want a harvest, they need to sow seeds at the right time of year in the right soil. And they need to let these seeds grow for the right length of time. If they are faithful and persistent, they will reap a harvest—but only at the right time.

As believers, all of us need to be like farmers, sowing seeds with the time, talents, and treasures we have been given, making sure that we sow into good soil. We should be persistent. If we don't immediately see the blessings God has promised, we must not become impatient. If we don't experience immediate answers to our prayers, we must not give up. Instead, we must continue to have faith, trust in God, and remember that our lives have seasons.

Make sure you are applying these principles in *your* life. Ask God to free you from any anxiety, help you be persistent, and persevere as you serve Him. Keep sowing seeds with the resources He has given you. Continue to seek first His Kingdom. Never give up. Stay faithful. Trust Him!

The Unknown Future

BIBLE READING: ECCLESIASTES 10

In 1579, Sir Francis Drake and his fleet ventured up the western coast of South and North America. Only a few people knew about this top-secret voyage. It was secret, in part, to keep from antagonizing the Spanish but also because Drake thought he had discovered the Northwest Passage, the route many hoped would provide a faster way to reach China.

The results made it clear Drake had not found this passage. But Drake was not alone. Many others thought they knew its location, including Gerardus Mercator, the great Flemish mapmaker. Mercator confidently included the passage on his world maps.

These men based their conclusions in large part on speculation and assumptions, more on what they imagined than on reality. Eventually, the Northwest Passage was discovered, but only centuries later. And the discovery proved that the theories of men like Mercator and Drake were wrong.

The struggles of these explorers and mapmakers remind us of how many people approach their lives. They are convinced in their minds with attitudes based on subjective speculation. The Bible reminds us how *little* each of us knows, how important it is to be humble, and how we need to trust God.

Remember, your life is just a vapor. You don't know what will happen tomorrow or even later today. But God does! Surrender your life anew to Him. Seek Him. Let Him take away your burdens and direct your path.

How do you remind yourself to live for Jesus in the moment?

No one really knows what is going to happen; no one can predict the future.

Ecclesiastes 10:14 NLT

PRAYER:

Father, give me Your perspective on my life. Open my eyes to understand more of Your truth. I trust in You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Yet you do not know [the least thing] about what may happen in your life tomorrow. [What is secure in your life?] You are merely a vapor...that is visible for a little while and then vanishes [into thin air].

James 4:14 AMP

PRAYER:

Father, give me Your perspective on my life. Help me focus on things of eternal consequence. Help me bear fruit for Your Kingdom. In Jesus' name, amen.

Based on how you spend your time and your money, where is your treasure?

A Wisp of Vapor

BIBLE READING: JAMES 4

“I remember my youth...the feeling that I could last forever.” These impressions were the work of Joseph Conrad in his novel *Youth*. His words express feelings common to young people, for whom it seems life will never end. Yet as we age, we understand more clearly that *life is short*. The Bible says it is like “a wisp of vapor.” It quickly fades and is gone.

Many marketers want us to forget these facts, urging us to live for today and trying to persuade us that we will find contentment and pleasure through more things and more experiences. We constantly are being bombarded with announcements designed to leave us discontent and lusting after things and experiences.

In themselves, there is nothing wrong with new things. But we must remember that these things can be just “*chasing the wind*” (Ecclesiastes 1:14). These pleasures that don't last can distract us, consume our hearts, and take our minds off serving God.

Ask God to give you *His* perspective on your life and the things of this world. Don't spend your time just chasing the wind or pursuing things that cannot produce lasting satisfaction.

Ask Him to help you evaluate your heart. Where is your treasure? What are you doing with your time and resources? Remember, life is like a *wisp of vapor*—gone in a flash. Make your life count into *eternity*. Invest in God's Kingdom.

Your Days

BIBLE READING: PSALM 39

In the moments after his birth, Philip Doddridge showed little sign of life. He was so unresponsive that he was considered dead. But an attendant noticed some motion and provided the attention necessary to nurse him to life. Surviving this near-death experience, he went on to dedicate his life to serving Jesus. As a pastor, he wrote hundreds of hymns, many of which accompanied his sermons.

This beginning helped give him perspective on the brevity of life. He expressed these insights in a hymn called “Tomorrow, Lord, Is Thine.”

