

JANUARY 2022

# inspiration

M A G A Z I N E

**GOD** is  
with **YOU**

**What's in a Name?**

Page 13

**Get Your Fight Back**

Page 14

**Unite Your Life with Jesus**

Page 52



PAGE 10



PAGE 52



PAGE 54

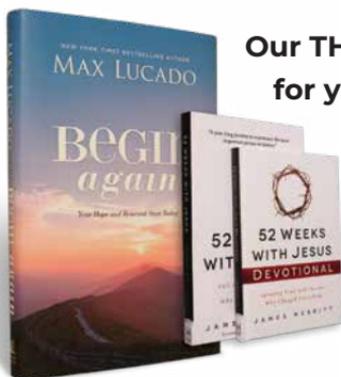
## *This Month's Theme Is...*

### **God is with you!**



The presence of God changes everything! He is the Good Shepherd whose power and love produce the victorious life He created for you. David's article on **page 5** will fill your heart with the peace and joy that

come from knowing God is both with you and for you.



### **Our THANK YOU GIFTS for your partnership!**

(See page 28  
for details.)

## **EDITOR'S CORNER**



As we start this new year, stop and think about this amazing truth: God is with you. Right now, wherever you are, the Creator of the universe is with you. All of His power, all of His love surround you. There is nothing He can't restore, no crisis He can't resolve. That profound truth gives me both comfort and courage. I trust it does the same for you.

My prayer for you in 2022 is that you seek and see God more fully every day. I pray, too, that from this day forward, your life will shine forth an ever-increasing light that draws others closer to Him.

## 10 **Finding God in Life's Disappointments**

*By Sarah Jakes Roberts*

Ruth was living the dream until it turned into a nightmare. Her choice to live with courageous faith placed her in the lineage of Jesus and gives us a glorious example!

## 13 **What's in a Name?**

Welcome to our new series on the names of God. Each month, we'll explore the power, provision, and promises tucked into His many names.

## 14 **Get Your Fight Back**

*By Lisa Osteen Comes*

Faced with a divorce she didn't want, Lisa cried out to God, "Why me?" His reply moved her from a victim to a victor – and He can do the same for you!

## 19 **Your January Devotions**

Get closer to God by spending time with Him each day.

## 52 **Unite Your Life with Jesus!**

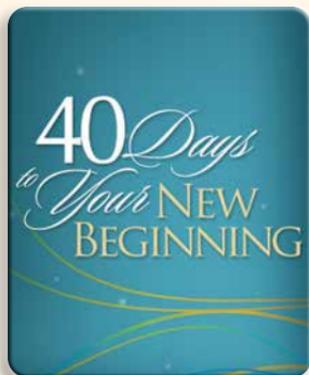
*By Ben Cerullo*

As the lover of your soul, Jesus wants you to respond to that love by cultivating an intimate relationship with Him. Join Ben as he offers four simple keys to enjoying your Savior more.



# Need a Real Change?

Walk with Jesus Every Day in 2022!



New Year's resolutions seldom change anyone's life, but walking with Jesus has been transforming lives for thousands of years. Join David Cerullo for simple, practical tips on walking in faith, and make 2022 your best year yet!

*And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left (Isaiah 30:21 ESV).*

Sign up to receive these power-packed teachings daily straight to your inbox, and *Strengthen Your Walk™* in Him!

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# GOD is with YOU

When you're at  
the end of your rope,  
God's presence changes  
**EVERYTHING!**



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

As we look forward to the coming year, I can't help but think about you and thank you for the sacrificial seeds of prayer and finances you're sowing into the worldwide outreaches of Inspiration Ministries.

I also want to encourage you with a word of hope and faith to give you a fresh start, **RIGHT NOW**, that I pray will make this year **YOUR** turnaround year.

So often I hear from our Inspiration Partners who are experiencing great challenges in their finances, health, or relationships these days. One partner named Velecia was overwhelmed with fear when her husband died, leaving her a widow at age 50 and deeply in debt. But now the Lord has given her a great job and erased her debt, causing her to testify...

"God is faithful and is working things out!"

You see, the Lord never promised that life would always be easy for His people. "*In the world you **will** have tribulation,*" Jesus told us, "*but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world*" (John 16:33).

As the world's economic systems shake, we can hold firm to His amazing promise: "**My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid**" (John 14:27).

**"My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."**

– John 14:27

Friend, I hope you are experiencing Jesus' incredible peace today. Yet perhaps you're thinking, "David, you have no idea how difficult life is for me right now." Maybe you're contending with an illness, the loss of a loved one, a financial setback, or struggles with your children.

Sometimes our lives can get so clouded with problems that we even wonder whether God is there. *Does He still care about me? Will He answer my prayers?*

These very same questions were asked by many heroes of the faith in the Bible. They faced times of fear...anxiety...discouragement...and doubt. Yet as they continued to seek God in their darkest hour, He proved Himself faithful and intervened in their circumstances with a supernatural turnaround.

## **FEAR NOT!**

God wants you to know today that **He is with you** as you encounter the challenges of life:

***Fear not**, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; **you are Mine**. When you **pass through** the waters, I will be with you; and **through** the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you **walk through** the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you...**Fear not, for I am with you** (Isaiah 43:1-5).*

In this life, we sometimes must pass through high waters or fiery trials. But there's good news here. The Bible doesn't say we have to *remain* in the trials forever – we're just passing through!

And no matter how difficult our journey may be, the Lord promises that we are precious to Him, and He will be with us *every step of the journey*.

David discovered this during the many anxious times he faced. *“Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,”* he said, *“I will fear no evil; for You are with me”* (Psalm 23:4). Although he wasn’t going to *camp out* in the valley, he *did* have to *“walk through”* it. But he knew he could count on his Good Shepherd to *provide* for him and *protect* him all along the way.

My prayer is that you will get to know the Lord as your Shepherd more intimately in 2022. Yes, Satan is a thief, and he plots against us to steal, kill, and destroy – whether physically, financially, relationally, or spiritually. But Jesus is our faithful Shepherd, and He came that we might have life and have it more abundantly (John 10:10). This can be *your* experience in 2022!

## KEEP YOUR EYES ON HIM

The Bible teaches that despite the turmoil around us, we must fix our eyes on Jesus, *“the author and finisher of our faith”* (Hebrews 12:2). Like Peter, we may be called to walk upon stormy seas at times, but ***we can do the impossible*** as long as we keep our eyes on the Lord (Matthew 14:25-32).

My dad used to often tell me, “Don’t look to the bigness of your need, but look to the bigness of your God!” You see, if we focus on our problems and the bigness of our needs, the devil will use our circumstances to bring us frustration and defeat. Instead, we need to look to God and remember His faithfulness, even when it’s hard to see signs of it with our natural eyes.

Yes, deep inner peace is possible amid the storms of life. As Isaiah observed, *“You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You”* (Isaiah 26:3).

***We can do the impossible as long as we keep our eyes on the Lord.***

Can I promise that 2022 will be an easy year? Certainly not. The storms of life may blow this year... in your life...in your family...in our nation...and in the world.

However, this year you can resolve to build a stronger foundation on Christ's love and faithfulness. Then when storms hit, you will not collapse but will stand firm in His safety and protection. You'll be able to say as David did, "*The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?*" (Psalm 27:1)

## MAKE THIS YOUR RESOLUTION

People make all kinds of New Year's resolutions during this time of year, starting an exercise routine...getting out of debt... losing some weight...strengthening relationships. These are all well and good, but there's another resolution I encourage you to put at the very *top* of your list:

## Resolve that in 2022 you will develop a more intimate relationship with the Lord...

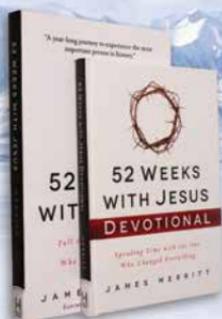
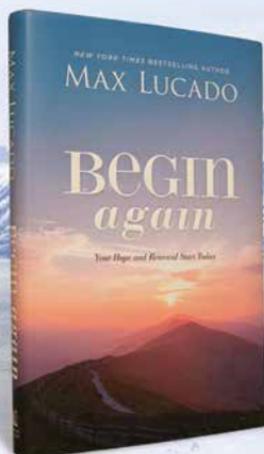
- Enter His presence through praise and worship
- Read His Word
- Devote your life to prayer

These three ingredients will help you gain a firm spiritual foundation...having **NOTHING TO FEAR** when buffeted by the storms of life (Matthew 7:24-27). I am praying this will be your best year ever!

Your friend and partner,

*David*

P.S. Turn to **page 28** to learn more about the great resources I'll send you as my **THANK YOU GIFTS** to help you make 2022 a year of God's amazing blessings in your life.



Turn to Page 28 for details.

# And God Said It Was Good!

At the end of each day of creation, God looked at His handiwork and said, “*It is good.*” The Hebrew word used was *TOV*. It’s a special word meaning created good with the potential to create more good.

We recently learned from a partner about his *good* financial plan. Tony explained how he created a tithes, offerings, and vows (*TOV*) account to simplify and maximize his giving. Tony’s good plan has the potential to create much more good! We rejoice in such intentionality and faithfulness. Partners like you and Tony are the reason that every minute of every day SEVEN people come to Jesus through the outreaches Inspiration Ministries.

We know not everyone wants to manage multiple checking accounts, so we partner with the **National Christian Foundation (NCF)**. This ministry helps donors create charitable accounts called Donor-Advised Funds (DAF) to manage their giving plans.

With a DAF, you simply make a single deposit to your giving account, and the DAF issues grants from it based on your giving preferences – from evangelism to adoption, human trafficking to disaster relief!

