

AUGUST 2022

inspiration

M A G A Z I N E

UNSHAKABLE

HOPE

Featuring a new book
by David Cerullo!

Toss Your
Emotional Baggage

God's Minutemen

A COVID Miracle



PAGE 10



PAGE 16

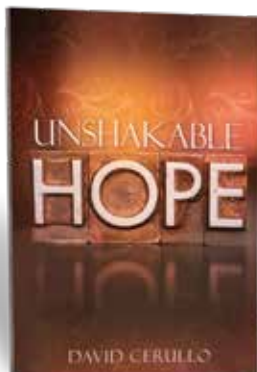


PAGE 53

Unshakable Hope!



You don't have to wait until every other option has failed before you reach out to God – but if you do, you can be confident He will help! Check out David's article on **page 5** to preview his new book ***Unshakable Hope***. You will be ready to rest on the One who will never let you down.



Our THANK YOU GIFT for your partnership this month!

(See page 28 for details.)

EDITOR'S CORNER



The long, hot days of summer are the perfect time to settle into your favorite comfortable spot and soak in some encouraging truths about God. His character is a solid hope for your life, the lives of those you love, and the future. He is the God of hope – the only source for continual goodness!

Friend, God knows what you are going through, and He has already prepared a path for you that is full of abundance and hope. He will never disappoint you, and this month we present to you a magazine filled with truths that will feed your faith. I pray you will enjoy it and share with others!

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August 8 – August 19

Pastor Jimmy Kallam reveals the path to peace and joy with wisdom and truth from the Word of God. You can walk victoriously with the God of hope.



August 22 – September 2

John Avanzini encourages you to step into your inheritance as a child of the God who owns it all.

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YOUR UNSHAKABLE

HOPE



STRENGTHEN
your walk
with David Cerullo

I love the story in Mark 5:25-34 (NASB) where a woman who suffered for 12 long years came to Jesus for a new beginning. Like so many people today, she had first tried everything else before seeking the Lord for a remedy to her situation.

Although the woman had done the best she knew at the time, her efforts brought no relief. We're told that she *"had endured much at the hands of many physicians, and had spent all that she had and was not helped at all, but instead had become worse"* (Mark 5:26).

She must have been feeling quite alone and hopeless.

The King James Version describes this woman's trouble as *"an issue of blood,"* meaning that she had a persistent bleeding problem or hemorrhage. But before you write off her story as being irrelevant to you, consider this: While you may not have *"an issue of blood,"* each one of us faces some kind of issue that requires God's help.

So, what is your issue today? Is it a medical condition, like the woman in this story? Are you battling depression or some form of addiction?

Do you face concerns about your finances or the choices being made by your children? We all have issues that bleed our hope away as surely as the woman in Mark 5. You are not alone.

READY TO OBEY?

Perhaps your situation today feels much the same as it did for this distressed woman. You've tried everything, but nothing ever seems to change. What more can you do? Like this woman, your frustrating circumstances may have lingered for weeks, months, or even years. The devil tells you every day, "See, nothing will ever change! You might as well give up!"

The turning point in this woman's life began when she heard reports about Jesus. *"After hearing about Jesus, she came up in the crowd behind Him and touched His cloak"* (Mark 5:27).

Although hearing about Jesus was the first step in the miracle this woman would receive, it was only the beginning. Lots of people hear about Jesus, but they still don't get their breakthrough. Why not? Often they have failed to take the next step that this woman displayed.

You see, after hearing about Jesus, she *took action* to touch His garments. Many hearers in our churches today have never become doers (James 1:22-25). But this woman received her healing because her hearing was followed by her doing.

What about you? You've no doubt heard about Jesus, and perhaps you even attend church regularly. Yet if you're feeling stuck in some area of your life, I encourage you to take the next step: Push through the crowd to touch the Lord by faith.

When you set out to do this, you will surely encounter obstacles. People may be in the way. Pain may be in the way. The devil himself may seem to block your path. However, it's crucial to

This woman received her healing because her hearing was followed by her doing.

turn your desperation into obedient action, not letting anything stop you from getting to Jesus to receive your breakthrough.

This woman's point of contact with Jesus was to touch His garment, but He may have some other action in mind for us. Are you ready to obey Him – whatever He tells you to do?

SPEAK IN FAITH

When you're awaiting your breakthrough, it can be difficult to keep your hopes up and continue speaking words of faith. Yet that's exactly what this woman did: *"She had been saying to herself, 'If I just touch His garments, I will get well'"* (Mark 5:28).

Many believers are willing to give a testimony after their breakthrough comes, but during their time of testing, they're full of moaning and groaning. Not so for this woman...she proclaimed the victory *before* she received it! She not only believed in her heart, but she also spoke words of faith from her lips.