He urged us to realize that our future is in God's hands. He rules the universe. Even if the sun rises, it shines by His command. Our perspective is to trust God and be faithful in each moment, realizing how quickly each present moment flies away. His prayer was that God would help us have wisdom as to how we spend our time and consider how quickly it passes.

Doddridge wants us to realize that eternity is comprised of moments that never can be repeated. Like Moses, we can ask God to “*teach us to number our days*” (Psalm 90:12), so we will not waste our time.

Remember that today is precious. Life itself is a gift from God. Ask Him to help you take advantage of every opportunity. Be a good steward of the time, talents, and treasures that He has given you.

Reflect on the brevity of life.

LORD, remind me how brief my time on earth will be. Remind me that my days are numbered.

Psalm 39:4

PRAYER:

Father, help me to be a good steward of every opportunity You give. Thank You for the opportunities You will give me today. In Jesus' name, amen.

Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.

James 5:16

Healing

BIBLE READING: JAMES 5

When we have health problems, the Bible encourages us to believe God for healing. While it can be natural to focus on ourselves, James described two keys to healing that may surprise us: *confessing* our sins and *praying* for others.

Confession changes us in many ways. Confession can help us recognize harmful lifestyles and habits and remove impediments that separate us from God. The process of confessing our sins helps us recognize mistakes and the enormous impact these sins can have. We see how these sins can block the flow of the Spirit.

Confession should lead us to forgiveness and being clean in God's sight. We can be reminded that we should have "*clean hands and a pure heart*" when we come into His presence (Psalm 24:4).

James also said that we should "*pray for one another.*" Instead of just thinking about our own needs, we should show concern for others by praying for them. This practice can help us take our minds off our problems. Praying for others can even help release God's power.

If you are burdened with physical needs, ask God to reveal any sins or problems in your life. Confess those sins and seek to be clean in His sight. But also think about people you know who have physical problems. Pray diligently for them. Then watch to see what God does in your life.

PRAYER:

Father, help me focus more on others and less on myself. I pray for these people and their needs: _____. Please touch them. In Jesus' name, amen.

Make a list of people who need healing, and pray for them this week.

How to Be Fulfilled

BIBLE READING: 1 PETER 1

It is natural to want results—to not just do things, but see the fruit of our labor. But Peter stressed that in God's Kingdom, the opposite often takes place.

Looking over history, Peter reminded his readers that many prophets had been faithful to obey God. They had delivered messages they had been given and gone where they were called to go. Yet despite their faithfulness, they had not seen the fulfillment they desired. God revealed, "*They were not serving themselves, but you.*" In other words, their labor was to be fulfilled in the generations to come, not in the time or ways they expected.

It is important to remember these principles. In all circumstances, we too must focus on being faithful to what God has called us to do and leave the results in His hands. We may see the fruit of our labor, but the impact of our words and actions may come later. We may touch people in ways we never expected or realized. We must learn to get our fulfillment from serving God, being faithful to His commands, and pleasing Him.

Think about God's call for you. Commit your life to Him. Seek to serve Him and do His will, whether you see any immediate results. Focus on being faithful, completing your assignments, and seeking to please Him. Let Him take care of the results.

What is something you're praying for but haven't yet seen results?

It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you...things into which angels long to look.

1 Peter 1:12 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I want my life to count for You. Direct me. Use me in others' lives. I look to You for fulfillment. In Jesus' name, amen.

Therefore, prepare your minds for action.

1 Peter 1:13 NASB

Ready for Action

BIBLE READING: 1 PETER 1

Christians were scattered throughout the Roman Empire. Many faced trials and persecution. We can imagine that many wondered what they should be doing.

Peter urged them not to be idle but to stay *active* and remember the importance of *preparing* their minds. Why? Because God had work for them to do. He wanted them to be *ready* for action.

Peter reminded them they should “*reside as strangers.*” They had been chosen by God who had given them “*a living hope.*” He prepared for them “*an inheritance which is imperishable.*” If they were faithful, they would receive rewards reserved for them in Heaven (vs. 1–4).

They may have faced trials but needed to realize that they only last “*for a little while.*” In every situation, they were to “*greatly rejoice*” and realize that every trial had a purpose—to refine their character (vs. 6–7). God knew what they were going through.

Instead of being anxious and fearful, they were to stay calm, trusting God. They were always to be seeking to serve Him and do His will. They were to mature as believers, knowing God’s Word, being filled with His Spirit, and living lives that were pleasing to God. They were to be faithful to fulfill His call, never being discouraged, confident they would be rewarded in eternity.