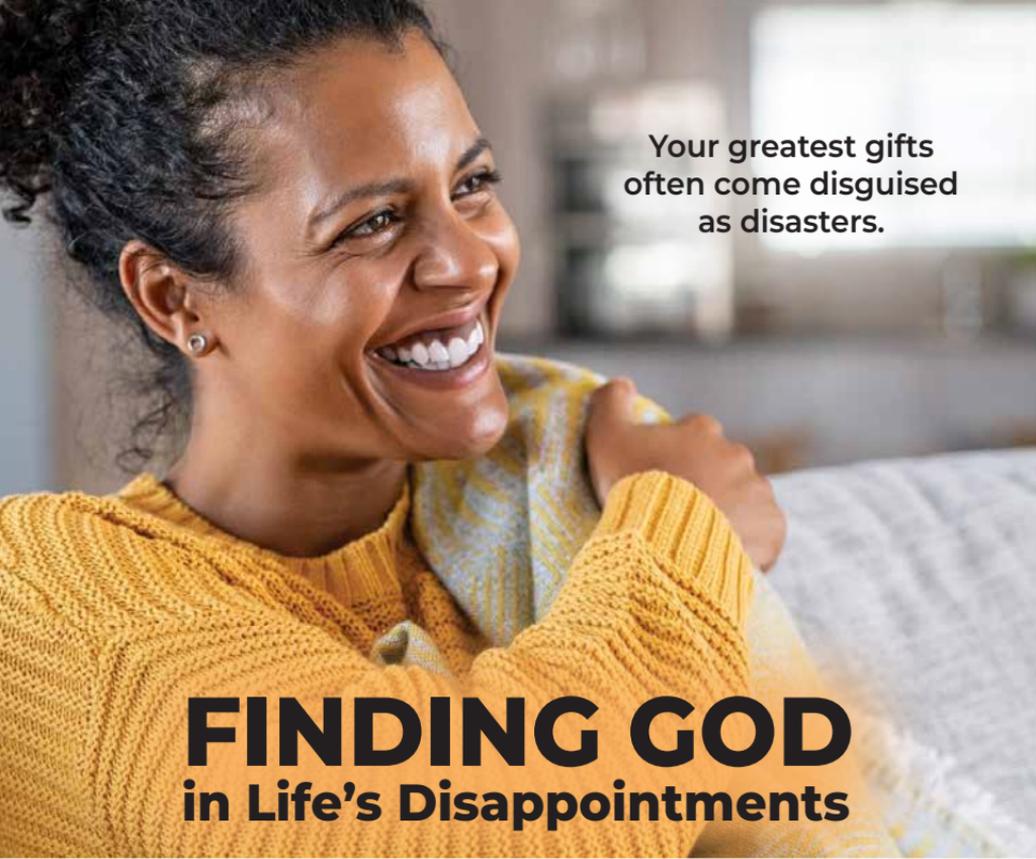


If you would like to know more about this or other charitable giving, contact Rob Dickson, Vice President of Partner Relations:

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A close-up photograph of a woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing a bright yellow, textured knit sweater. She is smiling broadly, looking off to the right. The background is softly blurred, showing what appears to be a living room with a couch and a lamp.

Your greatest gifts  
often come disguised  
as disasters.

## **FINDING GOD** **in Life's Disappointments**

We make idols out of so many things in our lives. Whether we're just getting by or finally getting ahead, we discover that cars, clothes, careers, relationships, and money all have a way of clouding our vision, pulling our focus away from God. Eventually, we learn that we cannot serve two masters. We must choose and prioritize what's most important to us. We have to draw the line between enjoying things and worshiping things.

In fact, it's usually not until we encounter trouble that we reassess what we consider valuable and learn that things are just that – things. Whether it's divorce, loss of income,

death of a loved one, or some other life-changing moment, we finally find ourselves at a crossroads. What do we do when life doesn't go as planned? Will we become bitter? Or will we seek God in the midst of our loss and become better?

Ruth, a Moabite woman, grew up practicing the religion of her land. Although she was raised to worship many gods, there was only One who could prepare her for her destiny. When Ruth married Mahlon, she didn't marry just him. She married his God. Finding fulfillment in her marriage and her new faith, Ruth appeared to be living her dream.

We aren't told how much they enjoyed each other, but it seems clear from her grief that Ruth experienced an abiding love with her husband. She may have recognized her good fortune, or she might have taken it for granted. Regardless, she enjoyed ten years of living her dream – until her dream became her nightmare.

Ruth had to have felt like her world had shattered into thousands of irretrievable pieces. How could this have happened? This was not what she had expected! And it wasn't just her life that seemed to be crumbling to dust. Her father-in-law had already died, leaving behind his wife, Naomi, Ruth's beloved mother-in-law.

Mahlon's brother also died. Now their family had no men to protect and provide for them. Ruth obviously had some hard choices before her. What do you do when life doesn't go as planned? You've finally sown all the right seeds, yet all you reap in return is heartache. We hardly ever question God when things go as we want them to. But when we face trouble, we

want answers. Where is God in the midst of our life's most painful disappointment?

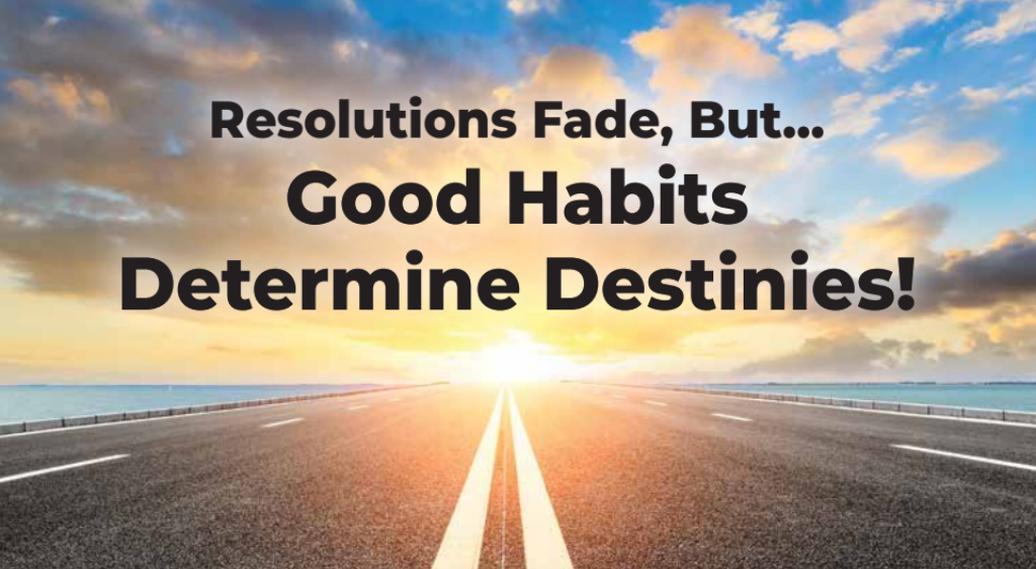
Many times we feel so stunned by the blows we receive that we feel abandoned by God. How could He love us as His children yet allow these things to happen? Couldn't He have done something to prevent us from experiencing the bitter pain of our loss? Why would He allow this?

It's so easy to see Him when things are going our way. But are you willing to do the work it takes to discover Him in the midst of your disasters? He never promised there wouldn't be trials. He never promised we wouldn't have to wipe away some tears along the way. What He has promised us is that we are not tested with any obstacle we can't overcome. And we will never have to face the harsh winds of life alone. God is there with us and has equipped us – long before He trusted us with the struggle. He knows better than we do what we can handle. He also knows what's required for us to mature into the masterpieces He designed. ❖



**SARAH JAKES ROBERTS**, daughter of T.D. Jakes, copastors The Potter's House with her husband Touré and founded *Woman Evolve*.

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# Resolutions Fade, But... Good Habits Determine Destinies!

*Inspiration Ministries Monthly Partners* build eternal destinies by being part of the Great Commission!

They nurture good habits of prayer and sow seed that produces a continual harvest of earthly and eternal blessings for themselves and others.

*Inspiration Ministries Monthly Partners* consistently win souls to Christ and faithfully practice generosity through *automatic* monthly giving. We rejoice in the reports of salvations and in the testimonies from our partners of personal harvests that include breakthroughs in health, peace of mind, greater security, or stronger family bonds.

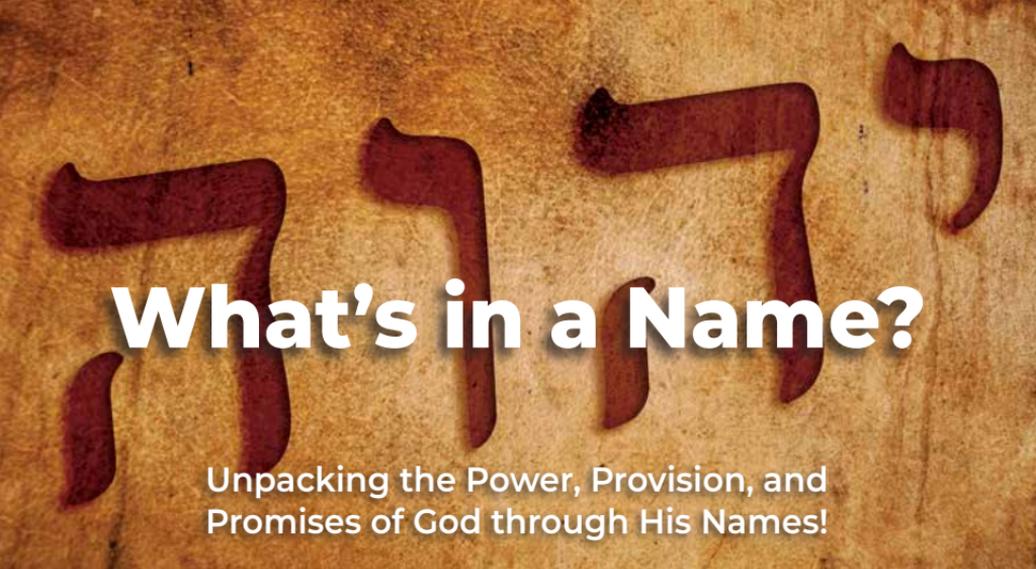
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# What's in a Name?

Unpacking the Power, Provision, and Promises of God through His Names!

Digging into the names of God deepens our understanding of His glory. Reverence for His name and praise for who He is keeps us in His presence. We trust this new series will increase your awe for the wonderful God who loves you so much!

**Elohim** is the first name used for God in Scripture, and it focuses on God as the supreme, strong Creator. Elohim appears over 2,500 times in the Bible, and *El* – referring to the power of God – combines with other divine attributes for greater revelations we'll explore in future pieces.

But the first name God applied to Himself is **Yahweh**, which is why it is known as the personal name of God. Jewish people consider the name Yahweh so sacred that they never speak it aloud. As His divine name, Yahweh presents God's relational nature. He's passionate for us to know Him. Yahweh is used 6,828 times in Scripture (typically

printed as LORD).

Yahweh replies to Moses when He says, "***I am who I am.***" As theologian Brevard Childs translates Exodus 3:14, "*I am there, wherever it may be – I am really there.*" The comforting, powerful truth God wants conveyed through His name Yahweh is this:

**Yahweh is all we need,  
and He is always with us.**

Before God used Yahweh to describe Himself, the writer of Genesis applied the name to God too. This reveals a beautiful truth. We know God by name – at a distance. But when we relate to Him personally, we can know Him *by heart*. God longs for each of us to draw close to Him so we can truly grasp *who* He is and *how* He acts.

