

JANUARY 2023

# inspiration

M A G A Z I N E

## OVERCOMER

A male athlete with a prosthetic running blade is captured in mid-stride on a red running track. He is wearing a blue and white singlet and blue shorts. The background shows a blurred stadium setting under a clear blue sky.

Breathe in  
God's Presence

Infection  
Protection

Are You on the  
Lamb's List?



PAGE 10

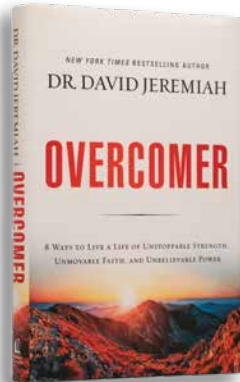


### Overcomer!

Do the challenges of life have a chokehold on you? David's article on **page 5** will inspire you to press forward and claim victory over any obstacles you face.



PAGE 12



**Turn to page 28** for details about our **THANK YOU GIFT** this month. Act quickly – our supplies are limited.



PAGE 16

## EDITOR'S CORNER



Roone Acree

When you look at a blank calendar, do you see possibilities? Or does it make you worry and fret? This month's *Inspiration Magazine* proclaims the assurance of God's sufficiency. No matter what you encounter in the coming year, God can lift you above it all!

As God's child, it's your birthright to live victoriously. But you can't win a victory without engaging in a battle. Your Heavenly Father steps into your hard times to reveal His love and power. So, grab a cup of coffee, open up your magazine, and get equipped to live out your destiny in 2023! Let me know how *Inspiration Magazine* can best encourage you. Email me at [editor@inspiration.org](mailto:editor@inspiration.org).

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David was leading a life of perversion and self-destruction – until a prison stay opened the door to his mind and heart.



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# GOD'S SECRETS *to your* TURNAROUND



## Is It Time for a Turnaround?

January 9 – February 10

Perhaps you're going through a difficult season with your finances or family relationships. Maybe it's a health crisis or addiction tormenting you. There is hope!

David Cerullo offers you practical solutions in **God's Secrets to Your Turnaround**. Tune in and step toward **God's good plans** for you.

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# Six Keys to Being an OVERCOMER



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



Throughout history, the greatest heroes have been those who've had the greatest challenges to overcome. But isn't it curious that while everyone wants to be an overcomer, we're typically upset when we're actually given something to *overcome*?

That's exactly what happened to Jesus' disciples when suddenly confronted with "a furious squall" on the Sea of Galilee one day (Mark 4:35-41 NIV).

Perhaps you're facing a storm of a different kind today. Not "a furious squall," but rather a furious boss, spouse, child, or creditor. Or maybe you're struggling against stormy winds in your health or emotions.

The tempest on the Sea of Galilee that day was so fierce that the boat was "nearly swamped" (v. 37), and the terrified disciples thought they were going to drown. Life's storms seem to pop up when you least expect them. When you're in the middle of a storm that seems like it's about to sink your boat, your first reaction is likely to be the same as the disciples' that day: fear! Yet God's message to you in this story – and throughout the pages of Scripture – is to FEAR NOT.

This brief story contains six powerful lessons for how we can not only survive the storms of life but even be *better off* because of them:



*The storm reveals how dangerous it is to assume Jesus is in your boat when He truly isn't.*

**1 Remember the promise.** The story begins with Jesus saying, “*Let us go over to the other side*” (v. 35). If the disciples had been paying attention, they would have noticed Jesus’ resolve to bring them **OVER**, not to let them go **UNDER**! And I’m convinced He has the same plan for *you* today. He didn’t say you would drown on the way to your destination; He said you would arrive there. So no matter how scary the storm may seem, you can be confident that He will bring you safely to “*the other side*.”

**2 Leave the crowd behind.** If you’re truly an overcomer, it’s unlikely you’ll also be Mr. or Ms. Popularity. Verse 36 describes the disciples as “*leaving the crowd behind*.” Why is that significant? Because a lot of people in “*the crowd*” aren’t on track to be overcomers. They’re content to live mediocre, uneventful lives. Rather than risk facing any storms on their journey to the other side of the lake, they would prefer to eliminate the risks and take the *safer* route – just trying to *walk* around the obstacle that’s keeping them from reaching “*the other side*.” But remember, you’ll never make a significant impact if you refuse to take risks and venture out into the deeper waters.

**3 Make sure you’re taking Jesus with you – on the INSIDE.** This is so basic, yet so easy to overlook. One day even His father and mother forgot to bring Jesus along with them (Luke 2:41-50). But here we’re told the “*disciples took him along*” (v. 36). If you’re going through a storm, it sure is good to have Jesus in the boat with you.

It’s fascinating that “*there were also other boats with him*” (v. 36). Jesus was only **IN** the one boat, but other boats were following along nearby. This is an apt depiction of people who attend church or other religious events to get in the *vicinity* of

Christ, yet they’ve never really invited Him into *their own* boat. Until a storm hits, they feel safe enough with the status quo, but the storm reveals how dangerous it is to *assume* Jesus is in your boat when He truly isn’t. When you’re going through rough waters, you don’t just want the Savior outside your boat – you desperately need Him on the *inside*.

**4 Don’t doubt His love for you.** Seeing Jesus asleep amid the storm, the disciples reacted the same way we would. Waking Him up, they questioned His love for them: “*Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?*” (v. 38). Their logic was flawed, but we’ve all wondered the same thing at times: “Lord, if You *really* loved us, You wouldn’t allow us to go through storms like this!” But as the old children’s song says, “Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.” Instead of doubting His love while we’re experiencing a storm, we should allow Him to show Himself strong and faithful **in** the storm.

**5 Be patient when you’re halfway across.** When Jesus told you He would get you to the other side of the lake, He meant it. But being in transition is difficult, and sometimes the journey lasts longer than we would like. At times it can even be tempting to *go back* to the shore we came from instead of *forward* to the other side. Yet we must not lose heart when we’re halfway there.

**6 Stir up your faith.** After Jesus calmed the storm, He asked His disciples, “*Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?*” (v. 40). Although the disciples had to awaken *Jesus* in this story, that’s not the message for us, for Jesus certainly isn’t asleep today. Instead, it’s *our faith* in Him that must be awakened. So take a moment to let God speak to your heart right now. Is there some step of faith He’s calling you to take? Some seed He’s leading you to sow? Some new direction

*It can be tempting to go back to the shore we came from instead of forward to the other side.*

*Is there some step of faith He's calling you to take? Some seed He's leading you to sow? Some new direction that will unlock more of His favor and blessings in your life?*

that will unlock more of His favor and blessings in your life?

The prophet Isaiah cried out to God in despair: *"There is no one who calls on Your name, who rouses himself to take hold of You"* (Isaiah 64:7 ESV). Isaiah's observation holds a vital key for whatever breakthrough you may be seeking in your life today: You must rouse yourself to take hold of the Lord!

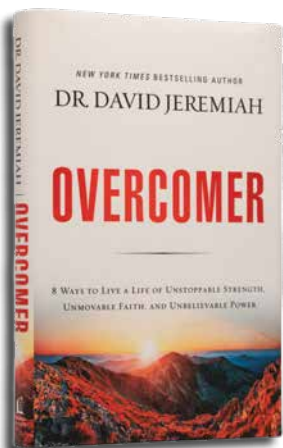
You see, storms can be our friend rather than our enemy because they're meant to cause us to awaken our faith. Rather than being a one-time proposition, this is something we must do regularly. Paul told Timothy to *"kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you"* (2 Timothy 1:6 NASB). Other translations say we must *"stir up"* (NKJV) or *"fan into flame"* (NIV) the gifts and callings of God in our lives.

My friend, God is calling you to be an overcomer, not a casualty or a victim. When you trust the Lord and apply these six keys, life's storms will always lift you higher.

God bless you!

*David*

P.S. Turn to **page 28** to see the powerful THANK YOU GIFT I want to send you this month in appreciation of your faithful partnership. I selected it to help you overcome any difficult trials you might be facing today in your health, finances, family, or emotions.



"I give Jehovah God Almighty thanks for saving me and destroying spiritual warfare in my life in Jesus Christ's holy name." – Rudy S., Florida



"I really see Jesus in my life because I was in the world of darkness and doing a lot of evil. Thanks for Inspiration's good work." – Owusu S., Ghana



"I was about to commit suicide, then I came across your website. It comforted me, and I felt relief. As I go on reading daily inspiration, I am growing so strong." – Juma, Kenya



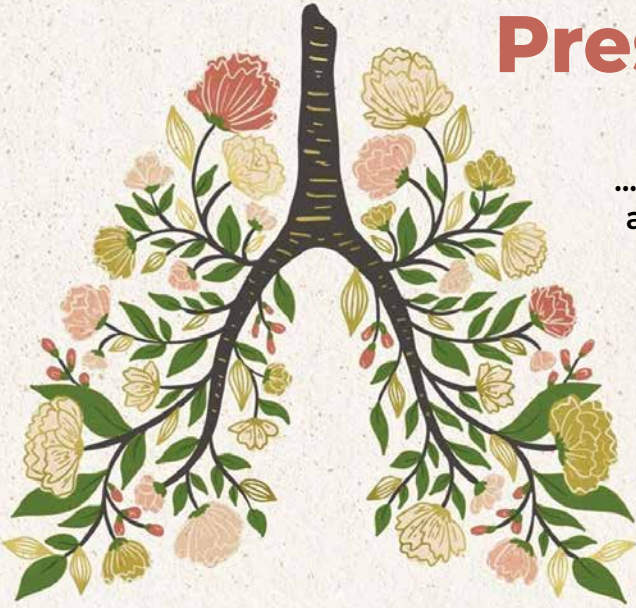
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# Breathe in God's Presence



...and exhale the anxieties of life!