Make sure that *you* are preparing your mind. Study. Read. Pray. Focus on God’s Kingdom and be ready for action.

What steps are you taking today to prepare for God’s call?

God’s Priorities

BIBLE READING: 1 PETER 2

As a pastor, Thomas Taylor observed how many Christians felt frustrated. Even though they had committed their lives to Jesus and said they believed the Bible, they still failed to experience God’s peace and joy. They didn’t know what was wrong.

The Bible urges us to focus on God’s Kingdom and on pleasing and serving Him. But many believers spend much of their time thinking about the world. This leads to *inevitable* problems. Taylor expressed his insights in a hymn called “I’m But a Stranger Here.”

He wrote how Heaven was his home but all around him was “danger and sorrow.” When he went through storms, he reminded himself that his pilgrimage on earth was short. Soon all of life’s troubles would be over, and he would reach home where he would be “at [his] Savior’s side.” This was a place of rest where he would join “those [he] loved most and best.”

This realization gave him *perspective*. He had no reason to complain. And no matter what he went through, he knew he soon would stand “at [his] Lord’s right hand.”

It can be easy to get caught up in the worries of this world. But always remember that you are just a *stranger* here and that Heaven is your real home. Make sure your priorities are right. Pray and seek God’s will. Commit your life to serving Him. Seek first His Kingdom. Focus on Him.

What are your priorities, and how do you keep them in perspective?

I urge you as foreigners and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that... they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God.

1 Peter 2:11–12 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, help me have the right priorities. I seek first Your Kingdom. I dedicate my time and resources to You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Such is the will of God, that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish people.

1 Peter 2:15 NASB

Doing Right

BIBLE READING: 1 PETER 2

Peter lived in a time of change. The Gospel was being spread. But believers also faced attacks and criticism. Peter had learned that, from a spiritual perspective, many of these critics were foolish and guilty of “ignorance.”

The world still is filled with foolish and ignorant people who reject the Gospel and don’t believe God’s Word. Many are convinced that it is Christians who are foolish.

How do we interact with people like this? Peter argued that we can silence their ignorance by “doing right.” They are watching us, seeing what we do and how we spend our time. We demonstrate the truth of the Gospel through a changed life—through our *testimony*.

This is a principle we can apply every day. It means that, in every situation, we do the *right* thing. We don’t just say we believe the Bible, but we put biblical principles into practice. We seek to be humble, with the attitude of a servant. We allow the Spirit to work through us to demonstrate His life-changing power.

Ask God to help *you* do the *right* thing in every situation you face. Seek first His Kingdom. Humble yourself and seek to have the attitude of a servant in your interactions with others. Seek to be faithful and obedient, a good example. Demonstrate that Jesus has changed your life; He makes a difference, and the Gospel is true.

How are you displaying Jesus in your interactions this week?

Our Example

BIBLE READING: 1 PETER 2

During His life on earth, Jesus experienced many challenges. He was rejected and criticized. Ultimately, He was falsely accused, tried, and sentenced to death on a cross.

Facing these kinds of circumstances, He could have responded in many ways. Encountering opposition, He could have attacked or lashed out. Some might have felt the need to be defensive or justify their actions. To this point, Pilate marveled that, when accused, Jesus did not even defend Himself (Mark 15:1–5).

When some would not accept Jesus, James and John wanted to command fire to come down and consume these critics. But Jesus explained that He did not come to destroy but to save (Luke 9:51–56). They needed to understand His motives, His mission.

The Bible tells us that through every experience, Jesus provided us with an *example*. He continually focused on doing the will of the Father and accomplishing His work (John 4:34). He could be so focused because He had pure motives and was free of deceit (Isaiah 53:9). Knowing the Father was always with Him, He was free from worry and fear. Jesus completely trusted His Father and could focus on the mission He was given.

In every situation, follow Jesus’ example. Ask yourself how He would respond. Pray about each situation. Seek to apply biblical principles. Be sure your heart is pure and that you are focused on doing the will of the Father. Trust Him.

Write a prayer asking God to show you any deceit or sin in your heart.

Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps [...] when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously.

1 Peter 2:21–23

PRAYER:

Father, search my heart. Show me if I am guilty of deceit. Help me to live a life of purity that pleases You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

He Himself brought our sins in His body up on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live for righteousness; by His wounds you were healed.