Ask God to reveal Himself to you as the Great *I AM*... the sovereign, supreme LORD who is always by your side! ❖

# Get Your Fight Back!



Faced with a divorce she didn't want, Lisa cried out to God, "Why me?" His reply moved her from a victim to a victor – and He can do the same for you!

Many years ago after going through an unwanted divorce, I kept asking the Lord, "Why is this happening to me? Why do I have to go through this? I have served you all my life!" I was stuck in the *why-me?* phase and thinking like a victim because it was a hard time.

I'll never forget what the Lord said to me: "Lisa, stop asking why, and realize that you have an enemy who wants to steal from you. He wants to destroy you. I have given you power over him in the name of Jesus!"

His correction that day helped me get my fight back. I stopped asking why and started resisting the lies of Satan. I realized that I was in a fight for my life and

destiny, and Satan was not going to win. He wasn't going to keep me in that victim mentality.

When I was a kid, we had a German Shepherd named Scooter. He was king of the hill in our neighborhood. My dad would take him on walks, and at this one corner, there was a cat that was afraid of Scooter. Every time, Scooter would chase that cat, and the cat would barely escape up a tree.

One day, the cat didn't run. Instead, he rose up like he was going to attack Scooter – with claws out. All of a sudden, Scooter made a rapid U-turn and ran from the cat. Our brave dog ran from a cat that was much smaller than he was!

Looking back, we realized that cat must have been going to Lakewood Church. He found out who he was in Christ! All joking aside, what happened? The cat was tired of being tormented by Scooter! He took a stand against him.

Let me ask you: When are you going to take a stand against the enemy's plans in your life? When are you going to say no to him? He has no power over you.

Jesus said, *"I give you power over ALL the power of the enemy and nothing shall by any means hurt you!"* Stop allowing the enemy to torment you! Get your fight back just like that cat did!

Genesis 27:40 says, *"When you decide to break free, YOU will break the yoke from YOUR neck"* (NLT).

Sometimes we are waiting on God – when He is waiting on us to walk in our God-given authority! Don't settle for anything less than God's best for your life!

Satan will make you feel like a victim as long as you allow him to. But you must push back and believe what God says about you.

You are a victor! You are who God says you are, and this is what his Word says:

- **You are blessed with every spiritual blessing** (Ephesians 1 :3).
- **You are chosen by God** (Ephesians 1:4).
- **You are adopted as a child of God** (Ephesians 1:5).
- **You are redeemed** (Ephesians 1:7).
- **You are forgiven** (Ephesians 1:7).
- **You have been lavished with God's amazing grace** (Ephesians 1:7).
- **You are marked with the Holy Spirit** (Ephesians 1:13) .

Ephesians 1 continues laying out all that comes with your identity in Christ as it further reveals that God wants you to have a spirit of wisdom and revelation, which cannot coexist with a victim mentality (v. 17). This revelation is about an ever-increasing understanding of who God is. It's a revelation that, as you are created in His image, you are a person of purpose and destiny. ❖



**LISA OSTEEEN COMES** is an associate pastor at Lakewood Church in Houston, TX and teaches at conferences around the country.

Excerpted from *It's on the Way*, by Lisa Osteen Comes, ©2021, Faithwords, Hachette Book Group.

# Focus on **FUN** a

Nourish your body.

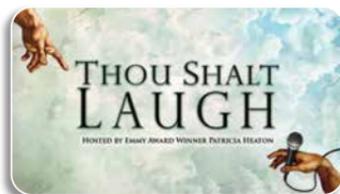
Watch Inspiration TV live...



Wednesdays at 1:00 p.m. ET  
Saturday, January 8 at 9:00 p.m. ET

## ▶ **Faithful Workouts**

Friends make fitness fun! *Faithful Workouts* is more than just exercise. You'll get exercise for your body, laughter for your soul, and nourishment for your spirit. Come join us.



Sunday, January 9 at 5:30 p.m. ET

## ▶ **Thou Shalt Laugh**

This concert of comedy hosted by Emmy Award-winning Patricia Heaton delivers the laughs you need! Jeff Allen, Thor Ramsey, Michael Jr., and others team up for tons of laughter and fun.



Saturday, January 22 at 9:00 p.m. ET  
Sunday, January 23 at 5:30 p.m. ET

## ▶ **Laughing on Purpose with Michael Jr.**

If laughter really is the best medicine, you're sure to be healthy after watching Michael Jr. With comedy "edgy enough for Las Vegas," yet "clean enough for church," you need to see this special show!

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# nd **FITNESS!**

..and your spirit!

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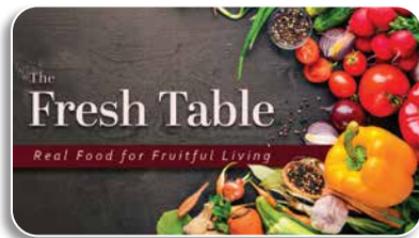
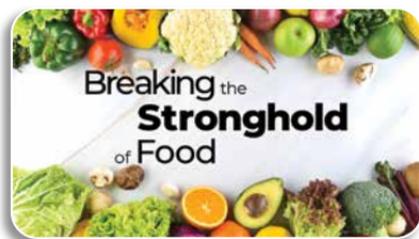
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# 50 million by 2030

## JOIN OUR GOD-SIZED GOAL!

Inspiration Ministries was birthed from a God-given vision for soul winning. Because of God-sent partners like you, over 4 million souls were added to the Kingdom of God in 2021.

But the Kingdom Clock is still ticking. We can't relax our efforts. God's desire is that NONE should perish, so let's reach out to the billions of people around the world who still don't know Jesus.

### SALVATION GOALS:

2021	4,000,000
2022	4,250,000
2023	4,500,000
2024	4,750,000
2025	5,000,000
2026	5,150,000
2027	5,300,000
2028	5,450,000
2029	5,600,000
2030	6,000,000

**TOTAL: 50,000,000**

**Together, we can change eternity for millions!**

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# Chasing the Wind

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ECCLESIASTES 1

What lies ahead? What can we expect in the new year? In many ways, it is helpful to plan, think about the future, consider the goals we want to achieve, and the best way to utilize our resources and time.

At the same time, the Bible reminds us of how little we know. No matter how much we plan, we just “*know in part.*” In reality, we all merely see “*a reflection as in a mirror*” (1 Corinthians 13:12).

We can gain perspective on the future by considering the past. What were our expectations a year ago? What did we wish we would have known about the future? What have we learned? Looking back, we can realize how often we spent our time and energy on efforts that had little lasting value. How many pursuits have been like *chasing the wind*?

The Bible reminds us that God *knows* the future. He knows the end from the beginning. And He knows “*what is still to come*” (Isaiah 46:10). He knows which of our efforts will have lasting value and which will be a waste of time. And He knows how we should be spending our time, energies, and resources.

Today, ask God to give you His perspective and the right priorities. Commit your life to Him. Don't spend this new year chasing after the wind. Seek the things that will last and matter in eternity.

What goals are you setting for the new year that will have a lasting impact?

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SATURDAY

January

1

*I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind.*

Ecclesiastes 1:14 NIV

## PRAYER:

Father, give me Your perspective on my life. I dedicate my time, talents, and treasures to You. Keep me from pursuing vain things. In Jesus' name, amen.

SUNDAY

January

2

*I said to myself, “Come now, let’s try pleasure.” [...] As I looked at everything I had worked so hard to accomplish, it was all so meaningless – like chasing the wind.*

Ecclesiastes 2:1, 11 NLT

### PRAYER:

Father, show me if I am allowing worldly pleasures to keep me from serving You. I submit my life to You. Give me Your priorities. In Jesus’ name, amen.

# Bread and Circuses

TODAY’S BIBLE READING: ECCLESIASTES 2

The poet Juvenal is best known for writing brilliant satires, inspired by his observations of life in the Roman Empire. Born around 55 AD, Juvenal gained fame for his comment that “people long eagerly for just two things – bread and circuses.” What did he mean?

He realized how readily people looked for *escapes*. Rather than face reality, many were willing to become *distracted* by food and fun.

We see these same principles in the world today. And many of Juvenal’s insights could be said to reflect trends in our time.

Looking around, we realize that many people spend their lives focused on *escapes* like TV programs, sports, social activities, social media, fantasies, and hobbies. But all these forms of “bread and circus” can distract them from facing reality or the things of God.

Many are so preoccupied with escapes that they rarely think about spiritual matters. This can even happen to believers! But eventually, like the writer of Ecclesiastes, all of us will realize that these distractions are “*like chasing the wind*.” They consume our time and energy but rarely leading to things that matter in eternity.

Ask God to show you if you are allowing the “bread and circuses” of life to distract you from serving Him. Don’t let the world or its escapes keep a grip on your heart and mind. Surrender your life anew to God. Make it your priority to seek *first* His Kingdom.

What keeps you from serving God wholeheartedly? How will you change your priorities?

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# God's Perspective

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ECCLESIASTES 3

Think about the ways we mark the passing of time. Watches. Digital phones. Wall clocks. Computer screens. We think about being on time and our schedules.

Thousands of years ago, people began measuring time by observing the shadow cast by a stick. Eventually more sophisticated devices were developed, including sundials and hour-glasses. Clocks were invented particularly to announce special times for worship. This led to the use of bells to mark time. The word clock comes from the Middle Dutch word for bells.

The Bible makes it clear that God is not limited by our sense of time. As He declared to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM" (Exodus 3:14). The message? He exists in eternity. He simply is. He has no time limits.

But, as Solomon reminds us, we are urged to remember that there is a time for everything (vs. 1-10). Learn to see His perspective. Don't be impatient. Remember that He is beyond time. Realize that we need to learn to wait for His time.

It also is important to learn to look at life from the perspective of seasons. There is "a season, a time for every purpose under heaven" (v. 1).

As you begin this new year, commit your past, present, and future to God. Remember, He is beyond time. Ask Him to give you His perspective on your life. And how you should spend your time.

How do you spend your time?

What blocks of wasted time could you reallocate to Him?

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MONDAY

January

3

*He has made everything beautiful in its time.*

Ecclesiastes 3:11 NKJV

## PRAYER:

Father, thank You for everything You have given me. Help me to be a faithful servant, serving You every moment of the day. In Jesus' name, amen.