Breath prayers have changed me. They are my lifeline when I walk through dark and difficult days. They comfort me, not just in times of high anxiety but on any day, strengthening both my body and soul by helping me tuck important truths in my heart.

Breath prayers are not a cure for anxiety, nor are they a replacement for professional medical treatment or therapy. But they can be a powerful tool to add to your mental health toolkit.

Anxiety doesn't have to trigger you to spiral into panic, but it can instead trigger you to turn to Christ in prayer. So when anxiety begins to press in, try a *Breath Prayer*:

*Breathe in deeply.* Things may not feel okay right now, but that's okay because God is still with you.

*Breathe out slowly.* No need to rush. God is in control. He knows what He is doing. You are safe and held and loved.

*Pray Scripture.* As you breathe, meditate on a truth from God's Word. For example, with Psalm 23, you would focus on "*The LORD is my Shepherd*" as you *inhale* – and on "*I have all that I need*" as you *exhale*.

*Repeat.* Continue the prayer as many times as you need to until your anxiety eases, your body and brain calm, and your soul and mind come back into alignment with Christ and His love for you.

You are created for so much more than an anxious life full of fear and worry – you are called to an abundant life of peace and joy as you are transformed by Christ and your mind is renewed day by day.

Anxiety is not an enemy you need to fight. It is an opportunity to slow down and invite Christ into your struggle, to breathe deeply in His presence, and let His peace enter into all your broken places.

By turning your thoughts to truth and reorienting your heart to Christ through prayer, you participate in the work of the Holy Spirit and "*let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think*" (Romans 12:2 NLT).

## OVERCOME ANXIETY: A Breath Prayer to Practice

Anxiety can feel like a storm inside you. Thick clouds of fear fill your mind as showers of sorrow and suffering spill from your heart and the winds of uncertainty blow in from every side. It's easy to feel tossed on the waves, drowning in a raging sea of worry or pain.

But God is powerful. With a word, He can calm the waves. With a breath, He can still the storms. His presence alone turns thunder to a whisper and crashing waves into hushed silence. The same God who calms the storms of the sea can calm your heart today. The waves of your circumstances may keep rising, and the thunder of fear may continue to boom, but there can be peace and calm in your soul when you focus on the One who is with you rather than the storm that surrounds you.

What waves are crashing into you today? What thunder is drowning out His voice? Name the storm you're in; then trust that God has the power to calm it to a whisper. And trust that if He doesn't calm the storm, He will calm you through the storm. He's riding those waves with you, right by your side (Psalm 107:28-29).

**Inhale:** *You still the storms to a whisper.*

**Exhale:** *You hush the waves of the sea.*



**Jennifer Tucker** is a passionate advocate for mental health, an accomplished illustrator, and graphic designer.

Excerpt from *Breath as Prayer: Calm Your Anxiety, Focus Your Mind, and Renew Your Soul*, by Jennifer Tucker. Copyright 2022 Thomas Nelson, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers. Reprinted by permission.





# Infection Protection

Guard your spiritual health by putting on God's armor.

Satan's first objective is to blind the mind of the unbelieving (2 Corinthians 4:3-4). When that fails, his next objective is to deceive, tempt, and accuse believers. Satan's aim is to prove that Christianity doesn't work, that God's Word isn't true, and that nothing really happened when we were born again. Because our struggle is against spiritual forces of wickedness, we need to know how to protect ourselves.

Westerners have a strange reaction to the notion that unseen demons are present, but so are germs, which they can't see either. Approximately 200 years ago, we didn't even know that germs existed. Doctors didn't wear surgical masks, sterilize their equipment, scrub before surgery, or use antibiotics. Consequently, a lot of people got sick, and the average person died before they were 50. Now that we know there are germs, what should we do? If we become germ-oriented and start looking for them, we will become hypochondriacs. The appropriate response is to live a healthy life. Our immune system will protect us if we get enough sleep, exercise regularly, and eat a healthy diet.

There are demons in this world! So, we must live a righteous life. Yet if that is all we have to

do, why do we need to even know about them? For the same reason we need to know there are germs. If there were no evil spirits, there would be no need to put on the armor of God, to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, to stand firm, and resist the enemy. Ignorance and passive resistance will leave a lot of people in bondage, sick, and dying (physically and spiritually).

When we put on the armor of God, we are putting on the Lord Jesus Christ:

*So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh (Romans 13:12-14 NIV).*

We are only vulnerable when we live according to the flesh, which is why we are to make no provision for the flesh. Satan has

nothing on Christ (John 14:30), and to the extent that we put on Christ, the evil one cannot touch us (1 John 5:18). There is no physical sanctuary or place where we are spiritually protected, and there is no time when it is safe to take off the armor of God. Our only sanctuary is our identity and position in Christ (Ephesians 6:10).

Putting on the armor of God requires an active participation on our part. We cannot passively take our place in Christ. As Paul describes the armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-18 NIV), he admonishes us to "put on" (v. 11), "take [our] stand" (v. 11), "stand firm" (v. 14), "take up" (v. 16), "take" (v. 17), "pray" (v. 18), and "be alert" (v. 18).

*Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground (v. 13).*

The purpose of armor is to stop penetration, and we become vulnerable if we do not assume our responsibility to stand firm in our faith. ❖

**Putting on the armor of God requires an active participation on our part.**



**Dr. Neil Anderson** is a best-selling author as well as the founder and president emeritus of Freedom in Christ Ministries, an international ministry that leads believers to abundant life in Christ.

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# Hoovey

A Midwestern family's life is turned upside down when rising basketball star Hoovey collapses on the court. Will he ever play ball again? Stars Cody Linley and Lauren Holly.

Saturday, Jan. 14 at 9 p.m. ET  
Sunday, Jan. 15 at 5:30 p.m. ET



# SPORTS



### The Price of Fame

Ted DiBiase, *The Million Dollar Man*, was one of pro wrestling's best. But there was a price for that fame. This is the story of Ted's rise, fall, and redemption, with cameos from Roddy Piper, Mick Foley, and more.

Saturday, January 14 at 2 p.m. ET



### 23 Blast

When high school football star Travis goes blind, true friends help him find the courage to live the life he loves. Stars Mark Hapka, Fred Thompson, and Becky Ann Baker.

Saturday, January 21 at 9 p.m. ET  
Sunday, January 22 at 5:30 p.m. ET



### Greater

When Brandon Bullworth joined the Razorbacks as a walk-on, people laughed. But God had a destiny for Brandon, who became one of the greatest walk-ons in college football history.

Saturday, January 28 at 9 p.m. ET

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## God's Transforming Presence

The promises of God are a rock-solid foundation for every day of the year, and we're jumping into our 2023 series with the powerful promise of God's presence.

But first, let's be honest... God's presence doesn't always bring comfort. Many don't feel His presence. Some don't want God's authority. Others don't trust Him because they're angry that an *all-powerful, all-loving* God allows evil and pain. Many ask, "What good is His presence if life still hurts?"

That is an excellent question that opens the way to truly treasuring His promised presence. In fact, the willingness of God to be present in our pain is the greatest proof of His love! The presence of God despite our rejection of His ways and our accusations against

His character reveals the almost incomprehensible beauty of His nature. This Creator – who wanted only to love us – accepts our failures, embraces our pain, and gently, persistently calls us to turn to Him, the Giver and Sustainer of life.

As God waits for us to obey His voice, He doesn't just sit idly by, observing us in a disconnected way. He enters our pain. God allows Himself to be vulnerable to the damage we experience, feeling our hurt with us and catching our tears in a bottle. How many friends do you have who will "*sit in the mess with you?*" Many want to swoop in and be the hero who saves you from your distress, but few are willing to walk with you while you find your way. Jesus is that kind of friend!

While God's presence provides us with the possibility of triumph, He doesn't just provide us with an easy out from our problems. He honors our potential, trusting us to find His solutions by calling us to come closer. Isn't that beautiful – it far exceeds a simple escape plan!

Every parent knows it's easier to do a task than have your child do it – but the only way a child gains skills and strength is trying, failing, and trying again! Our Heavenly Father patiently sits with us, sharing our pain, as we endure the struggles needed to prepare for eternity.

From Genesis to Revelation, God expresses His desire for a loving relationship with each one of us. His longing for our love compelled Him to speak life into being even though He knew the horrors to come. That same love propelled Him to enter fallen creation as a vulnerable baby and even face the torture of crucifixion, so He could overcome the damage *we caused* and restore us to Himself. Through it all, He maintains His promise to be present in our lives – proving His enduring love for you and me.