1 Peter 2:24 NASB

PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, I depend on You to face these challenges: _____. Be my balm. Provide healing and comfort. Thank You for Your peace. In Your name, amen.

In what current situation do you need Jesus' comfort?

Balm and Healing

BIBLE READING: 1 PETER 2

As a child, Johann Heermann battled health issues. After suffering one severe illness, his mother vowed that if he lived, she would dedicate him to God and have him trained for ministry. She kept that vow.

Born in Silesia, Austria, he went on to become pastor of a church near his birthplace. This town suffered during the violent Thirty Years' War. Several times Heermann was forced to flee, narrowly escaping death. In the process, he lost all his possessions. Then a throat problem forced him to stop preaching.

In 1644, he wrote a hymn reflecting all he learned through these experiences. Called "Jesus, Grant That Balm and Healing," he described how he had learned to *depend* on Jesus. He knew that Jesus could provide healing and soothe every pain he experienced.

He could turn to Jesus when he faced temptation and trust Him for protection and deliverance. He knew that by the stripes of Jesus, he was made *whole* (Isaiah 53:5) and that when he was faint, he could be revived by the power of the cross. Jesus could grant "new life to [his] soul." He realized that Jesus was his Rock and that he could depend on Him.

In whatever you face, Jesus can be *your* balm. He can take *your* burdens away and give you His peace. He can help you overcome every temptation. Remember, by His wounds you are healed. Call on Him today.

How We Act

BIBLE READING: 1 PETER 3

The daughter of a wealthy architect, Emily Post developed a passion for good manners. She expressed those thoughts in her first book, a fictional story of life among socially gracious people during the turn of the nineteenth century.

Her real breakthrough took place when she published a book describing what she thought were proper ways people should act in various social situations. This catapulted her into the public limelight. She went on to gain fame as a broadcaster and writer of newspaper columns and books.

Through all these media, Post emphasized that good manners are based on common sense and a regard for the feelings of others. She revised her books frequently to consider changing social conditions and new patterns of behavior.

The Bible, too, is filled with exhortations about how we should act. For example, Peter wrote that we should "*be harmonious, sympathetic, loving, compassionate, and humble.*" Even when others insult us, we should not insult them in return. Rather we should seek to bless others and point them toward Jesus.

Remember, how you act will impact people all around you. Seek to live in such a way that others will see Jesus in you. Be more concerned about their spiritual condition than with your own benefits. Demonstrate the love of God in every situation and with everyone you meet. Seek to live in harmony and be gracious and compassionate.

Do your Christian manners need to be brushed up?

All of you be harmonious, sympathetic, loving, compassionate, and humble; not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you would inherit a blessing.

1 Peter 3:8-9 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, change my heart. Use me to impact others. Fill me with Your Spirit. Help me be a good ambassador for the Gospel. In Jesus' name, amen.

Who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God [that is, the place of honor and authority], with [all] angels and authorities and powers made subservient to Him.

1 Peter 3:22 AMP

At God’s Right Hand

BIBLE READING: 1 PETER 3

Peter described how Jesus had ascended to a place of ultimate power and authority at the “right hand of God.” There, every power is subject to Him. He is Lord over everyone and everything. Every disease. Every nation. Every person. Every army. Every king. Every business.

As Paul wrote, Jesus is “far above all rule and authority and power and dominion...and [far above] every name that is named” (Ephesians 1:21). Every name!

Through faith in Jesus, each of us has access to this unlimited power (Luke 10:19). He has given us the authority to act in His name. Through His name, demons will flee. Fear must be banished. Problems can be solved. Opposition that seems overwhelming can be conquered.

Remember, we have a Savior who has no limits! Jesus is Lord of all, and every power on earth is subject to Him. He simply looks for people who have the faith to believe Him, stand on His Word, and exercise faith.

Dare to believe this truth. The Bible assures us that Jesus is ready to hear from you. You can call on Him right now. He is there, at the right hand of the Father, making intercession for you. Don’t think about your limitations or the size of your problem. Call on Him with faith. Believe Him for mighty things. He is waiting to hear and answer your prayers.

PRAYER:

Dear Lord Jesus, I commit these needs to You: _____. Thank You for victory in every situation. I praise and worship You! In Your name, amen.

What needs are you committing to God today?