The woman's example shows how powerful our words can be. As Solomon challenges us in Proverbs 18:21, *"Death and life are in the power of the tongue."* In this woman's case, her life was literally spared by the faith she exercised and proclaimed.

My friend, don't wait for the victory before you start proclaiming it! Your testimony of faith is one of the greatest keys to becoming an overcomer (Revelation 12:10-11). To get unstuck from your negative circumstances, you must get away from the naysayers and the purveyors of doom and gloom. Start surrounding yourself with people who point you to Jesus and stand with you to believe that a breakthrough is on the way.

After years of frustration and defeat, this woman discovered that Jesus could quickly fix her

**Your testimony
of faith is
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greatest keys
to becoming
an overcomer.**

“*issue*” – and I’m convinced that the same is true for you today.

Jesus wants to give you a fresh start. He wants to speak words of freedom, healing, and deliverance to you just as He did to the distraught woman: “*Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be cured of your disease*” (Mark 5:34).

This can be the day your turnaround begins. Believe in the Lord’s promises and reach out to Him in faith!

YOUR HOPE IS ALIVE!

Today it’s more important than ever to keep your focus on your living Savior as your true source of hope and assurance.

I’ve found that when I take my eyes off my needs and focus on how awesome and powerful God is, my troubles disappear in His presence. That’s why I’m so confident that whatever problem you may be facing today pales in comparison to the majesty of your Heavenly Father.

So choose to stop looking at your personal situation and trouble and start looking at the Savior of your soul. Stop looking at the political upheaval, pandemics, natural disasters...economic turmoil...and fierce cultural wars. Stay focused on who He is, and stand on His Word – no matter what you see and hear around you.

Ask the Lord to give you a new perspective, showing you who HE is and who YOU are in Him. Your Father is the Creator of the universe, and you are His workmanship, His child, and the love of His life.

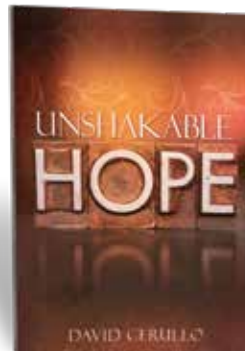
My prayer for you today is this: “*Now may the **God of hope** fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may **abound in hope** by the power of the Holy Spirit*” (Romans 15:13).

Remember, when your eyes are fixed on Him, your hope will always be ALIVE and unshakable!

God bless you,



P.S. I would love to send you my new book ***Unshakable Hope***. If you’re concerned about the trouble and turmoil we’re facing today, this wonderful **THANK YOU GIFT** will give you the insights you need for a life of God’s supernatural peace and hope (see **page 28**).



Salvation Is Simple

Yet getting the Word out can be a huge undertaking



"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."

– Acts 16:30-31

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Toss *Your* Emotional Baggage

**Godly truth can uproot the destructive effects of depression, fear, and anxiety.
Claim your victory today!**

An emotional stronghold isn't the same thing as simply having a bad day. We all have bad days or even bad weeks. An emotional stronghold is an attitude or emotion that stays with you day in and day out. It does more than just show up from time to time. It dictates and dominates your thoughts and choices and thus your life itself.

God never intended for you to wake up depressed every day or to always be paralyzed by fear. He didn't create you to carry anger around for five, fifteen, or fifty years. God has promised you a full life in Christ. If you're not experiencing the abundant life Christ

freely gives, you may be living with an emotional stronghold.

God wants to free you from the endless and fruitless task of denying or suppressing emotional strongholds through distractions, pills, entertainment, spending, or the like. He wants to reveal to you the root behind what you are experiencing. Just as a doctor will not only listen to how you feel when you go in for an examination but will also probe deeper through X-rays or tests, so too overcoming emotional strongholds involves going deeper than just your feelings to discover the root cause.

Certainly, some emotional strongholds are tied to physiological causes such as a chemical imbalance, and those need to be addressed physically. However, a large number of emotional strongholds are not physiological. They are rooted in sin. The sin may be your own, or someone else's sin may be affecting you, or your environment may be contaminated by sin. Maybe you were abused as a child, raped, betrayed in a relationship, or unwanted. It wasn't your sin that created the stronghold of fear, insecurity, guilt, or shame that you may be facing now. But it was still sin that caused it.

Emotional strongholds often come as a result of what I call *atmospheric sin* – sin that so clouds the atmosphere around us that its results affect us whether we committed the sin or not. It's similar in concept to secondhand smoke and lung cancer. You may not have smoked the cigarettes yourself, but studies show that if you grew up in a home contaminated by cigarette

smoke, you have a higher potential for contracting lung cancer. The same holds true for sin. An environment deeply contaminated by sin leads to a greater susceptibility to emotional strongholds.