Read and meditate on one verse a week about the presence of God and tell us how focusing on His presence changes your life!

[inspiration.org/my-story](https://inspiration.org/my-story)

### Week One

*"It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed."*

(Deuteronomy 31:8 ESV)

### Week Two

*"Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you."*

(Hebrews 13:5 ESV)

### Week Three

*"Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."*

(Genesis 28:15 ESV)

### Week Four

*"And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

(Matthew 28:20 ESV)

# Are You on the Lamb's List?



Our earthly journey of faith prepares us for God's eternal rewards.

by Ben Cerullo

Do you remember the movie *Schindler's List*? It's an inspiring story of how one man used his personal influence to keep thousands of Polish Jews from Hitler's death camps.

It's also the story of man's limitations. By the end of the war, Schindler was running for his life, and those he saved were left to find their own way. Separated from loved ones, hungry, sick, and destitute, those who were set free had no choice but to return to a hostile and brutal world.

Aren't you glad our Christian salvation isn't like that?

Jesus didn't just make a way for us to get to Heaven and then say, "Figure it out." He expressed confidence in the knowledge of His disciples by telling them, "*You know the way*" (John 14:4 NLT), and then He assured them with the words, "*I am with you always, even to the end of the age*" (Matthew 28:20).

I take great comfort in that.

As the years go by, I more fully realize that life has both earthly and eternal implications. God's written Word is our map, so we can *know the way*. Feeding on the Word of God strengthens us to travel a life path that leads to victory over the assaults of this hostile world. Our earthly journey prepares us for eternity.

Always within us, the Living Word lights our path so we can take the steps we need *each* moment! His presence helps us live our lives as He did – accomplishing the will of the Father. Human nature tempts us to focus on our own will, but learning to treasure the presence of Jesus produces an earthly life with eternal prosperity!

Schindler added names to his employees list to save earthly lives. But when Jesus adds you to the Lamb's list, the results are far more glorious – abundant earthly lives producing an eternal harvest. ❖

## Always Serving

BIBLE READING: MATTHEW 23

When this year ends, what will other people say about you and how you spent your time and energy? What will God say?

Jesus provided a *practical* goal that applies to you and *everyone* else. Simply, we should approach every project with the attitude of a *servant* – not to exalt ourselves, but to be humble in our relationship with others and God. We are to be the best servants we can be, no matter how we rank, and no matter our role.

Applying the golden rule, doing unto others what we want them to do to us can be helpful (Matthew 7:12). We are to be *thankful* in every task (Ephesians 5:20) and *humble* ourselves in God's sight (James 4:10).

Many take a different approach. For them, the overriding goal will be to gain riches, get attention, win awards, advance in their careers, experience pleasures, make special purchases, or add to their resources.

Regardless of our external conditions, Jesus reminded us that those who exalt themselves will be humbled. Instead, we should trust God to reward us in His time and in His way.

As you approach this new year, ask God to help you approach life with the attitude of a servant. Let this permeate everything you do and shape every relationship – with friends and family, neighbors, other believers, the old and young, rich and poor, every project, and people of every political persuasion.

How can you practically humble yourself to serve others this week?

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SUNDAY

January

1

*The greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.*

Matthew 23:11-12 NIV

### PRAYER:

Father, I humble myself before You. Help me to have the attitude of a servant in everything I do. I seek to serve You. In Jesus' name, amen.



*Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.*

Psalms 119:11

# Year of the Bible

BIBLE READING: PSALM 119:1-16

The Bible is packed with powerful principles, insights that can guide us, wisdom to help make decisions, and truths to shape our lives. But we can't receive these benefits unless we *know* the Word.

On the surface, this can seem like a daunting task. Looking at the Bible, we can be intimidated by its length, complexity, number of books, and verses. But the task doesn't seem so overwhelming if we break this down into smaller parts. All it takes to read the Bible in a year is to read a few chapters every day.

Reading the Bible is a discipline that can change your life. Many guides are available that provide daily reading goals. You also can just read a few chapters a day, beginning with Genesis and continuing through Revelation.

As you read, ask God for discernment and understanding. Don't just read, but *think* about what you read. *Meditate* on a verse or passages, for example, a passage from your daily reading. *Pray* about the passage, asking God for insights to help you understand the meaning. Then, *reflect* on the passage throughout the day. And, as God leads, memorize verses. These memorized verses will come to mind when you most need them.

Make this a year with a renewed commitment to read the Bible. Pray about the Word. Study the Word. Meditate on the Word. Apply its truths in your life.

**PRAYER:**

Father, I desire to fill my life with Your Word. Teach me. Give me insights. Help me put Your Word into practice. In Jesus' name, amen.

What is your Bible reading plan for this coming year?

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# From Beginning to End

BIBLE READING: DEUTERONOMY 11

For many Israelites, the future seemed uncertain. Preparing to enter the Promised Land, they still remembered the warnings given earlier by men who spied out the land. They had warned that the land was filled with giants and obstacles that seemed impossible to overcome. The thoughts of these giants caused the Israelites to react with fear and doubt.

But Moses wanted them to focus not on the giants but God's on promises. They needed to remember all He had done for them and realize that His eyes were on the Promised Land, from the *first* of the year until the *last*. He would be with them when they set foot in the land. He still would be with them every step of the way. Because of His presence, they could move forward with confidence.

This promise applies to us as well. Just like those Israelites, we can know that God is with us *every* moment of every day, through every situation, in good weather and bad. He's with us when we face opposition and experience problems, when we feel secure, and when we face uncertainty.

As you begin this new year, take this opportunity to look back and remember how God has been with you. He was with you at the beginning, and He is with you today. And He will be with you every day of this new year. You can trust Him. His eyes are on you!

Reflect on God's presence at the beginning of a fresh, new year.

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*The land which you go to possess is not like the land of Egypt. [...] The eyes of the LORD your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year.*

Deuteronomy 11:10, 12

**PRAYER:**

Father, I commit this coming year to You. I know You are with me. Thank You that Your eyes are on me everywhere. In Jesus' name, amen.

*Is there a thing of which it may be said, See, this is new? It has already been, in the vast ages of time [recorded or unrecorded] which were before us.*

Ecclesiastes 1:10 AMPC

# Learn from the Past

BIBLE READING: ECCLESIASTES 1

The future presents many mysteries. We wonder what is to come, with an attitude shaped by our worldview and personality as well as our spiritual condition and relationship with God.

In some ways we can anticipate coming days with excitement, looking forward to the possibilities – the opportunities that are unfolding and the trends we find encouraging. In other ways, the future can seem frightening. The prospects can seem uncertain. With so many unknowns, we can find ourselves perplexed, asking questions, or worried about conditions we find troubling.

As we think about the future, the Bible gives us an important insight that can give us perspective: Remembering the past can help us approach the future.

The Bible reminds us that God looks at our lives from an *eternal* perspective. He sees patterns that unfold generation after generation. He sees young people repeating mistakes made by older generations. He sees what happens when people don't listen to Him and when they apply His principles and learn from the past.

We see why it is so important to not only know the Bible, but also to be sensitive to the lessons from the past.

As you begin a new year, seek to remember the lessons of the past. Renew your confidence in God. Ask Him to give you understanding. Commit to studying His Word, applying His principles, approaching the future with humility, and seeking God's wisdom and insights.

What new opportunities are you looking forward to this coming year?

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# Beginning with God

BIBLE READING: PSALM 5

Carolina Sandell Berg knew how to write music filled with spiritual impact. She gained this sensitivity through the influence of her father, a leader in revivals that swept through Sweden during the nineteenth century.

One of her most beloved hymns was called "I With Thee Would Begin." Here she described why it was important to *begin* each day with God by praying, reading His Word, and filling our minds with His promises. These principles also are true for the new year.

This dedication points us in the right direction. But we also need to stay in communion with Him, continually conscious of His presence. Remember the truths in His Word. This foundation can help transform us, so others can see the difference He makes. They will desire to know Him more intimately for themselves and find refuge in Him.

Having begun with Him, we need to close each day with Him. This allows Him to give us perspective, to remind us of what we have learned. It also helps us realize how to rest in His presence and give us His peace in every situation.

These are principles to remember today and throughout this new year. Commit every project to God. Stay in communion with Him. Pray and seek His presence. Ask Him for discernment and wisdom. Make your relationship with Him the foundation of your life. Begin and end with Him.

How can you practically plan to begin and end each day with God?

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*My voice You shall hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning I will direct it to You, and I will look up.*

Psalms 5:3

## PRAYER:

Father, I begin this day with You. Guide me today and throughout the coming year. I trust in You. In Jesus' name, amen.



*The LORD will command His lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me – A prayer to the God of my life.*

Psalms 42:8

## Another Year

BIBLE READING: PSALM 42

Primarily a lawyer in what today is southern Germany, Johann Hertzog composed just one hymn written in German that was translated into English: “And Now Another Day Is Gone.” According to Hertzog’s brother, this hymn was written one evening while the author was still a student at Wittenberg University.

This hymn reflects the pressures he must have faced and how his faith in God gave him the perspective and strength he needed every day to find peace. Hertzog realized he could trust God, knowing that He never rested. His prayer was that God would safeguard him day and night and keep him free from danger.