TUESDAY

January

4

*He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.”*

Mark 16:15 NIV

### PRAYER:

Father, I commit my life to You. Use me to impact lives for Your kingdom. In Jesus' name, amen.

# The Gospel

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: MARK 16

Born into slavery in 1750, George Liele seemed like an unlikely evangelist. But his life was transformed when he heard the Gospel proclaimed. Liele realized that he was condemned by sin, and his only hope was to trust in Jesus.

Hungry to share this life-changing message, Liele was freed by his master, Henry Sharp, a deacon in his church, who encouraged Liele to devote his life to ministry. As a result of this outreach, so many gave their hearts to Jesus that a church was established in South Carolina. When the Revolutionary War disrupted their lives, Liele and members of his congregation moved to Savannah, Georgia, where they met in a barn.

As the war intensified, Liele obtained a loan and accepted the status of indentured servant to pay the passage for himself, his wife, and his four children on a ship bound for Jamaica. He soon repaid the debt and secured permission to preach to the slaves on the island. Receiving no financial assistance, he supported his family by farming and transporting goods with a wagon.

It was not an easy life. He was harassed and even imprisoned for “agitating the slaves.” But he continued to proclaim the Gospel, leading to thousands of converts.

The Bible reminds us that God looks for people like George Liele – men and women committed to serving Him. Anyone can share the Gospel, regardless of background or race, education or age, young or old.

Who can you share the Gospel with this week?

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# Never Shaken

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PSALM 112

At times it feels the earth is shaking, and nothing is stable. Everything seems adrift without an anchor. Challenged by a world of uncertainty, we can feel anxious and insecure, even unhinged.

Facing situations like this, the psalmist discovered how to respond and not be *shaken*. This starts with a change in our attitude. We are not to become obsessed with worries, personal problems, or world conditions, but to focus on God. Spend time in worship seeking Him and drawing closer to Him. Pray. Develop a personal relationship with Him.

Remember the power in His Word, *love* the Bible, and *delight in His commandments*. Don't depend on the ever-changing things in the world, but constantly meditate on His promises. By thinking His thoughts, our lives will receive new levels of stability and certainty.

As we love Him and focus on Him, we must make practical changes. We must *trust Him*, constantly remembering that He is with us and has a plan for our lives. He loves us. He has prepared a home for us and that we will spend eternity with Him. As we rest in Him, our hearts can be "*steadfast*" and secure.

Don't let fear rule your heart. You don't have to be afraid about problems you face or shaken by world conditions. Commit your way to Him. Spend time in prayer. Fill your mind and heart with His Word. Trust Him. Worship Him.

Write out your worries and fears, committing them to God in prayer.

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WEDNESDAY

January

5

*Blessed is the man who fears the LORD... Surely he will never be shaken... He will not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD. His heart is established; he will not be afraid.*

Psalm 112:1, 6-8 NKJV

## PRAYER:

Father, I worship and praise You. May my life bring You honor and glory. I trust in You. Thank You. In Jesus' name, amen.

THURSDAY

January

6

*I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet, saying, "Write in a book what you see, and send it to the seven churches."*

Revelation 1:10 NASB

**PRAYER:**

Father, fill me with Your presence. Deliver me from thoughts of the flesh. Transform me by Your Spirit. In Jesus' name, amen.

Do you ever feel like you don't know how or what to pray?  
What do you usually do then?

# In the Spirit

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: REVELATION 1

Isolated on the island of Patmos, John faced an uncertain future, including probable martyrdom. It would have been natural to be dominated by fear and anxiety and give up hope.

But there was something different about John. He was *"in the Spirit"* – filled with the Spirit, in tune with the Spirit, overwhelmed by the Spirit. He was not controlled by the flesh but focused on spiritual things.

While in the Spirit, John heard from God and was given breathtaking revelations (Revelation 4:2). John knew the importance of the Spirit in these revelations. Delivering the messages God had given him, John wrote, *"The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches"* (Revelation 2:7). He knew that the Spirit was speaking and that he needed spiritual sensitivity to receive the message.

Today, that same Spirit can speak to you and *transform* your life. No matter what's going on in the world, He can grant you peace, joy, and the other fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). He can give you His power and help you overcome your weaknesses. He can intercede for you and help you know how to pray (Romans 8:26).

Prepare your heart to seek Him more intensely. Fill your mind with His Word. Pray in the Spirit. Spend time in fellowship with the Spirit. Don't be dominated by thoughts and emotions of the flesh, but seek to be *"in the Spirit."*

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# Understanding

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ACTS 8

An official from Ethiopia was returning home from Jerusalem. Clearly a sincere seeker, he was reading a passage from Isaiah but did not understand the meaning.

At that moment Philip, who was following the leading of the Spirit, approached him. The man admitted that he needed help understanding what he was reading. Philip responded by preaching Jesus, “beginning at this Scripture.”

After hearing Philip’s teaching, the Ethiopian understood and believed. The passage made sense. Acting on his belief, he asked to be baptized (vs. 36-38).

Many people are like this Ethiopian. They read Bible passages, yet don’t understand. These are moments to remember the spiritual dimension of the Word and why we need a *spiritual* approach. We need to pray and ask God for discernment. Ask the Spirit to open our eyes *spiritually*, give us revelation, and lead us to mature believers who might give us insight.

Paul illustrated these principles when he wrote, “*The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God.*” These spiritual truths can seem like “*foolishness*” to our minds because the deeper things of the Bible “*are spiritually discerned*” (1 Corinthians 2:14).

Have you ever struggled to understand a passage from the Bible? Are you not sure what the words mean? These are times to pray and ask God for discernment. As He leads, seek the insights of mature believers who can help you understand.

What questions do you have about Scripture?

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FRIDAY

January

7

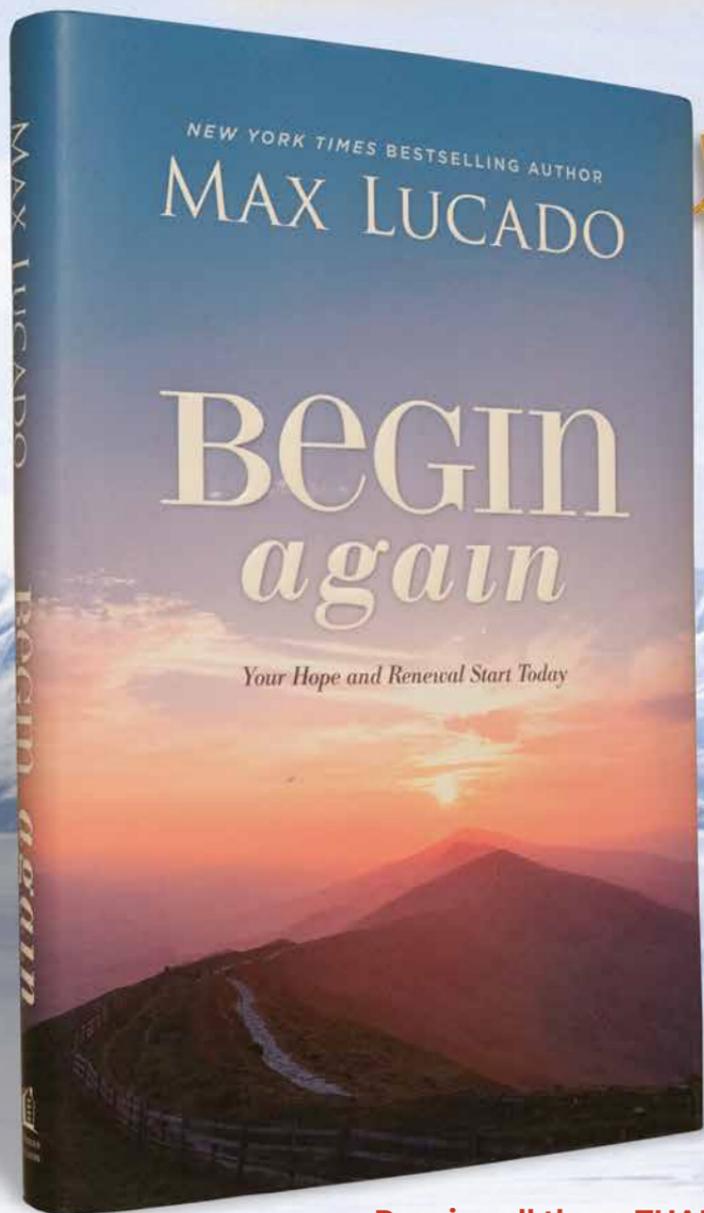
*“Do you understand what you are reading?” And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” [...] Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.*

Acts 8:30-31, 35 NKJV

## PRAYER:

Father, I seek spiritual discernment for Your Word and revelation from You. Give me a clearer understanding. In Jesus’ name, amen.

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SATURDAY

January

8

*Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time on and forever. From the rising of the sun to its setting the name of the LORD is to be praised... He raises the poor from the dust, He lifts the needy from the garbage heap.*

Psalms 113:2-3, 7 NASB

### PRAYER:

Father, I am so grateful for all You have done for me. Thank You for providing the answers I need. I praise You! In Jesus' name, amen.

## Unending Praise

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PSALM 113

When are we to praise the Lord? It can be easy to praise Him when everything is going well. But the psalmist reminds us that we should praise Him *all* the time, no matter what is going on in our lives or the world. We should praise Him at the start of each day and continue until the very end. We should *never* stop praising Him! We should praise Him at every stage of our lives, "*from this time on and forever.*"

Why do we praise Him? We praise Him for there is no one like Him. We praise Him because He reigns over all the earth (v. 5-6). We praise Him because the evidence of His faithfulness is all around us.

We praise Him because He can turn around *any* situation. He can raise the poor from the dust and lift "*the needy from the garbage heap.*" He can give hope to those with no hope. He can encourage people whose dreams have been dashed and supply energy to those who feel tired and weary. He can provide direction to those who feel lost. He can perform miracles for those facing problems that seem unsolvable.

Think of the many reasons you have for being grateful. Don't be silent but praise God. And thank Him. Make praise a priority, even during difficult circumstances. Praise Him morning, noon, and night! Praise Him for He is worthy!

What are some things you can praise God for even when circumstances are less than ideal?

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# Enjoyment

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ECCLESIASTES 6

Ecclesiastes described a person who had been blessed yet was not able to *enjoy* these blessings as “*evil*.”