VICTORY

Pray and ask God to reveal your discouraging thoughts, beliefs, or words; your sentiments of giving up... anything that reflects a spirit of insignificance or anything similar. Also, think of things others may have said to you to cause you to believe you were not valuable or were unable to be victorious in your life. Write these all down. For each untruth, look for a countering truth from God's Word. When you write down the countering truth, be sure to cross out the untruth and pray in Christ's name that it will no longer affect your life and the lives of those around you. Then thank God that the power of His truth has been let loose to do its work of healing, empowerment, and grace in you. ❖



Dr. Tony Evans is an author, radio show host, NBA chaplain, and senior pastor in Dallas, TX. He has been named one of the 12 most effective English-speaking preachers by Baylor University.

Excerpt from *Prayers for Victory in Spiritual Warfare* by Dr. Tony Evans. Printed by permission of Harvest House Publishers, Oregon, © 2015.



God's Minutemen

Always Hopeful and Ready to Serve

Being ready in an instant also means we're prepared to move quickly to meet a need.

During the American Revolution, a group of civilian colonists organized themselves into militia units that could mobilize very quickly if needed. They became known as the Minutemen because of their constant state of readiness. They didn't need time to find their musket or powder; everything was kept in readiness. We should be God's minutemen, hopeful and ready in season and out of season.

The terms in season and out of season represent agricultural language. In the fall, apples are in season and are ready to be plucked fresh from the trees. The rest of the year, they're out of season, but we still need to tend the orchards. Throughout my years of pastoring, I've noticed that some periods of ministry seem more fruitful than others, but whether revival is in season or out of season, we need to be ready for God to use us.

That means we are to be ready the instant we're called upon. In Mark 3, Jesus drew one of the largest crowds of His ministry, which put

Him in jeopardy of being trampled by the mob. The Lord devised an escape route should He need it – a water evacuation. Mark 3:9 says, “So He told His disciples that a small boat should be kept ready for Him because of the multitude, lest they should crush Him.”

He needed just a small boat, perhaps seldom used, perhaps tied at the dock and used by only the youngest fishermen. But on that day, the little boat was kept reserved for the Master’s use, constantly ready to transport Him if needed and to do His bidding. We should be like that small boat, set aside and ready for any opportunity to serve our Lord.

Being ready in an instant also means we’re prepared to move quickly to meet a need.

Paul himself lived in a state of hopeful readiness. When his friends tried to dissuade him from going to Jerusalem at the end of his third missionary tour, he told them, “Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in

Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 21:13 NIV). God uses those who are ready to obey Him instantly, whenever, whatever, wherever He bids us.

We must also be ready with our knowledge of the Scriptures. When we devote ourselves to its study, we’re preparing ourselves to be used by God, having the truth of His Word deep in our hearts, ready to share it with whomever He places in our pathway.

A spirit of revival also makes us ready to give an answer to those who ask us about Christ. Peter wrote, “Always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15). When we live in perpetual readiness for opportunities to share Christ, we find they come to us regularly, and we never know when a day will afford a rich opportunity to speak a word for Him. Let’s be God’s minutemen and trust Him to use us. Remain hopeful and be ready at every instant to serve Him in season and out of season. ❖



David Jeremiah is the founder and host of *Turning Point for God* and Senior Pastor of Shadow Mountain Community Church in El Cajon, California. For more information visit www.DavidJeremiah.org.

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Fat Chance

Embarrassed by her weight, Allison tries to increase her odds of finding a boyfriend by using her friend's photo on a dating site. What happens when her crush responds?



Home Sweet Home

When flirtatious Victoria's usual charms don't work on Jason, she pretends to be a Christian and volunteers for his home-building ministry.

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Building a Blessed Life



by Ben Cerullo

The most beautiful lives rest on this simple framework.

High-stress living and overburdened schedules are commonplace today, but that's not God's way. Too often, we chase blessings and call it seeking God, or we make idols of the good things God gives us and serve them instead of Him. Both of these sins leave us stressed and empty. God wants more for you!

Imagine your life as an empty glass jar. On the table before you are three large rocks, a large container of colorful pebbles, and several beakers of colored sand. You must add everything to the glass jar without shattering it. Do you know the simple principle that will make you successful?

You'll need to maximize the capacity of the jar by putting the largest rocks in first – then everything else will fit. Your life is the

same. Choose your priorities wisely, and everything falls into place. Fill your schedule with pebbles and sand, and your days will be packed, but your life will be empty.