He knew that through his faith in God, he could have a fresh start each morning. He could deal with the pressures of the past through prayer and His relationship with God. His commitment was to make a temple in his heart for God where he could commune with Him. Ultimately, he was confident that he would spend eternity with God, forever singing His praises.

These same promises are true for you. Whatever has happened in the past, and no matter what you face in the future, you can trust everything to God. He can give you rest and peace. He can give you the wisdom to understand the present and how to walk in the future. And He can take away your burdens if you trust Him.

### PRAYER:

Father, thank You for giving me peace. I trust my life to You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

What issues are you facing right now that you need to entrust to God’s care?

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## Eternal Life

BIBLE READING: TITUS 3

According to recent research, most Americans are uncertain about the reality of eternal life. Is this just wishful thinking? Speculation?

People hold to a variety of theories and beliefs. Some think there is an afterlife of some kind, but 10% believe there is no form of life after we die. One-fourth of people admit they have no idea what will happen after death.

To know the truth, we simply need to read the Bible. As Paul wrote, believers can “know that we will inherit eternal life.” More emphatically, the Bible confirms that Jesus has prepared a *glorious* place for us where we will spend eternity with Him (John 14:2). This is a *promise*.

Paul declared that when our earthly life is over, “We will have a house in heaven, an eternal body made for us by God himself” (2 Corinthians 5:1). Paul couldn’t even describe the glories of what awaits us: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Are you confident about *your* eternal destination? Are *you* sure you will spend eternity with God? Do you have doubts? You can be *confident* if you trust Him.

If you have doubts, be sure you are forgiven and clean in His sight. Spend time in prayer. Seek His wisdom and His perspective. Put your trust in Him. And believe His Word.

What are your thoughts about the home in Heaven God is creating for you?

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*He saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. [...] Because of his grace he made us right in his sight and gave us confidence that we will inherit eternal life.*

Titus 3:5, 7 NLT

### PRAYER:

Father, thank You that Jesus died for my sins. I believe He rose again and that I will live forever with You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

*Jesus...said to the paralyzed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven." [...] The scribes... "Who can forgive sins except God alone?" [...] He said to the paralyzed man, "I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet, and go home."*

Mark 2:5-7, 10-11 NASB

### PRAYER:

Father, thank You for forgiving my sins. Thank You that I am free! Thank You for giving me health! In Jesus' name, amen.

Do you need to forgive someone else today?

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## Impact of Forgiveness

BIBLE READING: MARK 2

The paralyzed man needed to be healed. Yet before addressing his physical problems, Jesus first forgave his sins. To the scribes in the room, this was blasphemy!

Jesus asked if they thought it was easier to forgive sins or heal the man. The scribes might have thought there were degrees of difficulty. But Jesus demonstrated that, with Him, there was *no barrier*. He had *full authority* (vs. 9-10). As proof, He healed the man. He could both heal and forgive.

Jesus was demonstrating the connection between the physical and emotional parts of our lives. Today, doctors can confirm this connection. Recent studies reveal that unforgiveness causes stress and leads to emotional, physical, and mental problems. But forgiveness leads to healing.

For the sake of our health and our testimony, we need to seek forgiveness in our relationship with God. We are promised that if we confess our sins, He will forgive and cleanse us (1 John 1:9). This also is an important part of our relationships with others. As Jesus taught, we are to be forgiving people. If fact, before asking God for His forgiveness we first need to forgive others (Matthew 6:12).

Remember, there is no limit to the forgiveness process. No matter what we do, God is ready to forgive us. No matter how often someone sins against us, we are to forgive them (Matthew 18:21-22).

## Doing Nothing

BIBLE READING: 1 SAMUEL 7

The ark had been captured and the Israelites lamented this loss. Yet for a long time, they did *nothing*, finally acting after an amazing *20 years!*

From the message delivered through Samuel, it was clear they were guilty of *compromise*. Samuel promised God would deliver them but only if they *returned* to Him "*with all [their] heart*" (v. 3). The Israelites agreed, but it took years to become willing to change.

Finally, when they gathered for prayer, there was a spirit of repentance as they acknowledged their sins. But when the Philistines attacked, the Israelites demonstrated a lack of faith. They still were afraid.

They pleaded with Samuel to pray for them. After he cried to God again, He sent "*a great thunder*" that "*confused*" the Philistines, who were then routed (v. 10).

The actions of the Israelites demonstrated the horrible consequences of sin and what happens when we compromise and ignore God's Word. He *always* is ready to fight for His people. But we need to be clean in His sight, repent of our sins, and commit to serving Him with our whole hearts.

Do you face problems? Do you need God's help? Don't delay or wallow in despair. Seek His discernment and help. Renew your relationship with Him. Make sure your heart is right before Him. Then call on Him with confidence. And be ready to step out in faith. Seek Him today!

What long-term problem do you need to resolve soon?

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*The men of Kiriath-jearim came and took the ark of the LORD... The time was long, for it was twenty years; and all the house of Israel mourned after the LORD.*

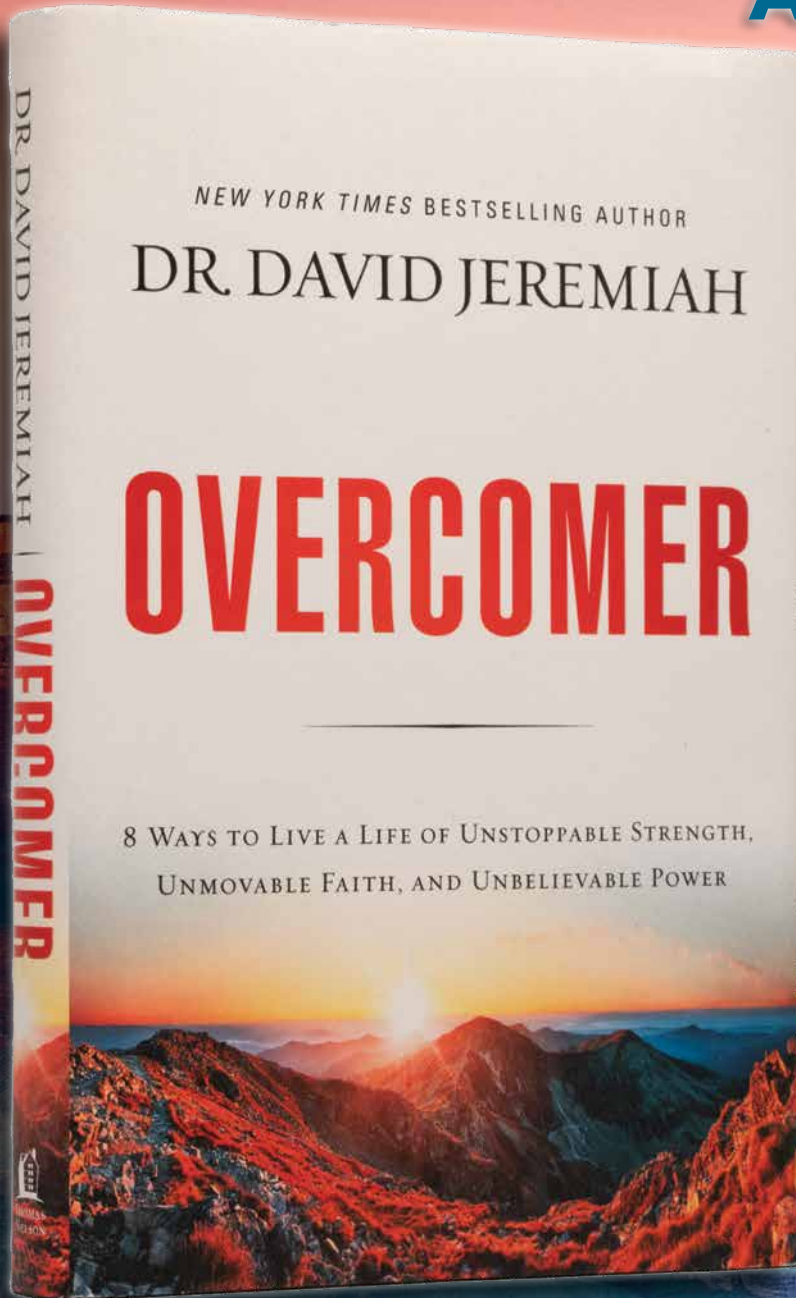
1 Samuel 7:1-2 NASB

### PRAYER:

Father, I commit these needs to You: \_\_\_\_\_ . Help me to be clean in Your sight. I trust You. Thank You for Your help! In Jesus' name, amen.



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*Samuel took a stone... and called its name Ebenezer, saying, "Thus far has the LORD helped us."*

1 Samuel 7:12

### PRAYER:

Father, I commit my life to You. Forgive my sins. Keep me from wandering. Thank You for providing everything I need. In Jesus' name, amen.

Reflect on what God's forgiveness feels like in your heart.

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## Wandering

BIBLE READING: 1 SAMUEL 7

Robert Robinson became a Christian when he was seventeen and later entered the ministry. A few years later, he wrote a hymn expressing what God meant to him: "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing."