Thankful

BIBLE READING: 2 CORINTHIANS 2

As a young minister, Martin Rinkart was called to serve a church in his native town of Eilenburg in what today is eastern Germany. He arrived at the beginning of what became known as the Thirty Years’ War.

During this war, rival armies marched through Eilenberg, and many fugitives sought refuge within its protective walls. The area also faced plagues and famines. Yet through every struggle, Rinkart remained faithful. He struggled to provide food for his own family yet opened his home freely to many refugees.

When an occupying army demanded the town pay a large tribute, Rinkart interceded, calling people to prayer. His spiritual fervor influenced the commander’s decision to lower his demands.

To celebrate this victory and express his gratitude to God, Rinkart wrote the hymn “Now Thank We All Our God,” which was translated into English by Catherine Winkworth. Rinkart wrote that we should thank Him “with heart and hands and voices.” We thank Him for the “wondrous things He has done, in whom this world rejoices.” Looking back, we can realize how He has blessed us “with countless gifts of love.”

How many ways can you be thankful to God? Be grateful to Him. No matter what circumstances you face, remember that you can turn to God in prayer. He will hear your cries. Allow your heart to be filled with thanks. He has done wondrous things!

Make a list of people and things you’re grateful for today.

Thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us reveals the fragrance of the knowledge of Him in every place.

2 Corinthians 2:14 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for the marvelous things You have done in my life and that I can trust You with the problems I face. In Jesus’ name, amen.

The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable... without complaint.

1 Peter 4:7-9 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, give me clarity about Your goals for me. I seek to be faithful. Keep me from distractions, and help me stay focused. In Jesus' name, amen.

What things are distracting you from God's Kingdom-building work?

Priorities

BIBLE READING: 1 PETER 4

Eighteenth-century scholar Samuel Johnson once observed, "When a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates his mind wonderfully." For similar reasons, death-bed confessions are given special credibility. These are moments when people tend to tell the truth.

Applying this principle to "the end of all things," Peter focused on practical matters. He was concerned about the thoughts of his readers and warned them about the consequences of thinking about the wrong thing or being swayed by the things around them. He urged them to be under control and have calm minds and not be dominated by rumors, gossip, or speculation.

These steps were important for effective prayer. They could not pray effectively if their minds were cluttered or distracted. He also expressed concern for their relationships, urging them to love each other "because love covers a multitude of sins."

In this same spirit, believers were to be hospitable to everyone, even those with whom they disagreed. They were to have a servant attitude and to be "good stewards" of their resources (v. 10). They were to be humble and never proud. And they needed to remember that they represented God. They were to be His ambassadors and seek to bring Him glory.

Ask God to give you His perspective on your life. Seek to have His priorities. Serve Him faithfully. Seek to have no reason to look back with regret.

Throwing Our Cares

BIBLE READING: 1 PETER 5

Peter said that we all are to "be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility." We cannot experience God's blessings and protection unless we are humble, for "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

We need to recognize that He is God and the source of all wisdom and knowledge. We need to come to Him humbly and acknowledge that we cannot solve our problems without Him; we depend on Him.

He also promises to free us from the cares of life. But we have a role to play: We need to cast our cares upon Him. The Greek word he used literally means to throw. It can help us to picture ourselves throwing our cares on Him.

The Bible assures us that God wants us filled with peace. This means that we need to depend entirely on Him. We need to believe in Him, trust Him, and have faith in Him. When faced with cares, we need to throw them on Him, knowing that He will take care of them. This kind of faith and trust results in balance, order, and peace.

If you find yourself having a divided mind, or filled with the cares and worries of the world, remember these two commands from Peter: *Humble* yourself before God, and *throw* your cares on Him. He cares for you and is ready to take your burdens away.

What concerns are you giving to Jesus today?

Be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Therefore humble yourselves... that He may exalt you... casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

1 Peter 5:5-7

PRAYER:

Father, I submit my life to You. I commit these needs to You: _____. Right now, I throw these needs on You. In Jesus' name, amen.

*Give all your worries
and cares to God, for he
cares about you.*

1 Peter 5:7 NLT

The Age of Anxiety

BIBLE READING: 1 PETER 5

It was called the "Age of Anxiety." A poem with this title written in 1947 seemed to capture the essence of the time. The euphoria that, for many, followed the end of World War II had been replaced by the harsh realities of economic recovery. Tensions were high as the Cold War developed between East and West.