Busyness is often the result of sin – rejecting God's priorities like Adam and Eve did in the Garden of Eden. Just as sin shattered their paradise, it still shatters lives today. God created us with three basic needs – sin is simply a wrong attempt at meeting one of these priorities:

- Establishing a strong connection to God Himself, the Giver of Life (John 14:6)
- Living in the security of the Heavenly Father's love (1 John 4:16)
- Pursuing your God-designed life purpose (Ephesians 2:10)

The only way to attend to our needs is to do as Jesus said, “*Seek first the Kingdom of God*” (Matthew 6:33). With these priorities addressed, everything else simply adds blessing and beauty to your life.

Are you ready to declutter your schedule and find the life you’ve been longing for? Ask God to help you answer the three questions below, and you will be on your way to a God-blessed life!

Are you trusting in anything other than Jesus to connect you to God?

Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind (John 1:3-4 NIV).

The very first priority in your life must be your relationship with God, and Jesus is the connector! Until our hearts rest in Jesus, we feel an empty restlessness. Establishing the bond of love between you and your Father requires accepting the work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

Are you living in God’s love, enjoying the sweetness of the Spirit or being dragged away by other concerns?

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness,

goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23 ESV).

Being connected to God is different from living fully in His presence and enjoying Him. Receiving Jesus as Savior restores your connection to God, but living in His presence is a moment-by-moment choice you must make.

What does your mission from God look like?

Jesus answered them, “My Father has been working until now, and I have been working” (John 5:17).

Work was not a curse from the fall of man – it is the privilege of imitating the Creator and the Savior! God designed you to do many things – discovering those details is your privilege and responsibility.

Abundant Life

Friend, I look forward to hearing how God changes your life as you focus on answering these questions. I know He has good plans for you (Jeremiah 29:11), and you will discover those plans by prioritizing your connection to Him, increasing your confidence in Him and pursuing your commitment to serve Him! ❖

The God of Hope

Your Source for Joy and Peace!

Hope is not a passive wishing for something better – it is active anticipation of a positive outcome. In biblical terms, hope is *reality* based on God’s goodness. It improves *today* by setting your sights on a better *tomorrow*!

Of course, hope needs a valid source to be of lasting value. Hope that is not based in truth may make your present better but will collapse over time. That’s what makes this aspect of God’s character so exciting:

*Now may **the God of hope** fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13).*

When your source of hope is **The God of Hope**, the enemy cannot harm your foundation or your future. The substance of God is built on the truth of who He is – the Great I Am who is eternal love, Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer.

Every hope for good finds fulfillment in Him!

In fact, in Romans, we read, “*Hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts*” (Romans 5:5). The love of God in your present reality is the foundation that permeates your hope-filled future. Trusting in **The God of Hope** protects you from dismay.

Hope that is just for today is a whimsical fantasy, but for those who trust in **The God of Hope**, it is eternal joy. Circumstances can’t crush the joy given by **The God of Hope**. Confidence in the willingness and power of God to create goodness from any mess generates a joy without boundaries. Biblical peace denotes wholeness – a wellness of body, mind, and soul. When you are united with and trusting in **The God of Hope**, your life overflows with enduring joy and peace. ❖

Forgiveness

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: MATTHEW 6

MONDAY

August

1

In 1947, Corrie ten Boom spoke at a church in Munich. The German people were recovering from World War II. Corrie spoke about a practical subject: *forgiveness*. She declared that when we confess our sins, they are gone forever.

After her message, a man approached Corrie whom she remembered being a guard at the Ravensbruck concentration camp where she and her sister Betsie had been imprisoned during the war. Betsie died in that camp. The man admitted he had been a guard but said he had since become a Christian. "I know God has forgiven me for the cruel things I did there, but I would like to hear it from your lips as well," he said as he reached out his hand. "Will you forgive me?"

Corrie wrestled with her response. As she reached out her hand, an incredible thing took place. She felt a current racing down her arm into their joined hands. A healing warmth flooded her whole being, bringing tears to her eyes. For a long moment, the two grasped each other's hands. "The former guard and the former prisoner. I had never known God's love so intensely as I did then," she later recalled.

Are there people whom you need to forgive? If Corrie ten Boom could forgive this guard, you can forgive those who have wronged you. Ask God to help you. As you forgive others, He will forgive you.

If you forgive other people for their offenses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive other people, then your Father will not forgive your offenses.

Matthew 6:14-15 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I forgive these people for what they have said or done: _____ . Give me your love. Thank You for forgiving my sins. In Jesus' name, amen.

Write a prayer forgiving those who have wronged you.

TUESDAY

August

2

Great is our LORD and abundant in strength; His understanding is infinite. The LORD supports the afflicted; He brings the wicked down to the ground.

Psalms 147:5-6 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I commit these needs to You: _____. Intervene in these situations, I pray. All things are possible with You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Do Not Limit God

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PSALM 147

The businessman would never forget this journey. As a tourist in India, he saw a large elephant tethered to a small stake in the jungle near Bengaluru. He was amazed to see this huge animal stay hitched to such a tiny object.