Thankful for how he had been blessed, Robinson prayed, "Tune my heart to sing Thy grace; streams of mercy, never ceasing, call for songs of loudest praise." Quoting from 1 Samuel, he determined to seek God: "Here I raise my Ebenezer; here by Thy great help I've come." He knew that with God's help he would "arrive at home."

Through this hymn, Robinson admitted that he knew what it meant to struggle. He acknowledged that God had sought him when he was *wandering*. He still was "prone to wander." He needed God's help to avoid pitfalls. His prayer: "Here's my heart, oh, take and seal it for Thy courts above."

Late in life, he encountered a woman humming the melody of this hymn. In tears, he admitted that he was "the poor, unhappy man who wrote that hymn." He would give a "thousand worlds" to enjoy the feelings he had when he wrote that hymn. He needed to remember the message he had written.

When you find yourself struggling or wandering, remember the experience of Robert Robinson. Because of Jesus, we can be forgiven. He can restore us and seal our hearts. Commit your life to Him. He is the source of every blessing!

## Trust in the Savior

BIBLE READING: 2 SAMUEL 22

As chair of a mission society in Sweden, Otto Ottander was responsible for its monthly publication. In this position, he had the opportunity to read stories from his homeland and elsewhere.

He particularly was impacted by a story in an American newspaper about a brother and sister. They were caught in a narrow railroad tunnel through a mountain as two trains were about to meet. The girl hastily guided her brother to an indentation in the wall and cried out, "Keep close to the rock." The trains rushed by, and the children were unharmed.

Ottander realized this provided a picture of how believers can trust God for safety and deliverance. He developed this story into a hymn, appropriately called, "Trust in the Savior, O Precious Soul."

Drawing on the image of those children, Ottander described how we might be threatened with many kinds of danger but can be safe by trusting Jesus. We can bring Him our anguish, fears, and sorrows, and confess our sins, confident that He will give peace and release.

We may experience troubles on earth but need to remember that our lives here soon will be over, and "Jesus will guide us to Heaven's shore." He calls us to trust Him in any situation, confident He will hear us and bring us to safety.

Today, in whatever situations you face, remember that you can call on Jesus. Trust in Him.

When has God physically protected you from harm?

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*The God of my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge; my Savior, You save me from violence.*

2 Samuel 22:3

### PRAYER:

Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for Your protection. I trust in You. In Your name, amen.

*Jesus spoke to them again, saying, I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.*

John 8:12

## Light of the World

BIBLE READING: JOHN 8

As a young man, George Fox observed that many Christians didn't seem to be serious about their faith. They simply were going through the motions with a religion based on traditions and rituals. Many said they believed in God but acted as if they did not know Him.

Fox, who died in 1691, was bothered by this condition and sought God's perspective. He experienced a personal turning point when he realized that Jesus was not a character from history but a real person we can know intimately and personally. Fox did not just want to read or know *about* Jesus; he wanted to *know* Him for himself.

He dedicated his life to revealing Jesus as the Light of the world. Each of us can know Him individually. Fox felt his mission was "to turn people from darkness to the Light." Knowing the difference Jesus could make, Fox sought to help others experience the joy of salvation. Committed to a biblically based faith, he felt called "to direct people to the Spirit that gave forth the Scriptures."

Jesus still is the "*light of the world.*" As the Bible confirms, He wants to be *your* Light. He can reveal more of His truths and change your life. He can give you more of His wisdom and power. Don't be content with a second-hand experience. Get to know Him more intimately.

### PRAYER:

Father, thank You for sending Jesus to be my Light. Open my heart and reveal more of Your truths to me. In Jesus' name, amen.

What is your plan to get to know Jesus better this coming year?

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## A Real Relationship

BIBLE READING: ACTS 17

The church in seventeenth-century England was dominated by the state. Religion tended to be formal. George Fox became dissatisfied with this condition. For him, it was not enough just to read the Bible or go to church. He wanted a vital *relationship* with Jesus Himself.

One day, he had an experience that changed his life. Jesus became so real that his life was transformed. He dedicated himself to helping others know Jesus for themselves – *intimately and personally.*

This message angered some authorities. Several times Fox was imprisoned. In 1650, a judge *laughed* as he sentenced Fox on charges of blasphemy. The charge? He claimed that Jesus had taken away his sin, and that, in Christ, there was no sin. Fox told the judge to tremble in the fear of God. It wasn't enough to go to church or recite formal prayers. God desires that we follow Him and know Him, not just know about Him.

Refusing to compromise, Fox ceaselessly proclaimed the Gospel. As a result, he turned England upside down. Those who responded to his message called themselves Friends (Quakers). They had an enormous impact because of Fox's commitment to a *personal* relationship with Jesus. He was their *friend.*

Remember, you can have a personal relationship with Jesus. Spend time with Him. Read God's Word. Ask Him to speak to you, guide you, and reveal more of Himself to you.

What practical steps can you take to grow your relationship with God?

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*The God who made the world...is Lord of heaven and earth...nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things.*

Acts 17:24-25 NASB

### PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, I desire to know You more intimately. Teach me. Give me deeper insights into Your Word. Transform my life. In Your name, amen.



*In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence, and His children will have a place of refuge. The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to turn one away from the snares of death.*

Proverbs 14:26-27

### PRAYER:

Father, I place my confidence in You. I know You will guide me. Free me from doubt and uncertainty. Help me serve You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Journal about your level of confidence and its source.

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## Confidence

BIBLE READING: PROVERBS 14

In his book on the development of civilization, scholar Kenneth Clark described how *confidence* has been a major factor in many breakthroughs throughout history. Confidence provided fertile ground for creativity to flourish, for business to be conducted, and for exploration to take place.

At the same time, the *lack* of confidence has been a factor limiting exploration and discovery, holding back development, and spreading doubt and disbelief.

The same principles are true for our Christian lives. Without confidence, we can feel defeated and insecure, reluctant to take steps of faith. Without confidence, we are vulnerable to manipulation and deception, and more easily can become discouraged.

*Everything* changes when we are confident. But we need to be confident in God alone. People will fall short and fail us. But, as Solomon wrote, we can have strong confidence as we fear the Lord. We also need to realize that the devil continually seeks to undermine our confidence. He knows that if we are confident in God, we can accomplish great things for His kingdom. He wants us weak and filled with doubt.

Do you lack confidence? Do you feel inadequate? Right now, turn to God. He can give you *confidence* that He is with you. He loves you and has a plan for your life. He will protect and guide you. He wants to be your strength. Trust in Him. Let Him give you confidence!

## A Glad Heart

BIBLE READING: PROVERBS 15

A recent study confirmed that pessimists are more likely to develop depression than those with a positive attitude. According to the study, some people react to distressing events with anxiety. And those people with a pessimistic attitude are more likely to yield to these emotions.

The Bible tells us that when we are depressed, *everything* can seem dark. But when our hearts are filled with joy, that darkness lifts. If we have glad hearts, all of life can feel like “*a continual feast.*” With this attitude, we experience God’s presence in everything we do. There is no need for anxiety, fear, or doubt. He can give us joy no matter what is going on in the world.

Do you feel pessimistic about the future? About your life? About world conditions? About problems you face? Do you doubt that you can trust God? Doubt can lead to a life filled with anxious thoughts and foreboding. But He can deliver us from doubt, anxiety, and depression. If we trust Him, He can fill our hearts with gladness.

Right now, the choice is yours. What is your attitude toward the events of your life? Don’t allow despair and anxiety to fill your heart but trust in God. He can take away your fears and doubts and replace them with hope. He can fill you with His Spirit and give you His joy.

What’s your current attitude toward life – anxiety or joy?

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*For the despondent, every day brings trouble; for the happy heart, life is a continual feast.*

Proverbs 15:15 NLT

### PRAYER:

Father, I pray You would give me a glad heart. Fill my heart with the joy of the Spirit. Take away my fears and doubts. In Jesus’ name, amen.

*How much better to get wisdom than gold! And to get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver.*

Proverbs 16:16

## Better than Gold

BIBLE READING: PROVERBS 16

Gold. It's among the most valuable commodities on earth. It's so valuable that the quest for it has inspired wars and murders. Its value is so great that people go to incredible lengths just for a *little* gold. Consider the process required to produce just *one ounce* of fine gold in South Africa, the source of most gold in the world today.

The mines reach down as far as twelve thousand feet with temperatures that reach 130 degrees! More than 400,000 people work in these mines in conditions that often are unhealthy and even dangerous. But miners do *all* this work, and even risk their lives, just for a few ounces!

The Bible teaches that wisdom is *much better* than gold. Yet how few people treasure wisdom the same way they treasure gold! Like the search for gold, if we want wisdom, we need to value it, dig for it, and search for it.

The Bible tells us God delights in giving us wisdom and helping us understand more of His truth. But we have a part to play too. We must search, seek, and dig (Matthew 7:7).

Ask God to give you more of His wisdom. Seek His face, and cry out to Him for understanding and discernment. Read His Word, and dig into it like a miner seeking pure gold. As you seek, have faith that He will give you a level of wisdom you have never known before.