What a perfect picture of life for many people! Despite all that God has given them, they are not able to *appreciate* His blessings. They don't rest or trust in Him or believe His Word! Instead, they are consumed by worry and anxiety. Many are skeptical and filled with doubt.

They spend their lives running after the “*vapors*” of life (James 4:14) – promises that cannot be fulfilled, pleasures that do not last, applause that quickly fades away.

The Bible talked about a man “*who loves silver*” but who “*will not be satisfied with silver*.” The lesson was that “*when goods increase, they who eat them increase also*” (Ecclesiastes 5:10-11). Their only gain is what they see with their eyes.

People like this fail to realize that God holds the key to life. We can accumulate things, but only God can give us real joy. When we serve Him and seek first His Kingdom, He promises to bless us and bring us into new dimensions of blessing, a dimension of the Spirit.

Today, remember that God desires to bless and prosper you, take away your burdens and worries, and enable you to enjoy life and the things He has given you. What is the key? Seek first His Kingdom. Surrender your life to Him. Let Him give you real life! Real joy!

Write a list of things for which you want to thank God – big and little things.

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SUNDAY

January

9

*There is an evil which I have seen under the sun...A man to whom God has given riches, possessions, and honor...yet God does not give him the power or capacity to enjoy them.*

Ecclesiastes 6:1-2 AMPC

## PRAYER:

Father, thank You for all that You have given me. Thank You for helping me enjoy life. I surrender my life to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

MONDAY

January

10

*I discovered that God created people to be upright, but they have each turned to follow their own downward path.*

Ecclesiastes 7:29 NLT

### PRAYER:

Father, thank You that Your promises are true for me. I trust You and submit my life to You. I seek Your plan for me. In Jesus' name, amen.

# The Simple Solution

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ECCLESIASTES 7

What does the Garden of Eden tell us about God's plan? God provided Adam and Eve with *everything* they needed and every possible *pleasure*. They just needed to obey God. But what happened?

They were tempted to reject His instructions. Instead of believing Him, they were tricked by the serpent into doubting Him and following their own devices. In the process, they complicated their lives and abandoned God's path.

The Bible tells us that God created us to be "*upright*." The Hebrew word here actually means straight. He designed us to obey and trust Him, to keep life simple.

All of us face choices about what to believe. People all around may suggest that simple faith is unrealistic and that it is foolish to trust God. We are encouraged to chart our own course. It can seem impossible that God really loves us and has a plan for our lives.

This rejection leads to a "*downward path*," as we move away from God's plan. We no longer simply believe, obey, and trust. We fail to remember that "*God made man simple; man's complex problems are of his own devising*" (Ecclesiastes 7:29 Jerusalem Bible). Like Adam and Eve, we find problems multiplying when we reject His Word.

Today, seek to live with simple faith. Submit to the Lordship of Jesus. Read His Word. Surrender your life to Him. Believe Him. It really is that simple.

Why do you think it often seems easier to follow your own path than to wait for God's plans?

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# A Sharp Ax

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ECCLESIASTES 10

The man who chops wood has no doubts. He *knows* he needs a sharp ax. Why? Because a sharp ax increases efficiency and reduces waste. It enables him to get more done. The opposite also is true. A dull ax results in the need to work harder, a decline in productivity, and an increase in frustration.

The Bible says wisdom is like this ax. Guided by wisdom, our efforts will be more fruitful. We will be more *efficient* and waste less time and energy. In contrast, acting without wisdom is like chopping wood with a dull ax. We are less efficient. We waste more time and energy.

This underscores the importance of seeking God's wisdom. Be filled with His Word. Be humble and devoted to prayer. Commit *every* project to Him. Be good stewards of the resources He gives you. Commit to obey Him and fulfill His goals for your life. Stay strong in the Spirit. Keep your skills sharp.

Without this kind of preparation, it can be easy to be wasteful. We can become discouraged, frustrated, worried, anxious, or afraid. But when our ax is sharp, we are prepared for challenges, ready to go into action, unafraid, effective.

Seek God for His wisdom in everything you do. Fill your mind with His Word. Put His principles into practice. Ask Him for answers to problems you face. Believe Him for the tools and strategies you need to be more effective.

Ask God for the tools and strategies you need for the problems you're currently facing.

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TUESDAY

January

11

*If the axe is dull and he does not sharpen its edge, then he must exert more strength. Wisdom has the advantage of bringing success.*

Ecclesiastes 10:10 NASB

## PRAYER:

Father, I cry out for Your wisdom. Open my eyes to understand more of Your truth. I want to be more fruitful and serve You faithfully. In Jesus' name, amen.

WEDNESDAY

January

12

*Tremble, earth, before the LORD, before the God of Jacob, Who turned the rock into a pool of water, the flint into a fountain of water.*

Psalm 114:7-8 NASB

**PRAYER:**

Father, I pray for the peace of Jerusalem. I trust my life to You. Give me a burden for souls. In Jesus' name, amen.

# God's Eternal Plan

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PSALM 114

The Bible makes it clear: God is Israel's defender. We see this in the crisis they faced "*when Israel went forth from Egypt*" (vs. 1-2). God delivered them and showed that His power is so overwhelming that He can turn "*the rock into a pool of water, the flint into a fountain of water.*" Nothing is impossible for Him!

As we think about world conditions, we need to remember that He has an eternal plan for Israel and the world. And He will fulfill this plan.

We are reminded about another time when some doubted that His prophecies would be fulfilled. But He promised that His vision was "*yet for the appointed time...it will not fail.*" It may tarry for a season, but "*it will certainly come*" (Habakkuk 2:3).

Today, God's vision for the nations is hastening toward the appointed time. He will accomplish His purposes. To people in the world, His plans may seem impossible. But God is never limited, and *nothing* can stand in His way – not nations or armies.

Right now, remember to pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6). Remember that God has a plan for the world and your life. He can turn rocks into pools of water and flints into fountains of water. He can provide for you and protect you. Dedicate yourself and your resources to God and His kingdom. And pray that the Gospel might be preached in all the world.

What can you do this week to further advance the Kingdom of God right where you are?

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# Your Shield

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PSALM 115

Soldiers throughout time have known the importance of shields. Facing danger and the possibility of death or injury, they have welcomed the protection offered by shields.

Styles and shapes of shields have changed to reflect new technologies and weapons. Depending on place and time, shields have been made from animal hide, wood, or various metals. Some have been plain while others were elaborately decorated. But during battle, soldiers know that an effective shield can save their lives.

People find various ways to be shielded. Some trust in their jobs or resources. Others hide behind governments or armies. Some retreat to secluded hideaways. But the Bible teaches that none of these can protect us perfectly. All these human shields have imperfections that can fail. The only perfect protection is to trust God.

The psalmist urgently wanted people to understand this truth. Over and over, he urged everyone to “*trust in the LORD.*” It was a message he cried to Israel, the house of Aaron, and all who fear the Lord. He certainly would convey the same message to us. Our only effective shield is to trust God.

Remember that you have an adversary who is prowling like a roaring lion. He is seeking to devour you and your family. And the world can be a dangerous place. Make sure you trust in the Lord, and He is your shield.

Journal about how you use the shield of faith in your own life.

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THURSDAY

January

13

*Israel, trust in the LORD; He is their help and their shield. House of Aaron, trust in the LORD; He is their help and their shield. You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD; He is their help and their shield.*

Psalms 115:9-11 NASB

## PRAYER:

Father, I look to You to defend me. I take up the shield of faith and believe You for protection. Help me to be ready. In Jesus' name, amen.

FRIDAY

January

14

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

Ecclesiastes 11:6 NASB

### PRAYER:

Father, thank You for all You have given me. Help me to develop these resources. Thank You for multiplying the seeds I sow. In Jesus' name, amen.

What resources has God given you, and how are you investing them?

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## Investing

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ECCLESIASTES 11

How does a person become a world-class musician? Natural abilities are vital. But many with ability don't live up to their potential. Over and over, great musicians testify to the impact of the *investment* of time and making *practice* a priority.

Ignacy Jan Paderewski, the noted Polish pianist and statesman, once declared that "the very essence of success is *practice*." Investing time was *not optional* for those wanting to be great.

Describing his opportunity to be music director of the Chicago Symphony, Sir Georg Solti recalled how he was challenged by "the height of professionalism" demonstrated by this orchestra. The players always studied and practiced. Their commitment forced him to be prepared.

This *commitment* to excellence helps separate the extraordinary from the ordinary. The Bible expresses this truth in the principle of *seedtime* and *harvest* (Genesis 8:22). This teaches the importance of *investing* our time and resources to reap a bountiful harvest.

These principles are true in the spiritual realm. The Bible reminds us to sow from the seeds we have been given – our time and talent, our love and concern, our resources. But they also apply in the natural realm.

Do you want to reap the harvest God has prepared for you? Do you want to achieve your full potential? Then don't be content with the ordinary or good enough. Cultivate a commitment to developing the resources you've been given. Invest your time and resources well.

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# Prepared for Blessings

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 2 CHRONICLES 1

During World War II, American air units based in Australia experienced problems with aircraft maintenance...until General George Kenney became involved.

He made inspecting each plane a priority. General Douglas MacArthur observed that Kenney's attention to detail and preparation was crucial to "keep his planes flying."

An end-of-war, inspection of 8,000 planes of the adversary revealed how much his attention to detail affected the outcome. Although 95% of the enemy planes were intact, most were "not operational because some small part was unavailable." The conclusion? The "attention to detail and extra effort" Kenney provided was a key difference between defeat and victory.

Preparation and details also were important for Solomon's reign. David had done much to prepare the way, so Solomon could complete his assignment and receive God's blessing.

The Bible reminds us that God wants to bless us abundantly. But, to receive these blessings, we must be *prepared* and put His principles into practice. We must know His promises and obey them. We must spend quality time with Him in prayer and commit our time, talents, and treasures to His Kingdom.

Think about the gifts and talents God has given you. Seek to be a good steward, investing these resources. Sow your seeds. As you are faithful, you can expect His blessings.

How can you prepare yourself to be a good steward of the gifts God has given you?

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SATURDAY

January

15

*Solomon, and all the assembly with him, went to the high place... for the tabernacle of meeting with God was there... David had brought up the ark from Kirjath Jearim to the place David had prepared for it.*

2 Chronicles 1:3-4 NKJV

## PRAYER:

Father, I seek Your abundance and blessings. Help me be a good steward. Speak to me through your Word. Give me Your wisdom and favor. In Jesus' name, amen.