The man asked the elephant trainer, "How can you keep such a large elephant tied to such a small stake?" The trainer replied, "When the elephants are small, they try to pull out the stake and fail. For their entire lives, they continue to follow old *habits* and *never* change."

The business leader realized that many people were like those elephants, trapped by past habits, limiting themselves, and not realizing their capabilities or full potential.

This could also describe many Christians who focus on their weaknesses and past mistakes. They are intimidated by the giants around them and trapped by habits and attitudes formed in their past.

The Bible tells us that *everything* is new when we become believers (2 Corinthians 5:17) and "*all things are possible for the one who believes*" (Mark 9:23), yet many Christians *limit God* and accept *less* than the abundance He has *provided*. They choose to live in their *old* ways.

Dare to believe God's Word is true for you! Believe that, with Him, *all things* are possible. Shake off habits that hold you captive. Soar into the unlimited realm of God's power. Allow Him to prove all things are possible.

How have you been limiting your potential? How can you be free?

God Never Abandons Us

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: DANIEL 1

For many Israelites, this must have felt like the darkest of times. Jerusalem and the temple had been destroyed. Their treasure was gone. Their king and many of their people had been taken into exile by mighty Babylon. Nothing of any value or importance remained behind. Their position could have defined hopelessness.

The Bible tells us God *never* abandoned His people. They had been exiled because of their disobedience and idolatry, but as the prophet Jeremiah, who lived at this time, realized, God's mercies are new every morning. His faithfulness is great, even when we are unfaithful (Lamentations 3:22-23).

Even while the Israelites were in exile, some people sought to follow and obey God. Men like Daniel rose to be a witness for Him in this foreign land and this seemingly hopeless situation.

In many ways, this time of exile served as a purifying agent to help them put their lives in perspective and realize what they had done. It forced them to realize that kingdoms could rise and fall. God remained sovereign over every nation and all people. He can and will accomplish His purposes even if we fail Him and even if we fall short.

Today remember that these truths apply to you. No matter what you are going through, God has not abandoned you. He is with you. You can trust your life to Him.

Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the LORD handed Jehoiakim king of Judah over to him...and he brought them...to the house of his god, and he brought the vessels into the treasury of his god.

Daniel 1:1-2 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I trust You. I know that You are with me right now. Help me serve You with my time, talents, and treasures. In Jesus' name, amen.

Reflect on a time when you felt God was testing and purifying you.

THURSDAY

August

4

It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him.

Daniel 2:22 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, open my mind to understand profound and hidden things. Shed Your light to illumine things that seem unknowable. In Jesus' name, amen.

Hidden Things

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: DANIEL 2

It seemed an impossible request. King Nebuchadnezzar demanded his advisors provide the correct explanation of a disturbing dream and describe that dream in detail. When his wise men complained, the king became angry and ordered them all killed, including Daniel.

Daniel knew no man could fulfill the king's request, but he knew God and had faith He could do anything. God revealed every detail of this dream to Daniel in a vision.

After listening to Daniel's vivid description, Nebuchadnezzar "*fell on his face and paid humble respect to Daniel.*" Knowing he had experienced a miracle, he proclaimed, "*Your God truly is a God of gods and a LORD of kings and a revealer of secrets*" (vs. 46-47).

Daniel, too, knew he had been given insights that were not humanly possible, but he knew God could reveal "*profound and hidden things.*" He knew God heard his prayers and could answer them in miraculous ways.

We might conclude that such miracles are possible only for select people, but we serve the same God. He is willing to reveal these "*profound and hidden things*" to us.

What questions do you have? What problems do you face? Are there challenges that seem too difficult? Commit every need to God in humble, sincere prayer. Have the faith to believe He can reveal anything to you. Be bold to ask for revelation and insight. He is still a "*revealer of secrets.*"

What circumstances are you facing that seem beyond comprehension?

Monuments to Self

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: DANIEL 3

Having created a monument to himself, Nebuchadnezzar demanded that leaders throughout the country gather for a special service. Once they were assembled, they heard an announcement. At the sound of the music, everyone was to bow down and worship the statue. There were no exceptions. Anyone who did not immediately bow down was to be thrown into a blazing furnace.

There could be no clearer demonstration. The message was that Nebuchadnezzar wasn't just to be admired but also worshiped. There could be no rivals and no questions.

On the surface, this might seem like a usual display of arrogance. Many throughout history have been driven by similar desires, including people in politics, business, entertainment, and the military.

Napoleon once said, "Power is my mistress." He observed that once people have power, they have a hard time relinquishing it. They can even develop a kind of god complex, feeling that they are invincible and can do whatever they want. Nebuchadnezzar had a significant god complex.