### PRAYER:

Father, I seek more of Your wisdom. Open my heart so that I might understand Your truths. Give me discernment and understanding. In Jesus' name. Amen.

What do you value most in the world?

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## Discernment

BIBLE READING: 1 KINGS 3

Observers were puzzled. Studying birds, they seemed to behave in unexplainable ways. To probe these observations, two universities recently conducted a research study. Their discovery? Birds have a unique way of seeing the world.

In fact, birds see colors people cannot see. They have “additional color cones in their retinas that are sensitive to ultraviolet range.” As one researcher concluded, humans are “color blind compared to birds.”

There also are differences from person to person. Each person sees the world in unique ways. What can be clear to one person may be muddy to another. And what we see changes as we age.

The Bible teaches that God can give believers special insights. With His help, we can recognize patterns others cannot recognize. We can weave our way through complicated situations and make the right decisions.

Recognizing this truth, Solomon asked God to give him an “*understanding mind*,” so he could have divinely inspired discernment. As a result, God gave Solomon “*wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and breadth of mind like the sand on the seashore*” (1 Kings 4:29). In fact, he excelled all kings in wisdom (1 Kings 10:23).

The Bible tells us that God sees the world differently than we do. But He delights in giving us the wisdom to help us see life from His perspective (James 1:5). Ask Him for the wisdom *you* need.

What do you need God's wisdom to face this week?

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*Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?*

1 Kings 3:9 ESV

### PRAYER:

Father, I commit these matters to You: \_\_\_\_\_. Give me discernment. Show me the right thing to do. In Jesus' name, amen.

*Don't you realize that friendship with this world makes you an enemy of God? I say it again: If you want to be a friend of the world, you make yourself an enemy of God.*

James 4:4 NLT

### PRAYER:

Father, give me discernment about what to believe. I believe Your promises are true. Thank You for giving me victory. In Jesus' name, amen.

How do you filter the many competing ideas bombarding you daily?

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## Battle for Your Mind

BIBLE READING: JAMES 4

In 1981, Jack Trout and Al Ries caused a sensation with their book *Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind*. This book provided revolutionary insights into how to shape what people think and what they do.

They argued that so much information is being distributed that our minds cannot process the volume. Many turn to experts. We listen to friends or gravitate toward what *sounds* believable.

To keep from being overwhelmed by life's complexities, one common pattern is to *rank* products and ideas. Trout and Ries likened this process to having a "series of ladders in the mind." To influence behavior and belief, the goal should be to occupy "the top rung" to be the most memorable. Those further down the "ladder" are less likely to have an impact or be remembered.

If anything, these tendencies have accelerated as more information bombards our minds. How can you know what is true or what to believe? In the process, we need to realize that there is a battle going on for our minds. Every day, we are assaulted with ideas, many designed to influence our thoughts and beliefs.

Who is influencing *your* thoughts? Remember, you have choices about whom you listen to and what you believe. And you don't have to allow other people to rule your life. Instead, fill your mind with God's Word. Seek His help to know what to believe. And be careful to whom you listen.

## Persistence

BIBLE READING: JAMES 1

The task of building the Panama Canal seemed impossible to many. Conditions were inhospitable. The obstacles were enormous. Gradually, answers emerged. Solutions were found for malaria attacks and other health issues. Engineering and design obstacles were overcome. Labor issues were addressed as thousands of new workers were recruited.

Then, on this day in 1912, a serious mudslide occurred. This has been described as one of the worst mudslides on record. The impact was devastating. As a result, all traffic through the canal was blocked. Many months of work had been *totally* wiped out.

It was a moment many found to be discouraging. One engineer reacted with shock. He reached out to project leader Colonel George Goethals, asking, "What are we to do now?" Goethals calmly responded, "Dig it out again." Guided by this spirit of determination, the problems caused by the mudslide were overcome, and soon the canal was finished.

Facing life's challenges, it can be easy to give up and become discouraged. That's why believers are instructed to be *diligent* and *persistent*, faithful in every situation. We are to have faith no matter how things may appear and ask God if we need wisdom. We must depend on the leading of the Spirit.

Do you face challenges? Problems that don't seem to have solutions? Stay persistent and faithful. Continue to seek God. Trust Him for the answer you need. And don't give up!

What tricky situation do you need to persevere through right now?

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*Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*

James 1:2-4 NASB

### PRAYER:

Father, I commit these issues to You: \_\_\_\_\_. Thank You for Your wisdom and favor. I believe that with You all things are possible. In Jesus' name, amen.



*When she heard about Jesus, she came behind Him in the crowd and touched His garment. For she said, "If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well." Immediately... she felt in her body that she was healed.*

Mark 5:27-29

## Touch

BIBLE READING: MARK 5

Discerning listeners can learn much about pianists just from their touch on the keyboard. One skilled master was known for achieving a pure sound, partly the result of his distinctive posture. Sitting low to the floor, he struck keys from a unique angle. His approach was quirky but generated a memorable tone.

Another pianist is known for his elegant touch and, as one critic described, "the sheer beauty of sound" produced. So stunning is the sound that "one begins to forget that fingers are even touching keys."

Not all pianists have a memorable touch. The playing of one leading figure was described as "crisp and competent" but lacking in artistic distinction. The problem? His "overemphatic touches" and "aggressive phrasing."

Touch was an important distinctive of New Testament ministry. This is clear from the story of a woman who had suffered many things and tried many cures. She found relief just by touching Jesus. He knew that "power had gone out of Him" (v. 30). Touching through the laying on of hands was how the Holy Spirit was given (Acts 9:17) and important for imparting the gifts of the Spirit (1 Timothy 4:14).

There is something special about touch. Our touch can provide a point of connection as believers. Touch can reassure and demonstrate compassion and concern. Even a release of the power of the Spirit.

Ask God to help you be sensitive to ways you can touch others.

How can you touch someone's life with the Gospel today?

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## Pausing

BIBLE READING: NUMBERS 35

God made it clear. He expected people to be *accountable* for their words and actions. But He also recognized the importance of  *motive*. Particular judgment was pronounced for those who acted intentionally and with "malice aforethought" (v. 20). But special grace was permitted for those who acted "accidentally." Rather than rush into action, they were encouraged to *pause*.

Those whose mistakes were accidental were allowed to escape immediate judgment by fleeing to a city of refuge where they could be safe until their case had been judged impartially. The impulsive thing might have been to rush to judgment, but God established rules stressing the importance of waiting,  *pausing* before acting, and listening carefully to the evidence.

The Bible warns us against being impulsive and acting rashly. We are encouraged to be *patient* (Proverbs 19:11). We are taught to "be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry" (James 1:19 NLT). We are not to assume we know the right thing to do, but we are to "wait for the LORD" (Psalm 27:14). We are to seek God's help to be calm and under control.

These are important principles to employ in our everyday lives. Avoid being impulsive and rash. Before acting, pause to commit every situation to God and be sensitive to His leading. Pray about a matter. Seek direction from the principles found in His Word.

When have you been tempted to act impulsively recently?

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*When you cross the Jordan into Canaan, select some towns to be your cities of refuge, to which a person who has killed someone accidentally may flee... so that anyone accused of murder may not die before they stand trial.*

Numbers 35:10-12 NIV

### PRAYER:

Father, I commit this situation to You: \_\_\_\_\_. Give me discernment. Show me the right thing to do. Keep me from acting impulsively. In Jesus' name, amen.

*LORD, hear my prayer!  
Listen to my plea! Don't  
turn away from me in  
my time of distress.  
Bend down to listen,  
and answer me quickly  
when I call to you.*

Psalms 102:1-2 NLT

## Solving Problems

BIBLE READING: PSALM 102

Sometimes problems seem unsolvable. Nothing seems to work, and we don't know what to do. It may seem easier to live with problems than try to solve them. We sometimes feel like just running away.

These are times to remember that the Bible is filled with powerful principles that can help solve *any* problem and show us what to do. These are times to remember the example of Psalm 102, which is "a prayer of one overwhelmed with trouble, pouring out problems before the LORD" (superscription). The psalmist approached his problems by *crying* out to God, asking Him to listen to his plea and answer when he called.

What things plague you? Are you tired of dealing with these issues? Are you frustrated by your inability to solve these problems? Do you really want to find freedom?

Make this a time to deal with problems. Start by digging into God's Word, asking Him for His help and insight. Diligently seek His wisdom. Learn His principles, and then apply those principles to your problems. As you pray and study, ask God to help you identify root issues. Are there changes you should make? What practical things can you do to make a difference?

Don't assume that you have conquered this problem permanently, but continue to seek God and apply the principles in His Word. He will meet you where you are when you ask Him for help.

What are some root issues you're dealing with currently?

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## Generous

BIBLE READING: PSALM 112

Here was a person with a life that sounds ideal. He had "wealth and riches" and received honors. God blessed his family with descendants who were "mighty on earth" (vs. 2-3). What made him different?

This person *revered* the Lord and *delighted* in His Word. His faith was so strong that He was *resolute* and confident in God in every situation. His heart was steadfast, so firm he was never shaken. He always sought to do the right thing. God guided him, and he knew that "light shines in the darkness" for people who are "upright" and whose lives are pleasing to Him (v. 4).