Winner of a Pulitzer Prize, this poem was the work of W.H. Auden and reflected the isolation many felt.

The title of this poem can remind us of our own time, for many today are filled with anxiety. There are wars and rumors of wars. There are economic challenges and political divisions. The forces lining up against Christianity are gaining strength.

To anyone who is worried, the Bible has a message of hope: God still is on the throne. He promises to protect and provide for His children. He calls us to trust Him, commit our lives to Him, and cast our cares on Him.

Jesus warned that we would have "many trials and sorrows." But He reminded us, "I have overcome the world." He has given us His Word, His promises, and His Spirit. He calls us to "take heart" and realize we can "have peace" in Him (John 16:33).

Don't allow worry or fear to dominate your life. If you have any anxieties, cast them on God. He cares for you!

PRAYER:

Father, I commit these matters to You: _____. Thank You that I can trust You. Give me Your peace. In Jesus' name, amen.

Write a prayer of trust in God for what's going on in your life right now.

Nothing Without God

BIBLE READING: 2 PETER 1

Recently, a previously unknown work by Johann Sebastian Bach was discovered. The two-page score was dated October 1713 and appears to have been written to mark the birthday of a special duke.

The music world was excited to discover this new work by one of history's greatest composers. However, this piece also revealed a great deal about Bach's philosophy. It opened with the phrase, "Everything with God and nothing without Him." These words were based on the motto of the duke, but they also reflected Bach's personal commitment.

These words could have been the motto for his own life. They also provide a reminder for each of us that we cannot do anything of real meaning or lasting value *without* God, but "with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26).

Peter wrote that God "has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness." He has called us, equipped us, sent Jesus to die for us, and given us His Holy Spirit as our constant companion to guide, lead, and empower us.

Stay on guard against pride. Humble yourself before God. Like Bach, remember that you are *nothing* without Him; you owe *everything* to Him. Remember, He has a plan just for you and has given you the resources you need to accomplish that plan.

Commit your time, talents, and treasures to Him. Remember the motto: Everything with God, nothing without Him.

Write out your personal commitment to Jesus.

*Grace and peace be
multiplied to you in the
knowledge of God and
of Jesus our Lord; for
His divine power has
granted to us everything
pertaining to life and
godliness, through the
true knowledge of Him
who called us.*

2 Peter 1:2-3 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I am nothing without You. I depend on You for everything. I am grateful for all You have done for me. In Jesus' name, amen.

I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you already know them and have been established in the truth which is present with you.

2 Peter 1:12 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I humble myself before You. I hunger for Your truth. Open my mind to receive new insights. Use me to teach others. In Jesus' name, amen.

What new spiritual truth have you learned recently?

Reminders

BIBLE READING: 2 PETER 1

Sitting in church or a Bible study, it can be easy for our minds to wander. We can tune out when we hear a sermon from a text we have heard before. We may pay less attention to a familiar Bible passage, confident that we already know what it says. Ironically, these tendencies can increase as we age—the longer we have known the Lord, the more church services we have attended, and the more we have read the Bible.

But the Bible reminds us of the depths present in God's Word and how much more there is to learn. We are encouraged to be *reminded* about things we *already* have heard. These reminders are not condescending. They are *essential!*

As Peter told his audience, they needed to be *reminded* of truths even if they had heard them before. These are characteristics of the kind of childlike faith that Jesus encouraged (Luke 18:17), of a person who is humble and eager to learn, always sensitive to His Spirit.

Remember that there is much more to learn about God's Word and His Kingdom and the work of the Holy Spirit. He can use *anyone* to teach you, young or old. He can impact your life in many ways—through a simple testimony, a devotion on a familiar text, or a sermon on a well-known Bible passage. Open your spirit, and listen to His leading.

The Sure Word

BIBLE READING: 2 PETER 1

Throughout the New Testament world, the Lighthouse of Alexandria (in Egypt) filled people with awe. Known as one of the Seven Wonders of the World, it was the tallest building on earth, rising to a height of 338–387 feet. Its light beams could be seen more than 29 miles out to sea, saving many ships from destruction.

This magnificent structure was built on the ancient island of Pharos because of the dangerous sailing conditions in the region. For centuries, it marked the harbor, using fire at night and reflecting sun rays during the day. It survived in part until 1480 AD, becoming the last of the Wonders of the World to disappear.

This lighthouse provides a symbol of the guidance we seek in our daily lives. Today, men and women look for many ways to avoid dangers and find the right course.