SUNDAY

January

16

*The house which I am about to build will be great, for greater is our God than all the gods.*

2 Chronicles 2:5 NASB

# A Great Work for God

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 2 CHRONICLES 2

Solomon knew that the temple had to be built with excellence. Why? Because it was being built *for God*. It was a witness about God Himself. This excellence had to be reflected in every detail. And it had to be built by the best workers and craftsmen.

To accomplish this goal, he asked Hiram, the king of Tyre, to send the right materials, as well as “*a skilled man*” to work with the “*skilled workers*” in Israel (v. 7). Hiram agreed to Solomon’s requests, praising him for his wisdom and commitment. He also blessed God because He had given David “*a wise son, endowed with discretion and understanding*” (v. 12).

Solomon kept emphasizing that he was doing something “*great and wonderful*” because it was being built for God and represented God Himself (v. 9). Solomon also acknowledged that even this temple could not measure up to God’s greatness. “*Who is able to build a house for Him?*” (v. 6).

Solomon provides a model for us. The reality is that *everything* we do should be done in the name of the Lord. We are His witnesses. Everything in our lives should bring Him honor and glory, for He is great and worthy to be praised.

Today, commit to doing *everything* as unto the Lord. Live so your life is a witness to His greatness. Serve Him with excellence and humility. Remember, you are His representative.

## PRAYER:

Father, may my life bring you glory. Give me Your wisdom and the resources I need to honor You. Use me to impact others. In Jesus’ name, amen.

What special and unique skills do you have, and how can you use them for God’s glory?

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# Clean Before the Lord

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 2 CHRONICLES 4

MONDAY

January

17

While the Israelites were in the wilderness, God commanded them to build a tent of meeting. In that tent, they were to have a laver (washbasin), a place where Aaron and his sons were to “wash their hands and their feet” before entering the tent. This was very serious, something no one could take for granted. They were to “wash with water, so that they will not die” (Exodus 30:18-21).

But the laver was not just for this tent. When it was time to build the temple in Jerusalem, the Israelites again made basins as places for the priests to wash. Why was this so important? Because God is holy and cannot tolerate the presence of sin. He wanted them to realize that they had to be clean and pure when they came into His presence.

David recognized this principle when he wrote that only those with “clean hands and a pure heart” may “stand in His holy place” (Psalm 24:3-4).

The Bible reminds us that God wants to fellowship with you. He longs to hear from you and answer your prayers. He wants to bless you, grant you more of His wisdom and favor, and reveal more truths to you. But when you approach Him, remember that He is holy. Humble yourself before Him. Confess your sins and receive His forgiveness. With clean hands and a pure heart, approach His throne. You can be confident and bold!

*He also made ten basins in which to wash, and he set five on the right side and five on the left to rinse things for the burnt offering; but the sea was for the priests to wash in.*

2 Chronicles 4:6 NASB

## PRAYER:

Father, search my life and reveal anything that displeases You. Thank You for forgiveness. I trust You! In Jesus' name, amen.

Ask God to show you your sins.  
Write a prayer of confession and  
repentance.

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TUESDAY

January

18

*When the trumpeters  
and singers were as one,  
to make one sound...  
the priests could not  
continue ministering  
because of the cloud;  
for the glory of the LORD  
filled the house of God.*

2 Chronicles 5:13-14 NKJV

**PRAYER:**

Father, I want to experience Your power and presence. Help me put aside anything that separates me from You. I seek You. In Jesus' name, amen.

What is separating you from God's presence? Seek to set those things aside.

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# Make One Sound

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 2 CHRONICLES 5

In 1958 while on tour, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra played what their conductor, Fritz Reiner, called "a perfect concert." Waiting backstage afterward with tears in his eyes, he told the musicians, "Thank you, thank you! All my life I waited for this moment."

This was a rare concert when an unusually high level of excellence was achieved during a performance when there was complete focus and singleness of purpose. There was a harmonious blending that resonated a level of perfection. The musicians seemed to perform as a unit, transported to a higher plane of purity.

An even more glorious moment took place during the ceremony dedicating the temple in Jerusalem as the musicians and singers became like one, making one united sound. This unity was expressed as they sang and played their instruments. And God's presence filled the place.

Powerful things happen when God's people join together. The Bible tells us, "*How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity*" (Psalm 133:1). This is more than a nice experience. Where there is unity, the Lord *commanded* His blessing.

Ask God to show you if there are any rivalries in Your heart. Put aside anything that keeps You from seeking Him with Your whole being. And seek opportunities to join with other believers to worship and seek God. He longs to pour His Spirit upon You and to fill Your life with His presence.

# When God's People Pray

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 2 CHRONICLES 7

God knew there was sin in the land. He was ready to act. Something had to change.

His focus was not on sinners or the godless, but *His* own people. They needed to *humble themselves*, pray, seek His face, and turn from *their* wicked ways. Only then would He hear, forgive, and heal their land.

The same principle applies today. It can be easy to focus on the immorality, blasphemy, corruption, and godlessness we see in the media. But God tells us He focuses on His people. He watches to see how *we* react.

If you want to see change, start with prayer! Humble *yourself* before God. Seek His face. Ask Him to convict you of anything that displeases Him – any thought or activity, any hobby or habit. Make sure to confess your sins, repent, and seek to make changes

The Bible promises that God is ready to “*hear from heaven.*” He’s ready to forgive the sins of our people and heal our land and ready to act in powerful ways. But we need to be passionate about our prayers. Will we seek Him persistently? Will we pray with compassion? Will we cry out for His mercy? For healing? For His power to fall on us?

Today, commit to pray more intensely and to pray for the lost. Pray that the Spirit will fall. Pray that God will send revival. Pray until our land is healed.

*[If] My people who are called by My name humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*

2 Chronicles 7:14 NASB

## PRAYER:

Father, forgive my sins. Forgive the sins of your people. Help us turn from our wicked ways. Heal our land. Bring revival! In Jesus' name, amen.

Write out a prayer for our nation's healing.

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THURSDAY

January

20

*Hiram sent him ships and servants who knew the sea; and they went with Solomon's servants to Ophir, and took from there 450 talents of gold, and brought them to King Solomon.*

2 Chronicles 8:18 NASB

**PRAYER:**

Father, I want my life to count. Help me to have Your perspective on my possessions. Use me to impact lives for eternity. In Jesus' name, amen.

# Mysterious Ophir

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 2 CHRONICLES 8

Ophir. A place of mystery. Today, no one knows where it was located. In Africa? On the Arabian Peninsula? But it was well known in Bible times. A thousand years before Christ, ships were built that traveled hundreds of miles to this faraway land.

Ophir is mentioned in Genesis as an ancestor of Shem. In Job, it was associated with gold (Job 22:24). David himself gained riches from Ophir, providing 3,000 talents “*of the gold of Ophir*” to help build the temple (1 Chronicles 29:3-4).

Ophir became central to Solomon. He arranged for Hiram, king of Tyre, to provide ships for a journey to Ophir. Together with Solomon's servants, they returned with an unbelievable amount of gold. In modern terms, about 16 metric tons!

Kings after Solomon continued to be attracted to the riches found in Ophir. We read, for example, how “*Jehoshaphat made ships of Tarshish to go to Ophir for gold*” (1 Kings 22:48). Ophir and its gold may have become an obsession for some, but their search did not bring lasting peace or happiness.

Many of us have places of our own like Ophir that become obsessions, objects that dominate our thoughts, experiences we crave. But, in the end, the Bible tells us that these things can be like chasing the wind (Ecclesiastes 1:14).

Don't be obsessed with temporary things. Seek riches that will last – what you invest in God's Kingdom.

Do you have an obsession in your life that's keeping you from seeking God wholeheartedly?

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# Knowing the Word

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 2 CHRONICLES 17

God blessed Judah because King Jehoshaphat sought God and obeyed His Word. *“He took great pride in the ways of the LORD”* (v. 6). He expressed this pride and commitment by sending Levites throughout the land to teach the people about God’s Word. But he also sent officials, making it clear to everyone that this project had his blessing and that this was important to him.

As the people learned from the book of the law of the Lord, people in the surrounding nations developed *“the dread of the LORD.”* God had not changed, but because His people knew His Word, *they* changed. Others could see the difference He made. He could protect them from danger, grant them favor and success, give them peace, and fight their battles.

The same kind of impact can occur in our lives when we know God’s Word. It not only will change us, but it can change our relationships and impact how other people act toward us. When we get our lives in line with God’s Word, we can be delivered from fear and worry. He can shield and defend us and give us His peace.

Today, make sure that you renew your commitment to know the Word, fill your mind and heart with the Word, apply the Word in every area of your life, and seek God with your whole heart. This is important!

How will you make extra time in your schedule to study the Bible?

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FRIDAY  
January  
21

*He sent his officials... to teach... They taught in Judah, having the Book of the Law of the LORD with them... The dread of the LORD was on all the kingdoms of the lands which were around Judah.*

2 Chronicles 17:7-10 NASB

## PRAYER:

Father, I seek You. I seek to know more of Your Word. May others see Your presence in my life. In Jesus’ name, amen.

SATURDAY

January

22

*Jehoshaphat had great riches and honor; and he allied himself by marriage with Ahab. Some years later he went down to visit Ahab at Samaria. And Ahab...incited him to go up against Ramoth-gilead.*

2 Chronicles 18:1-2 NASB

### PRAYER:

Father, help me to stay on guard against deception. Give me discernment. Help me to be more sensitive to Your Spirit. In Jesus' name, amen.

## Deceived

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 2 CHRONICLES 18

Jehoshaphat had been a good king in Judah who had sought God and *"took great pride in the ways of the LORD."* He experienced His blessings. He *"had great riches and honor"* and *"grew greater and greater"* (2 Chronicles 17:4, 6, 12).

During this time, the neighboring country of Israel was being ruled by Ahab, one of its most ungodly kings. Perhaps concerned about security, Jehoshaphat *"allied himself by marriage with Ahab."*

Then, Jehoshaphat allowed himself to be influenced by Ahab. Ahab *"incited"* and misled him. Jehoshaphat became vulnerable to clever words as Ahab convinced him to do what *he* wanted.

The Bible warns that this kind of deception is common in the world. We can be deceived by *"smooth and flattering speech"* (Romans 16:18) and by enticing promises and *"empty words"* (Ephesians 5:6). We even can deceive ourselves (1 Corinthians 3:18).

We need to be on guard against all these forms of deception and the pressure to conform to the ways of the world. We shouldn't allow others to shape our actions, attitudes, and beliefs to reflect *their* goals.