Many people seek to be revered. The Bible tells us that, in God's Kingdom, greatness is reserved for those who *serve* (Luke 22:26). As Jesus said, the *greatest* are those who *humble* themselves like a child (Matthew 18:1-4).

Today humble yourself before God. Seek to serve Him. Be sure to seek first His Kingdom. Do not allow your life to be dominated by pride.

Write a prayer repenting of any pride in your life.

FRIDAY

August

5

Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its width six cubits. He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.

Daniel 3:1

PRAYER:

Father, I humble myself before You. I am Your servant. I give You all the praise and glory. In Jesus' name, amen.

SATURDAY

August

6

Now I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and...same judgment.

1 Corinthians 1:10 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, help me to be a faithful servant. I surrender my life to You. Use me for Your Kingdom. Help me fulfill Your call. In Jesus' name, amen.

The Impact of Disunity

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 1

From their home in southern Mesopotamia, the Sumerians became one of history's first superpowers. Their empire gradually expanded as far as the Mediterranean Sea. Their cities included Ur, the home of Abraham. Throughout their history, they had to defend their empire from invading raiders and battle rebellion within their borders.

They had many strengths and for decades held a position of dominance. Eventually, a lack of unity led to a decline. Fighting among themselves, the Sumerians faded as a world power.

This kind of infighting can destroy any organization, country, family, church, or marriage. Therefore Paul strongly warned about the consequences of division. He urged the Corinthians to seek unity and eliminate rivalries and divisions. He taught them not to be consumed with personal attention and control but to seek God's Kingdom and work together to pursue the same goals.

The Bible teaches that the more Christians work together, the more effective we will be and the more impact we can have. Jesus prayed that we *"may all be one."* Why? *"So that the world may believe that You sent Me"* (John 17:20-21).

Ask God to help you seek the unity of the body. Surrender your will to the lordship of Jesus, as head of the church. Strive to have *"the same mind"* with your brothers and sisters in Christ, united in serving God and united in seeking first His Kingdom.

How can you contribute to unity within your sphere of influence?

Unravel Life's Knots

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: DANIEL 5

Throughout his life, Daniel faced monumental problems. As a young man, he was taken captive in Babylon along with thousands of other Israelites. He was thrust into an alien culture saturated with principles that violated God's laws. He and his people were outnumbered and surrounded by hostile forces, yet he stayed true to God, his faith, and his people, and even rose to a position of leadership.

How was Daniel able to achieve these accomplishments? The Bible tells us he had “*an extraordinary spirit, knowledge and insight.*” He could explain enigmas and solve “*difficult problems.*” The Hebrew word here literally means a knot, and the word translated solving means to free or *unravel*.

We see that Daniel was an expert at *solving* problems. He knew how to provide clarity. Instead of being bound by the knots of life, Daniel was given the ability to *unravel* these knots.

To be like Daniel, we need to have that same spirit of problem-solving, unraveling knots, seeking solutions, and setting people free. When we see problems, we should seek God's wisdom to unravel them, and then believe Him for the answers.

We can be confident that God delights in giving us answers and setting us free.

If you face problems, do not be discouraged, confused, afraid, or frustrated. Turn to God. Seek Him with conviction, sincerity, and persistence. Ask Him to help you unravel the problems you face.

What problems do you need to hand over to God to be unraveled?

SUNDAY

August

7

An extraordinary spirit, knowledge and insight, interpretation of dreams, explanation of riddles, and solving of difficult problems were found in this Daniel.

Daniel 5:12 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I commit this problem to you: _____ . I seek understanding. I know you can help me find solutions and answers. In Jesus' name, amen.

MONDAY

August

8

This is the interpretation of the matter... You have been weighed in the balances and found wanting... your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.

Daniel 5:26-28 ESV

PRAYER:

Father, I humble myself before You. I seek first Your Kingdom. I dedicate all I have to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Found Deficient

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: DANIEL 5

The Dutch artist Rembrandt had a profound knowledge of the Bible and frequently turned to the Bible for inspiration. He also sought to bring a fresh perspective to familiar stories.

In 1635, he turned to the story of Belshazzar's feast for a powerful painting. Historian Paul Johnson observed that Rembrandt invested his painting "with a breathless excitement."

Instead of focusing on the masses attending the feast, Rembrandt brings us into the *intimacy* of the moment Belshazzar confronted God's mysterious message written by a finger. The king's eyes are mesmerized. We feel his shock. A handful of onlookers share his amazement.

Rembrandt portrayed the king's lavish wardrobe, a glorious crown, and vessels perhaps taken from the temple in Jerusalem. Rembrandt focused particularly on the gold, which became a symbol of Belshazzar's life. It was all for nothing!

No one knew the meaning of the words until Daniel was summoned. He gave the sobering interpretation: The king had been arrogant. It was time to face God and give an account of his life.