This was a man who was not self-centered or stingy but was *compassionate* and *concerned* about others. He was *gracious* and always ready to give to others from the resources God provided. He "has freely given" to the poor and needy (v. 9). He knew that those who fear the Lord can be generous. They realize He has blessed them, so they can bless others. In every situation, he trusted God and depended completely on Him.

Ask God to give you a spirit of generosity and compassion. Look for opportunities to help meet the needs of others. Serve Him with the time, talents, and treasures He has given you. Always be ready to give. Remember, "God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7).

How can you offer concrete help to someone near you this week?

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*It goes well for a person  
who is gracious and  
lends...he will never  
be shaken...his heart  
is steadfast, trusting in  
the LORD...He has given  
freely to the poor...his  
horn will be exalted in  
honor.*

Psalms 112:5-9 NASB

### PRAYER:

Father, thank You for all You have given me. Help me be generous with the resources You give me. In Jesus' name, amen.

*Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance.*

Psalm 42:5

## Honest Praise

BIBLE READING: PSALM 42

Samuel Hedborn was born into a Swedish family with few resources. He only could afford higher education because of the help of friends. He hoped to pursue an academic career, but this proved impractical. As a last resort, he decided to become a pastor.

Although a Christian, he still battled depression and pursued the ministry with “dark forebodings.” To Hedborn, this career meant preaching “to others about light and hope without possessing them myself.” Partly as an outlet for his struggles, he wrote hymns, many reflecting his honesty with God and himself and what he learned about faith.

One of his most impactful compositions was “Glorious Majesty.” As this hymn suggests, Hedborn realized how much he needed God. Instead of wallowing in despair, believers should *praise* Him despite personal struggles.

Perhaps because of his doubts, he could turn to God in praise. He knew others may have similar experiences and need to worship Him as well.

Despite whatever struggles we go through, we need to remember that He is God. In our earthly journeys we may struggle, but our hearts still can be full of praise. We can trust Him to bless us and overcome our darkness with His light. As Hedborn realized, we may be imperfect, yet God continually reveals His grace.

No matter what is going on for you, make this a moment to worship God. Remember, you can be honest with Him.

What can you praise God for right now?

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## Prosperity and Health

BIBLE READING: 3 JOHN 1

All around us, we see worried people. Many are plagued by financial difficulties, and family or marriage problems. Others suffer from diseases and pain. It can be easy to conclude that these problems are normal and that we cannot escape their grip. When they go through problems, some Christians even doubt God and start thinking like people who do not know Him.

But the Bible confirms this promise: God truly wants us to be in *health*, to “*prosper in every way*”! That is His *desire* for each of us!

This desire is expressed throughout the Bible. Think about this promise from Jesus: “*I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly*” (John 10:10). God wants us to experience this abundant life. He wants us to be victorious and not defeated. He does not want us to be sick or in pain but to be healthy. And He has promised to meet all our needs “*according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus*” (Philippians 4:19).

Think about God’s desire for you. Don’t be discouraged even if your needs seem overwhelming. Don’t allow the thief to steal your victory. Confess the promises in God’s Word. And commit your problems to Him. Believe Him for health and prosperity. Ask Him to grant you His fullest blessings and to heal every disease, remove every worry, and give you abundant life.

What is stealing your joy this week? How can you combat it?

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*Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in every way and [that your body] may keep well, even as [I know] your soul keeps well and prospers.*

3 John 1:2 AMPC

### PRAYER:

Father, thank You that You want me to prosper and be in health. I believe You for the abundant life You have promised. In Jesus’ name, amen.



*Catch the foxes for us, the little foxes that are ruining the vineyards, while our vineyards are in blossom.*

Song of Solomon 2:15  
NASB

## Shrewd as a Fox

BIBLE READING: SONG OF SOLOMON 2

Foxes long have been symbols of cunning. Masters of disguise, these animals can conceal their appearance and attack without warning.

The people of Israel knew all about foxes. Israel had a climate ideal for growing grapes. Farmers had to battle constantly against these creatures. Many surrounded their vineyards with walls or hedges. Yet they could never let down their guard as clever foxes could attack at any time, even digging tunnels under fences.

The picture Solomon provides should remind us of the spiritual battles we face. The world is filled with temptations that can lure us into danger. Solomon specifically warned against “*little foxes*.” These seemingly small temptations can encourage us to let down our guard. These things can seem insignificant, but these “*little foxes*” can do enormous damage.

How often the greatest dangers are not from obvious things, but from those that seem small. We do things that may seem harmless but can lead to harmful relationships. We go places that lead us into trouble.

What is the solution? We must be on guard, ready to catch these foxes. If we are passive, we can remain vulnerable, allow bad habits to develop, and enable small problems to become big problems.

Remember, you are in a spiritual battle. Your enemy will attack you, directly and indirectly, in ways that are obvious or subtle. Be on guard, particularly against the “*little foxes*.”

What small problems do you need to weed out of your life now?

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## Transformed

BIBLE READING: ACTS 18

When Priscilla and Aquila were forced to leave Italy, they resettled in Corinth, Greece. There, they met Paul, who was a tentmaker like they were. They became drawn to his ministry and the power of the Gospel.

When Paul left Corinth, they left with him and resettled in Ephesus (modern-day Turkey), where they stayed after Paul moved on. In Ephesus they encountered Apollos, a man committed to the Gospel, but who needed further instruction. Priscilla and Aquila “*explained to him the way of God more accurately*” (v. 26). Armed with corrected understanding, Apollos became a powerful minister.

Priscilla and Aquila had made rapid spiritual progress. Within a brief time, they were transformed from novices into people with profound spiritual discernment. They absorbed Paul’s teachings and were able to minister on their own with a powerful impact.

Today, you may feel inadequate. You may not be sure that God can use you. But have faith. He can change your life and do remarkable things *through* you. If He could transform Priscilla and Aquila, He can transform *you*. This transformation can take place over a long time or comparatively quickly. He can fill you with His Spirit and give you the power and anointing you need.

Submit your life to God. Fill your mind with His Word. Seek His wisdom and be filled with His Spirit. Trust Him to open doors and bless you with everything you need.

Compose a prayer asking God to transform every area of your life.

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*He found a certain Jew named Aquila... who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla... Because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers.*

Acts 18:2-3

### PRAYER:

Father, transform my life. Help me learn more about You. Help me grow in my faith and be used for Your kingdom. In Jesus’ name, amen.

*The LORD said to [Moses], this is the land of which I swore to give Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob...I have caused you to see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there.*

Deuteronomy 34:4

### PRAYER:

Father, help me to be a good servant. Help me to fulfill Your calling on my life and be faithful. In Jesus' name, amen.

What is one small thing you can do today that will count for eternity?

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## Your Review

BIBLE READING: DEUTERONOMY 34

Moses was approaching the end of his life. He had spent years as leader of the Israelites. He had led them out of bondage in Egypt, through 40 years in the wilderness until finally they arrived at the place God had prepared for them.

God brought him to Mount Nebo across from Jericho. From this vantage point, he could see much of the Promised Land that he had been looking forward to for the previous 40 years.

It was a bittersweet moment, for Moses could see the land but could not enter it. Yet at this moment God gave him *perspective* and a review of his life. It was a moment to be reminded of his *legacy*, all he had done, and the impact of his life on future generations.

It was a reminder that God had kept His promises. But also that, in God's sight, Moses had been a faithful servant.

The Bible reminds us that each of us will have this kind of review when our lives will be evaluated. We will be able to see our legacy and give an account of what we have done with all God has given us. We'll be confronted with whether we've been faithful. These are moments when we hope God tells us, "*Well done, good and faithful servant*" (Matthew 25:21).

Today, spend your energies focused on God's call for you. Be faithful. Get ready for your review.

## The Summary

BIBLE READING: DEUTERONOMY 34

How does the Bible summarize the life of Moses? The final verses of Deuteronomy tell us that he was remembered as a man with a *personal* relationship with God, who knew Him "*face to face*."

Moses provided a great example for his people. Looking back, the Israelites could recall many times when Moses had spent time *alone* with God. They could realize that his relationship with God was more important than any personal qualifications or experience.

Moses also was remembered as a man through whom God performed "*signs and wonders*." Because of his faith and personal relationship with God, he was available as a vessel for His *power*.

Moses demonstrated that God could use him in many ways. He was confident that God was with him when he confronted Pharaoh and the magicians of Egypt. He could stand boldly before Egypt's army and command the sea to open.

The question for you is this: How will *you* be remembered? As a person who knows God? Who spends time alone with Him? Whom God can use to do mighty things?

The Bible assures us that God wants to have an intimate relationship with you. Let Him give you boldness and faith and take away your worries and fears. Trust Him to meet your needs, protect and guide you, defeat your enemies, and perform miracles. And let Him use you to impact lives for His Kingdom.

How is your plan to spend time in the Word going so far this year?

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*Since that time no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, for all the signs and wonders which the LORD sent him to perform.*

Deuteronomy 34:10-11  
NASB

### PRAYER:

Father, help me develop a more intimate relationship with You. Use me to impact lives for Your Kingdom. Nothing is impossible with You. In Jesus' name, amen.