Instead, we need to stay true to God's Word. Be filled with His Spirit, sensitive to His leading. Commit our ways to Him, and let Him direct and guide us. When we have any questions or doubts, we need to seek Him.

What are some questions you have for God about the Bible or Christian living?

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Philipp Jakob Spener lived at a time when many emphasized a more formal religion. But Spener felt what was most important was *spiritual* renewal by individual believers. Born in France on this day in 1635, he became known as the father of German pietism, reflecting his belief in the importance of Bible study and a life of personal devotion.

Spener felt that positive change depended upon the lives of individuals, their relationship with God, their commitment to seek Him, and live in ways that please Him. His views were not always popular. He wanted people to realize that it wasn't enough to attend church services. For growth and maturity, believers needed to know the Word and know God themselves.

He tried to lead by example, seeking to live with discipline and purity. As a pastor of several churches, he stressed the need for believers to meet for times of prayer, study, fellowship, and personal devotion.

A prolific writer, Spener published hundreds of letters, sermons, and other documents. Through these materials, he encouraged believers to realize the importance of individual purity.

The Bible reminds us that God looks at our hearts. Each of us must stand before God and give an account of our lives. Commit to seeking to mature as a believer. Draw close to God through times of Bible study and prayer. Ask Him to help you live a life of purity, pleasing to Him.

Spend time examining your heart and your motivations. What do you need to change?

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*Beware of practicing your piety before men in order to be seen by them; for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.*

Matthew 6:1 RSV

### PRAYER:

Father, search my heart. Help me to live pleasing to You. Purge me of things contrary to Your Word. In Jesus' name, amen.

MONDAY

January

24

*I love the LORD, because  
He has heard my voice  
and my supplications.*

*Because He has inclined  
His ear to me, therefore  
I will call upon Him as  
long as I live.*

Psalms 116:1-2 NKJV

### PRAYER:

Father, I commit these situations to You: \_\_\_\_\_ . I love You, for You have heard my voice. I will call on You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Looking back, when can you see God's hand faithfully at work in your life?

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## Confident in God

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PSALM 116

The psalmist, David, had real problems. Overwhelmed by a sense of hopelessness, he needed help. He felt pain and despair. With his resources proving inadequate, he hoped he could find answers. If he cried, he wasn't sure anyone would respond. It was a desperate situation, and he needed to know what to do.

But looking back over his life he realized that, in situations like this, if He called, God had heard and answered him. The psalmist was confident that he could call on Him at any time. Repeatedly, God proved Himself faithful.

When God answered, everything changed. His problems were solved. His needs were met. In addition, God demonstrated that He really cared for David and loved him.

Each of us has an opportunity to learn these things for ourselves. We will go through situations in which our own strength, wisdom, and resources fail us. Then we have opportunities to realize just how dependable God is. We can depend on Him and know how much He loves us.

This is not about a religion but a *relationship* – knowing God Almighty intimately and personally. Love His Word. Trust Him.

No matter what challenges you face, realize that God is with you. You can call to Him about any situations you face, confident that He will hear you and answer your prayers. Remember, you can call on Him as long as you live!

# Simple and Direct

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PSALM 117

The Library of Congress is the largest in the world, containing more than 160 million items on more than 838 miles of bookshelves. Its collections include millions of books, recordings, photographs, maps, and manuscripts. But combined, all the words in these books together total only a fraction of the words that have been written throughout history.

Psalm 117 can seem insignificant compared to those statistics. It has only two verses and is comprised of only 17 Hebrew words. It comes just before Psalm 119, which extends for 176 verses.

Can we find value in a psalm so short? Its brevity is a key to its power. It delivers a message that cannot be simpler.

First, God's "mercy is great toward us." The Hebrew words remind us that His kindness is overwhelming and without limits. And His truth is *everlasting*. He is not subject to trends but absolutely objective and absolutely fair. His words are as true today as they were when this psalm was written. And they will be true throughout eternity.

These attributes impact us in many ways. They mean that we can trust Him absolutely. He is fair and just, dependable and kind, loving and holy. Thinking about these truths, we can only join the psalmist in praising God.

Make these attributes the cornerstone of your life. Remember these simple truths: God is faithful, and His truth is everlasting.

Write your own psalm of praise  
for God's blessings in your life.

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TUESDAY

January

25

*Praise the LORD, all nations; sing His praises, all peoples! For His mercy toward us is great, and the truth of the LORD is everlasting. Praise the LORD!*

Psalm 117:1-2 NASB

## PRAYER:

Father, thank You that Your faithfulness and kindness have no limit. Thank You that Your truth is everlasting. I praise Your name. In Jesus' name, amen.

WEDNESDAY

January

26

*He commanded the people who dwelt in Jerusalem to contribute support for the priests and the Levites... "Since the people began to bring the offerings... we have had enough to eat and have plenty left."*

2 Chronicles 31:4, 10 NKJV

### PRAYER:

Father, help me to be motivated by the things that please you. I will give my time and resources to support Your kingdom. In Jesus' name, amen.

Can you think back to a time when your generosity was rewarded?

# Abundant Blessings

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 2 CHRONICLES 31

Hezekiah commanded that everyone in Jerusalem give their required tithes. While the people began giving, this command was not their primary motive. Instead, they recognized the need to give, so priests and Levites *"might devote themselves to the law of the LORD"* (v. 4). They gave because they were *committed to God's work*.

The people responded by giving *willingly and eagerly*. They gave until there were *"heaps"* of offerings (v. 7). Hezekiah and other leaders were *overwhelmed* by the response. *Every need was met, and God blessed them abundantly*.

Azariah, the high priest, provided this summary: They not only had enough to eat but had *"plenty left, for the LORD has blessed His people; and what is left is this great abundance"* (v. 10).

God wants to bless us *abundantly*. He *rewards* our faith and our faithfulness. As we sow into His kingdom, we plant seeds that will yield a great harvest.

Jesus also taught this principle when He said, *"Give, and it will be given to you."* As we give, He promised *overwhelming* blessings: *"For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you"* (Luke 6:38).

The Bible tells us that God looks for people who practice these principles, who are not stingy but *eager* to give. He is ready to meet our needs as we commit ourselves to His Kingdom. He will bless us as we give.

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# The Lifeboat

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ACTS 27

Henry Greathead spent much of his life around ships. Born on this day in 1757, he grew up to become a carpenter, having learned his craft aboard sailing ships. After establishing his own boat-building business, he became fascinated by the idea of building an unsinkable boat that could be used to save lives at sea.

In 1789, a ship sank in waters in the North Sea, not far from his shop. The entire crew was lost even though the ship was only 300 yards from shore. The problem? The sea was too rough for normal boats to reach the sailors.

As a result of this disaster, a prize was offered for the design of a boat that might have saved that crew. The winning model was entrusted to Greathead, whose assignment was to build the boat. While guided by the winning design, Greathead made several modifications. The result was the first specially designed lifeboat, aptly named the *Original*. Over the next 40 years, this special craft saved many lives.

Greathead continued the work of designing and building lifeboats, improving as he gained experience. Fourteen years after launching the *Original*, he had completed 31 more crafts.

The lifeboat presents a picture that applies to our spiritual lives. Many people feel that they are sinking beneath the burdens of life. But Jesus provides hope. He is there, ready to save.

He is by *your* side, ready to rescue you!

Do you feel you are sinking in the storms of life? Write a prayer to your Lifeguard!

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THURSDAY

January

27

*Then the sailors tried to abandon the ship; they lowered the lifeboat as though they were going to put out anchors from the front of the ship.*

Acts 27:30 NLT

## PRAYER:

Father, thank You for the hope I find in Jesus. Thank You for rescuing me. Use me to help reach others who feel hopeless. In Jesus' name, amen.

FRIDAY

January

28

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

Psalms 4:8 NKJV

### PRAYER:

Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for giving me peace and rest. I trust my life to You. In Your name, amen.

Write a prayer to God for a peaceful slumber.

## Rest and Peace

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PSALM 4

Sabine Baring-Gould had one of the most brilliant minds of his generation. Born on this day in 1834 in southwestern England, he learned six languages and authored more than 100 books. He was an archaeologist, architect, artist, and teacher. A strong believer, he also pastored several churches.

Baring-Gould had a passionate concern for children. In February 1865 he published the poem "Now the Day is Over," which later became a hymn and an evening prayer, particularly for young boys and girls. This was inspired in part by a home for children that had been special to him.

He described how the night was "drawing nigh; shadows of the evening steal across the sky." Children might experience fear and uncertainty by the coming night. His prayer: "Jesus, give the weary calm and sweet repose... may our eyelids close."

He prayed that as they went to sleep, children would think about Jesus, confident that He would guard them. He would provide comfort for "every sufferer watching late in pain" and assure "sailors tossing on the deep-blue sea."

He prayed that angels would spread their wings, watching them throughout the night. Filled with thoughts of peace, they could awaken in the morning, "pure and fresh and sinless in Thy holy eyes."

His song has been sung throughout the world, blessing both children and adults. It provides a reminder that we can trust our lives to Jesus. We can rest in Him and sleep in peace.

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# When God Is Silent

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 2 CHRONICLES 32

God wanted to see what was in Hezekiah's heart – not what he wanted others to *think* but what *really* was important to him, what he *actually* believed. So He withdrew “*in order to test him.*”

This can happen in our lives, too. God always is with us, but He may want to see what is in our hearts. How does He do this? At times, He may seem silent or distant. He may not answer our prayers immediately or provide the direction we need right away.

How do we respond during these times? Become discouraged? Feel abandoned? Assume He will not answer our prayers?

The Bible assures us that God is with us even when He is silent. Through His silences, He determines our true character. In these situations, we are weighed in the balance. He is finding out what is in our minds and hearts and learning the real conditions of our beliefs and thoughts.

If it ever feels that God is silent, realize that He may have withdrawn from you for a season. But He never has abandoned or forgotten you. He may be testing you to see what is in your heart.

Be sure you are ready for these tests. Always remember to stay faithful to His Word. Continue to declare His promises to be true. And realize that if you obey Him and remain faithful, He will pour out even greater blessings.

Compose a prayer to God asking Him to search your heart for hidden issues.

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SATURDAY

January

29

*When ambassadors arrived from Babylon to ask about the remarkable events that had taken place in the land, God withdrew from Hezekiah in order to test him and to see what was really in his heart.*

2 Chronicles 32:31 NLT

## PRAYER:

Father, search my heart and help me to be pure in Your sight. I want to be faithful. I know You are with me. In Jesus' name, amen.