This painting reminds us that many people are like Belshazzar, consumed by temporary pleasures and not realizing they will face God and be judged for how they spent their lives or what they do with their resources. Make sure you are ready to face God. Humble yourself before Him. Surrender your life to Him anew.

Do you need to alter how you're spending your life and resources?

Praising Our Creator

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PSALM 148

TUESDAY

August

9

Wherever he turned, the psalmist found reasons to praise the Lord. He called everything and everyone to praise Him – all the universe – including angels and hosts, sun, moon, and stars!

His heart filled with praise as he considered nature: snow, rain, wind, and fire. He marveled at mountains, hills, rivers, oceans, trees with their fruit, beasts, and birds. The range of God's creations astonished him.

He thought about the diversity of humanity, races and personalities, interests and resources, study and growth, and the impact of change. He considered shape and design, the abilities the Lord gives each of us, and the opportunity to experience life.

We can be focused on problems, but the psalmist challenges us to realize the glories of creation and think about God as our *Creator*. He spoke, and everything was created out of *nothing* (Genesis 1:2). Be amazed that all creation owes its very existence to Him and that each one of us is special in His sight.

We can easily take life for granted. The psalmist urges us to stop and consider creation every day, no matter who we are or where we go, and to realize all we owe to God. Ponder all He has given us, the glories of simple things, trees, plants, flowers, clouds, sunsets, and sunrises. Praise Him for the food that nourishes us, the water that sustains us, the beauty that inspires us, and our families and friends.

Praise Him!

Compose a poem praising and thanking God for all He's given you.

Let them praise the name of the LORD! For he commanded and they were created. And he established them forever and ever; he gave a decree, and it shall not pass away.

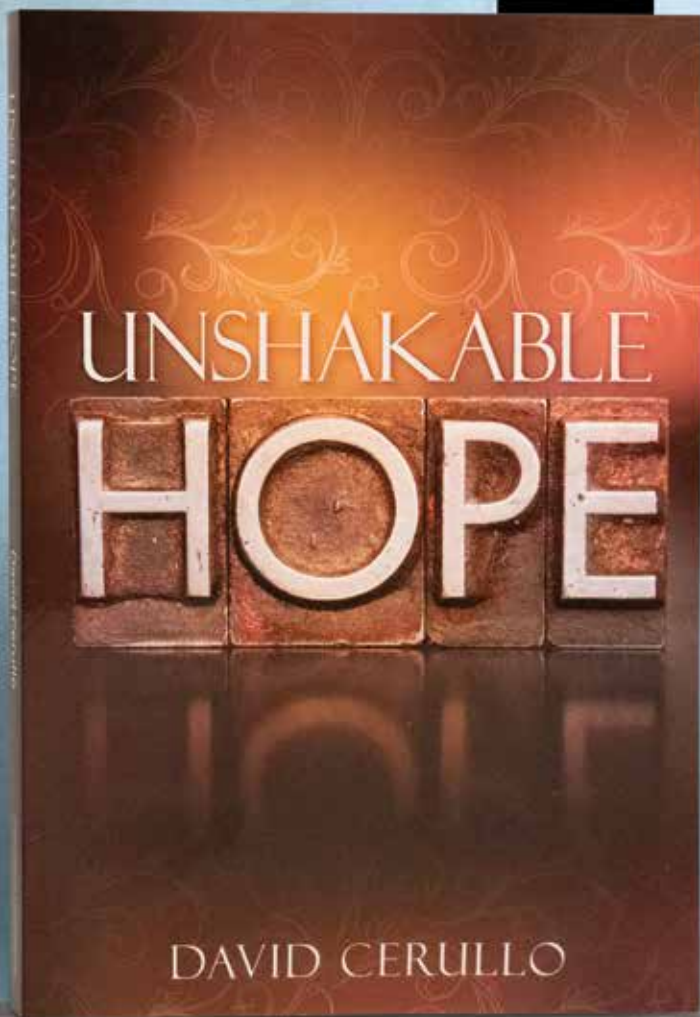
Psalm 148:5-6 ESV

PRAYER:

Father, forgive me for taking so much for granted. Thank You for all You have given me. I am grateful. I praise You. In Jesus' name, amen.

What's Shakin

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WEDNESDAY

August

10

The kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins... Five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. [...] The groom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut.

Matthew 25:1-2, 10 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, use me to bring the Gospel to the nations. Thank You for all You have given me. Help me be ready for Jesus' return. In His name, amen.

The Night Is Flying

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: MATTHEW 25

Religious wars and violence swept throughout Europe. During these traumatic times, Philipp Nicolai fled for his life on several occasions. Nicolai, a pastor born in Germany on this day in 1556, at times went into hiding, forced to preach in secret house meetings.