*After looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored.*

Mark 3:5 NASB

## What Grieved Jesus

BIBLE READING: MARK 3

Entering a synagogue on the Sabbath, Jesus saw a man with a withered hand. While He focused on the man, nearby Pharisees studied Jesus, only concerned whether He would heal the man. Jesus knew the thoughts of these observers, asking them, "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath or to do harm?" (v. 4) They listened but remained silent.

Jesus was angered by their reaction. Although these religious leaders represented His Father, they were poor examples. Jesus also was "grieved." The Greek word suggests He was *distressed* and *saddened* by their hard hearts and closed minds. They were more interested in their own interpretations than in God's full revelation or the health of this man.

Despite their attitudes, Jesus healed the man. The Pharisees immediately left, plotting how to destroy Him.

We can understand why Jesus was angry. But perhaps it was His grief that speaks most to us; their hardness *grieved* Him. Despite their religious background, they were not really concerned about God or His people.

We can imagine Jesus must have the same reaction toward some people in our time too – anger toward those who twist His Word, but also *grief*. He knows the power of the Gospel and how it can change lives. Yet He is sad when so many reject His Word, refusing to believe.

Don't harden your heart or grieve the Savior. Listen to His Word. Don't limit Him. Trust Him.

Are you grieved by others' rejection of the Gospel?

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## Open My Eyes

BIBLE READING: PSALM 119:17-32

In the 1860s, the Comstock Lode in western Nevada became one of the most lucrative mining strikes in history. But those mining this site almost missed these riches.

Sparked by the California gold rush in 1848, these prospectors primarily searched for gold. But because of this obsession, they did not realize they were digging into one of the richest silver lodes in the world.

Eventually, they realized that these rocks contained overwhelming quantities of silver and the Comstock boom began. But countless miners failed to realize that they had touched abundance. Because of their preoccupation, many lost a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, blind to the riches in the rocks before them.

In the spiritual realm, many Christians do not realize what great spiritual riches God has available for them: riches of power, wisdom, resources, and peace. They may feel they know what is possible and what God is revealing to them. But the psalmist realized that God offered even *greater* blessings than they had imagined and *deeper* truths. He asked God to open his eyes to this abundance.

Ask God to open *your* eyes as never before. Don't *limit* your expectations or assume that you have experienced the fullness of His riches. Don't be content with what you *think* He offers. Seek Him for more of His power, more of His wisdom, more blessings, and more understanding.

Don't miss all He has available for you.

Write a prayer asking God to help you experience His spiritual riches.

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*Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law.*

Psalms 119:18 NASB

### PRAYER:

Father, open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your Word. Grant me a deeper understanding and more of Your riches. In Jesus' name, amen.





# Your Miracle Catch

When you go deeper, expect an even greater harvest!

Do you recall the account of the fishermen in Luke 5 who had a dismal night and “*caught nothing*” (v. 5) until they heeded Jesus’ instructions to “*Launch out into the deep and let down [their] nets for a catch*” (v. 4)?

Obedying Jesus’ instruction to “*GO DEEPER*” brought a fantastic ending to a former failure!

*When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking* (v. 6).

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FROM OUR MAILBOX

# I Found HOPE

At one time, David was more interested in women and liquor than his grandma’s Jesus. But when his life of sin led him straight to prison, he began to search for answers, joining other prisoners in seeking the true, living God.

“Since everyone was looking and praying to God, I got challenged and went into deep prayer. Being left all alone in prison made me remember what my grandma had taught me about God. So I cried to the God who would hear my prayers. In my heart I heard, ‘This is your time of salvation,’ so I bowed down and accepted Christ as my Savior. Then I started praying again for my freedom, and within one week, my fine was paid, and now I am free with Jesus Christ.

“I realized that was the reason I was detained – I had to get salvation the hard way, so I would not look back. I learned a lot through that suffering and many other experiences in my life. I made an oath with God never to backslide again. Inspiration Ministries has been of great help to me.

“I have found a home of hope where I can build my trust in God’s Word. I currently receive your morning devotions and prayers via email every day. I also read the articles and watch the videos online. I am drawing closer to God.

“You are indeed a blessing to me. Thank you for spreading the Word of God in such a way. I am also sharing the blessings with my fellow church mates. I will stand and proclaim the Word of God to the vulnerable and especially the prisoners since I know what they go through.” ❖



# The Time Is NOW

Create your financial plan for free in 2023!

One of the benefits of being an Inspiration Partner is that we are here for you. For example, when you need some kind of breakthrough in your life, you can always contact the prayer ministers in our International Prayer Center to agree with you in prayer for the miracle you need.

But did you know that Inspiration Ministries can also help you plan your estate and financial legacy? One of our partners in North Carolina explains:

“The Christian Legacy Planning representatives at Inspiration Ministries helped me update my Will, making sure any special requests were placed into my legal documents. This is just one of the ways God has used Inspiration Ministries to bless my life!” – Jan, NC



Our Christian Legacy Planning Team is waiting for your toll-free call, ready to help you discover what is best for you and your family. This comes without obligation from you!



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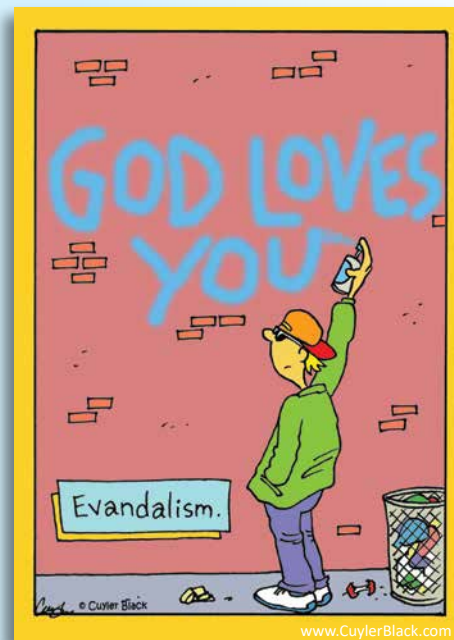
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# A Merry Heart...

does good, like medicine. – Proverbs 17:22



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

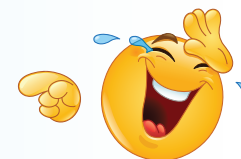
Email it to: [MerryHeart@inspiration.org](mailto:MerryHeart@inspiration.org)

The pastor interrupts his sermon to ask three men in the front row: "What would you like your loved ones to say as they are looking down at you in your coffin?"

**Tom's answer:** "That I was a good husband and father."

**Mike's response:** "That I lived a good life of kindness to others."

**Dan's answer:** "Look! He's moving!"



Where does January come after February, and December comes before November?

In the dictionary, of course!



The other day I asked my new friend, "When is your birthday?"

"January 22," she replied.

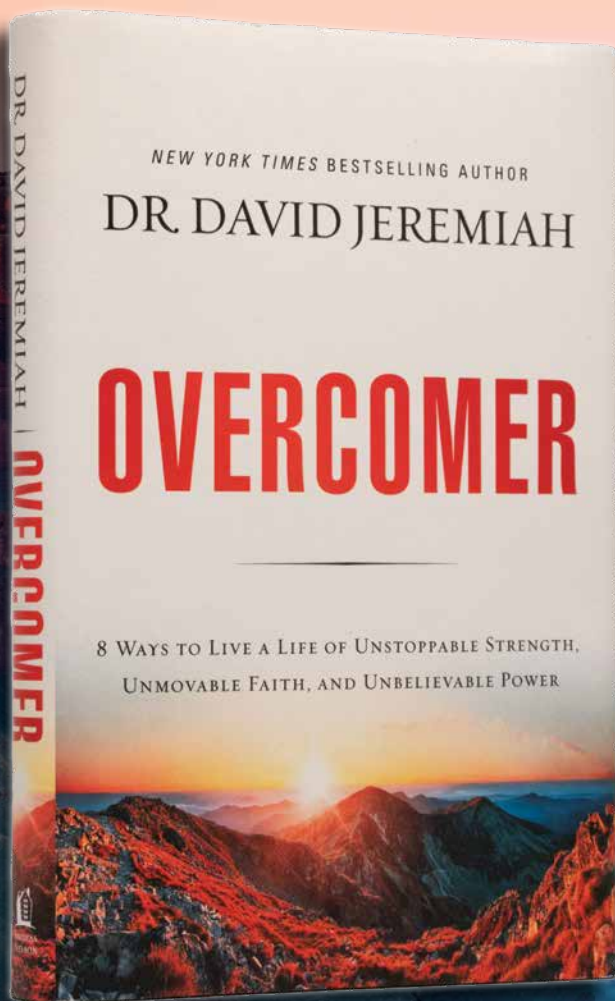
So I asked, "Of what year?"

"Every year," she answered.

# Overcome Every Obstacle

You are called to live in this world as an overcomer. Let Dr. David Jeremiah show you how to walk in victory, strength, peace, and love.

Request this month's THANK YOU GIFT – ***Overcomer: 8 Ways to Live a Life of Unstoppable Strength, Unmovable Faith, and Unbelievable Power*** today, and let 2023 be the year you conquer all!



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