SUNDAY

January

30

*When he was in distress, he appeased the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers... [God] was moved by him and heard his pleading... Then Manasseh knew that the LORD is God.*

2 Chronicles 33:12-13 NASB

## PRAYER:

Father, I commit these people to You: \_\_\_\_\_ . I believe You can turn their lives around. Nothing is impossible for You. I trust You! In Jesus' name, amen.

Reflect on the people you know who need to repent. How can you encourage them this week?

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# Turn from a Life of Sin

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 2 CHRONICLES 33

Just twelve when he became king of Judah, Manasseh's reign was dominated by wickedness. He worshiped false gods and even practiced witchcraft, encouraging this ungodly behavior among his people. God warned him about the consequences of his actions, but Manasseh paid no attention.

Then Manasseh was taken to Babylon, bound with chains. While he was in exile, something remarkable happened! He "*humbled himself greatly*" before God, who answered his prayer of repentance. Manasseh's eyes were opened to the impact of his mistakes. He realized the importance of living according to God's Word. He was given a second chance when he was returned to Jerusalem. This time he sought to serve God.

What an *amazing* turnaround! Despite the evil Manasseh had done in the past, God was moved by his genuine *repentance* and *humility*.

As Manasseh's life demonstrates, God has given us His Word. He promises us blessings if we obey, but He warns there are consequences if we live in sin. We always reap what we sow. But this story also demonstrates that God can *change any life* – even a person as wicked as Manasseh.

This turnaround is possible even for people dominated by evil who live ungodly lives. He can turn around *any* situation and the life of any person who repents and calls on Him.

Do you know someone living far from God? Who needs to change? Commit them to God and pray for a turnaround. Have faith!

# How We Finish

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 2 TIMOTHY 4

Unfinished. A word used to describe a great symphony written by Franz Schubert. Today admired as one of history's elite composers, Schubert gained little recognition during his life.

Born on this day in 1797, he died when he was only thirty-one years old. Few people living at that time could have imagined what musical riches he left behind. Gradually, often by accident, compositions were discovered. Some had been bundled in cupboards and cellars. His *Unfinished Symphony* was found in a chest. Five symphonies were unearthed in a publisher's house in 1867.

As his music was discovered, later generations marveled at the quality of his work, amazed at how few of his contemporaries had recognized his genius. But they also considered the tragedy of his life. How could a man so brilliant have been so unappreciated and overlooked?

Schubert left an incredible legacy of music, but it is hard not to think about the loneliness of his life. Despite all he wrote, he left so much unfinished. One wonders what more he could have done.

Each of us can consider the fruit of our lives. Indeed, what is God's purpose for us? Toward the end of his life, Paul could state with confidence that he had "*finished the race.*" He was sure he had been faithful to *complete* God's calling.

Think about *your* life? Have you left anything unfinished? Are you finishing the race that God has designed for you?

Journal about journeying through life well, not leaving things undone.

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MONDAY

January

31

*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.*

2 Timothy 4:7 NKJV

## PRAYER:

Father, I commit my life to You. I desire to please You. Help me finish the race you have prepared for me. In Jesus' name, amen.

LANE ENDS  
MERGE  
RIGHT



by Ben Cerullo

# UNITE Your Life with JESUS!

## 4 Keys to Enjoying Your Savior More

I love the old hymn that says, “Trust and obey, for there’s no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.” I’m convinced this is God’s objective for you today: to impact the world by being “happy in Jesus.”

But it’s crucial to understand that the Christian life cannot be lived by studying what Jesus did and trying to duplicate it in your own strength. Rather than just being a script to read and act out, the Christian life is actually uniting your life with Christ’s... to draw near to your Savior. And it can only happen through the power of the Holy Spirit.

That’s why Paul makes the amazing statement, “*When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory*”

(Colossians 3:4). Jesus doesn’t just *give us* life, He **IS** our life! In fact, Paul says, “*It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me*” (Galatians 2:20).

Jesus is the lover of our souls, and He wants us to respond to that love by cultivating an intimate relationship with Him. The dictionary defines intimate as “informal warmth or privacy and marked by a warm friendship developing through long association.” No one else will have a relationship with Jesus just like yours, but we’re all promised that He will draw near to us when we make a commitment to draw near to Him (James 4:8).

There’s not a formula for having a unique, profound personal relationship with Jesus, but the Bible gives us patterns and examples to follow:

## 1. Regularly enter God's presence.

Just as with any earthly relationship, you must spend time with the Lord. The more you draw close to Him and hear His heartbeat, the deeper your love for Him will become. The Bible reveals the way to do this: *“Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name”* (Psalm 100:4 NIV). Worship is a necessary daily habit!

## 2. Develop a heart of devotion.

God-honoring, Christ-centered, Spirit-led worship always involves expressions of gratitude, awe, and devotion. Like the angels in Heaven, true worshipers will have lives that declare, *“You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power”* (Revelation 4:11). Worship from our lips is merely the outward evidence of our inward devotion and passionate love for Christ.

## 3. Honor the Lord 24/7.

For many people, worship is confined to singing praise songs or hymns during a church service. But it's meant to be SO much more than that. The Bible tells us, *“Whatever you do, do ALL to the glory of God”* (1 Corinthians 10:31). This means our love for Jesus should be visible in every encounter we have and in every activity we engage in.

## 4. Hang out with others who are passionate for Jesus.

It's important to fellowship with people who share our love for the Lord. Jesus promised us, *“Where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them”* (Matthew 18:20). And as Hebrews 10:24 reminds us, *“Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.”* Nurturing relationships with fellow believers is a vital ingredient for our spiritual growth and effectiveness.

My friend, I pray that your relationship with Jesus grows richer, deeper, and stronger every day. He passionately loves you – as shown by His death on the cross. Choose today to draw near to Jesus and cultivate a passionate love for the Savior of your soul. ❖

# Homelessness to Happiness



Headed down a dead-end road,  
Crystal found God's hope through Inspiration TV!

After years of crying out to God, Crystal found herself at a dark, hopeless dead end. Alone in a hotel room with enough drugs to overdose, she felt desperate and alone. “I had lost everything. I had no hope.” Miraculously, God provided a way out through an Inspiration TV program.

“I’d been in church and around God for decades, but never felt God’s presence like I did that night. Suddenly I realized God had been trying to answer my prayers for years, but I’d been ignoring everything He said and blaming Him for my choices.

“I began doing the things I knew I should do...going to church, putting God first. The blessings came so fast, they took my breath away! God is doing miracles in my world through you – even though you’re in another state. I’m excited to learn every day, so I can know more about this

wonderful Savior who has helped me move from homelessness to happiness.

“I’m thankful for all the things you’ve taught me. I don’t know where I’d be without my daily devotions and videos. I’m learning to be patient, knowing I can work through problems with Jesus – and if I stumble, He will help me back up. I’ve learned tithes and offerings aren’t about giving money – they’re about the Holy Spirit working through ME – little, old me. It feels so good to write a check to help others know God more!

“Inspiration Ministries taught me how to be part of an online family, and now I’ve found a local church that helps me in other ways. I thought I would never recover, but now I know my brokenness was so God could build me up to what I was meant to be!” ❖

Want to know more about Inspiration TV’s ministry?  
Visit [InspirationTV.com](https://www.InspirationTV.com).



# A Merry Heart...

does good, like medicine. – Proverbs 17:22

## Actual signs in stores and newspaper story titles.

- Toilet out of order. Please use floor below.
- Sign at a health food shop: "Closed due to sickness."
- Outside of a secondhand shop: "We exchange anything: bicycles, washing machines, etc. Why not bring your wife along and get a wonderful bargain."
- Man struck by lightning faces battery charge.
- Astronaut takes blame for gas in spacecraft
- Typhoon rips through cemetery. Hundreds dead.



**At the beginning of this year I made a New Year's resolution to lose 10 pounds...**  
...Only 20 pounds to go!

**I have only two New Year's resolutions:**

To get back into the shape I was in before the accident... and to stop referring to the fact that I eat too much junk food as "the accident."



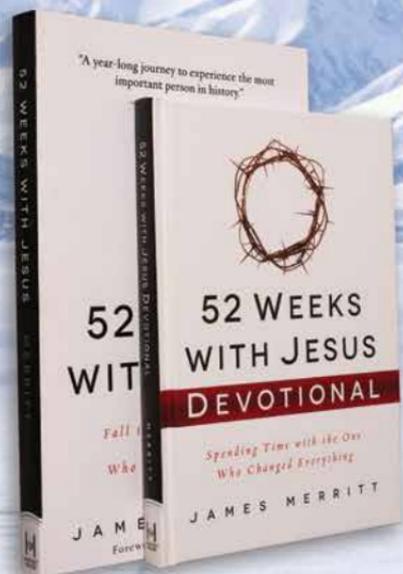
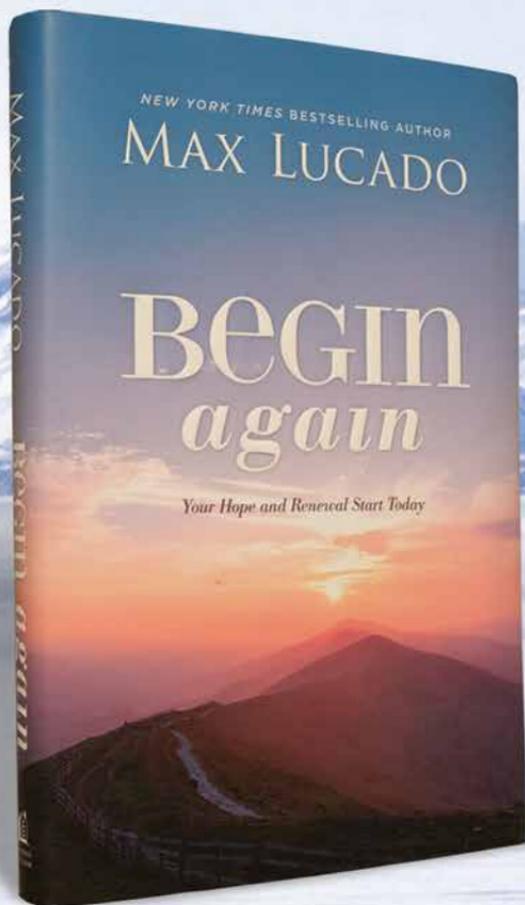
Got some clean, Christian humor you'd like to share?  
Email it to: [MerryHeart@inspiration.org](mailto:MerryHeart@inspiration.org)

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