But there is only one light that can lead us safely home and help us navigate the turbulent conditions around us. That is the Word of God. The Bible says that we have been given "*the prophetic word,*" of which we can be sure. We can look to this Word just like it was "*a lamp shining in a dark place.*"

Remember that you can be sure of God's Word. It can *guide* you, *answer* your questions, and *anchor* your life. Fill your heart and mind with His Word. Trust in Him.

Write a few lines of praise to God for being your ever-present lighthouse.

We have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.

2 Peter 1:19 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, help me to be alert to dangers all around me. Show me the right way to go. I place my hope in You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Know...that no prophecy of Scripture becomes a matter of someone's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

2 Peter 1:20–21 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, speak to me. I yield my mind, emotions, and will to You. Help me be more sensitive to Your Spirit. Teach me. In Jesus' name, amen.

What do you feel like the Holy Spirit is saying to you today?

Moved by the Spirit

BIBLE READING: 2 PETER 1

How do we know when God is speaking to us? Some people allow their own thoughts and feelings to distort their discernment. They can even develop their own interpretations.

But the Bible says that prophecy is never “a matter of someone’s own interpretation.” Nor can it be “an act of human will.” There is only one standard: being “moved by the Holy Spirit.” It can never be influenced by our interests and desires or shaped by our personal feelings. The same principle applies to any word of God.

The Bible teaches that there is *purity* when He speaks. There are no questions.

God still speaks to His people. We hear Him as we study, read, and listen to the Bible. At the same time, His Spirit is with us to guide us, warn us, and teach us. We can know He is speaking if our hearts have His peace.

We must never seek our own interpretation or superimpose our own will. Rather, we must surrender our lives to Him, saturate our minds with His Word, and place all our thoughts and feelings on the altar before Him.

Are you sensitive to God’s word for you? Immerse yourself in His revealed Word. Spend time in prayer, committing every question to Him. Be careful to listen. Surrender your life to Him. Call on Him. Lay aside your personal agenda and be sensitive to His Holy Spirit.



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

John 3:16 NIV

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God's Healing Rest

Experience His sincere stillness of the soul.

Our lives can be downright crazy at times. Schedules fill our heads while stress and anxiety often fill our hearts. We're exhausted. Depleted.

Many of us are tired beyond what a good night's sleep could ever fix.

Even if we followed all the experts' advice about taking care of our bodies, we'd still be soul weary—mentally and emotionally exhausted. It's something that impacts every part of our lives and can drag us down beyond our ability to cope.

So, what can we do about our exhaustion? How do we find rest?

The ultimate promise of rest for believers is found in the assurance of salvation and eternal life. These things are not earned through personal efforts but received as a gift of grace. As the apostle Paul reminds us, *"God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins"* (Romans 3:24 NLT). This promise calls us to rest in the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice.

In a world filled with challenges, anxieties, and burdens, believers can find solace in God's promise of rest. Jesus invites His followers to let Him take on their worries, promising to provide comfort and peace amid life's trials:

Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls (Matthew 11:28–29 NLT).

Our souls don't get enough rest because of our drive-thru church mentality. God promises us rest and healing, but we must be still long enough to receive it. By purposefully quieting our bodies and our minds, we'll be able to focus on God's promises for rest and restoration. As the psalmist reminds us:

Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth! (Psalm 46:10).

The concept of a Sabbath rest is not new. In the Old Testament, God commanded the Israelites to observe a day of rest as a sign of their covenant relationship with Him (Exodus 20:8–11). For believers, it represents a time of spiritual renewal and reconnection with God. It involves setting aside dedicated time for worship, prayer, studying Scripture, and being refreshed in the presence of God. This regular practice allows Christians to experience a deeper relationship with the Lord and find spiritual rest in Him.

How can you build a time to be still in your schedule? Meditate on these verses as you ask God to refresh your soul this month. ❖

Week One

But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

Isaiah 40:31

Week Two

The LORD is my shepherd; I have all that I need. He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams. He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name.

Psalm 23:1–3 NLT

Week Three

In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.

Psalm 4:8 ESV

Week Four

Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him; do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass.

Psalm 37:7

God Still HEALS

Cancer eradicated through prayers!

“Thank you for prayers for my daughter Kristie; after chemo and surgery, her biopsy results came back benign. Praise my Lord Jesus Christ for the healing!”

—Kevin B., KY

Our **Inspiration Ministries Monthly Partners** share many stories just like this with us frequently! Are you ready to join our partners who faithfully sow their seeds every month?

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A Merry Heart...

does good, like medicine. – Proverbs 17:22

Money talks. But all mine ever says is goodbye.

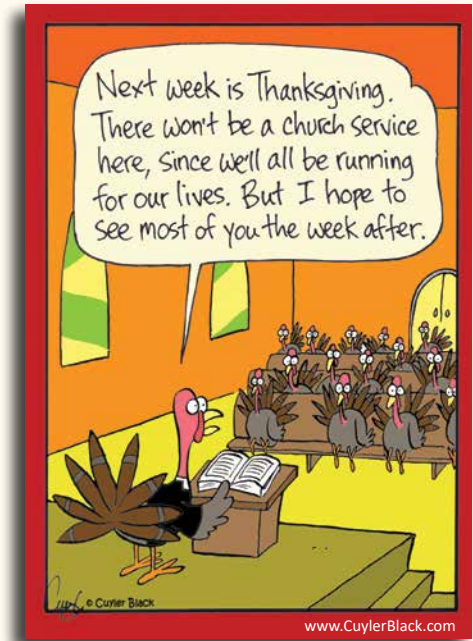
There are three kinds of people: those who can count and those who can't.

Feeling pretty proud of myself...The puzzle I bought said 3-5 years, but I finished it in 18 months.

I was addicted to the hokey pokey...but thankfully, I turned myself around.

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

Email it to:
MerryHeart@inspiration.org



My first job was working in an orange juice factory, but I got canned. I couldn't concentrate.

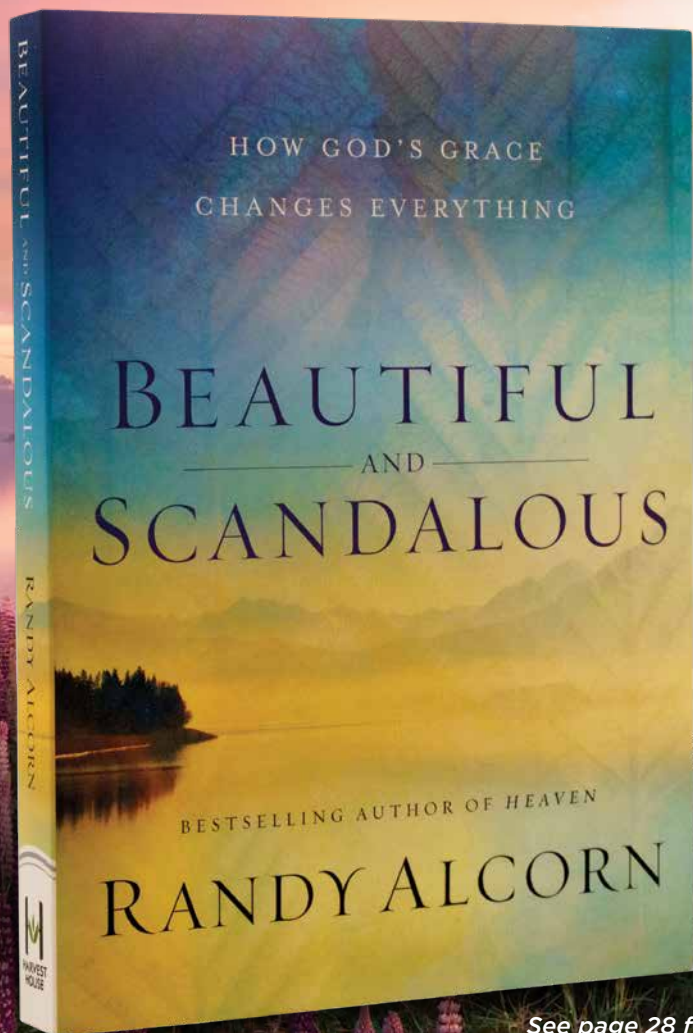
Most people are shocked when they find out how bad I am as an electrician.

Did you hear about the guy who got hit in the head with a can of soda? He was lucky it was a soft drink.



Grace Changes Everything

Explore the many facets of God's grace through daily meditations, Scriptures, and inspirational quotes that can transform the way you think and live. You'll be encouraged as you grasp more fully the grace God lavishes on you and gain a bigger view of His love.



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