Compounding these problems, a plague swept through the area around Westphalia where he was pastoring, killing more than a thousand church members.

To comfort his people, he wrote a hymn called "Wake, Awake, for Night Is Flying." It reminded everyone of life's brevity and the importance of eternal things.

Referencing Jesus' story of the ten virgins, Nicolai wrote, "Wake, awake, for night is flying, the watchmen on the heights are crying; 'Awake, Jerusalem, at last!'" He urged them to focus on God's Kingdom and have joy in their salvation. This gave them perspective on things happening in the world and their lives.

This perspective can help us be ready for Jesus' return. When the groom comes, we can be glad for we are *ready* for the marriage feast He has prepared! We can go and meet Him and cry, "Alleluia!" Make sure you are ready for His coming. Look around and think about the people who are not ready. Remember that midnight is striking all around the world for millions of people who do not know Jesus, who aren't ready. Dedicate yourself to being His witness, and be an example of Christ's love.

What do you need to do to make sure you're ready for Jesus' return?

The Ancient of Days

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: DANIEL 7

God gave Daniel a dream about a time in the future of turmoil and strife. Daniel saw God in His glory, sitting on a throne, described as *"the Ancient of Days."* This title and picture put everything in perspective.

The title reminds us that God is *beyond* time. He is never worried or caught up in the world's troubles. He is the perfect judge, always pure, holy, and objective, and He always brings an eternal perspective to every situation.

Daniel saw His throne *"ablaze with flames"* and *"a river of fire was flowing and coming out from before Him."* This was a place of absolute purity where sin cannot be tolerated. Throngs of people surrounded the throne. As they stood before Him, *"the books were opened."* These books were the history of what these people had done, not just some things but *everything*.

Think about this picture. God is on the throne. He is to be worshiped and praised! He is the *"Ancient of Days."* He is completely objective, beyond time, and holy. He knows everything you have said and done.

Humble yourself and seek Him. Ask Him to burn away any sin. Commit yourself to serve Him. Fill your life with His Word. Surrender to His Spirit. Ask Him to fill you with His miracle-working power. Reach out to others, so they might be ready when the books on their lives are opened.

THURSDAY

August

11

The Ancient of Days took His seat...His throne was ablaze with flames, its wheels were a burning fire. A river of fire was flowing and coming out from before Him...and the books were opened.

Daniel 7:9-10 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I humble myself before You. Purify me. Thank You for Your perspective on my life. Use me to spread the Gospel. In Jesus' name, amen.

What will you hear when God opens the book of your earthly deeds?

FRIDAY

August

12

His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house will consume me."

John 2:17 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I seek first Your Kingdom. Open my eyes to the mission fields all around me. Use me to impact lives for Christ. In Jesus' name, amen.

Zeal

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOHN 2

"Let me burn out for God," Henry Martyn wrote in his diary after arriving in India. But he did not always have this level of commitment.

Although raised in a Christian home, only gradually did he commit his life to Christ. As his commitment grew, he was moved by the example of missionary David Brainerd, became devoted to prayer, and desired to glorify God.

Inspired by William Carey's pioneering missionary efforts in India, Martyn felt the call to go to that country. After ordination as an Anglican priest, he was named a chaplain to the East India Company and left for India in 1805.

He also looked for every opportunity to work in missions. Taking advantage of his brilliant mind, others encouraged him to work on Bible translations. He began translating the New Testament into Hindustani, Persian, and Arabic.

Increasingly, Martyn battled health problems. In 1812, hoping to find a solution, he embarked on a journey back to England but died along the way. He was 31 years old, but he truly had "burned out" for God.

His example reminds us of the words of the disciples as they looked at the life of Jesus. They realized that He did not compromise. He was *sold out*. His only priority was serving the Father.

Ask God to give you the zeal to serve Him, a passion for souls, and a commitment to reaching the world with the Gospel.

Journal about your commitment to reaching the lost with the Gospel.

Continued Humility

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: DANIEL 8

Daniel had everything going for him. He was handsome and talented. He showed “*intelligence in every kind of literature and expertise*” and was “*endowed with understanding and discerning knowledge.*” He even understood “*all kinds of visions and dreams*” (Daniel 1:4, 17). He was able to describe and interpret dreams given to King Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2). Despite these gifts, he consistently stayed humble.

We see this humility when he was given revelations he did not understand. Impacted by what he had seen, he became “*exhausted and sick for days.*” He tried to go about business as usual but remained “*astounded at the vision.*” He was troubled by the vision he could not understand. He had been given special gifts, but even Daniel had limits.

We can respond in many ways to the blessings of God, the abilities, gifts, and insights He gives us. We can easily feel superior and become spiritually proud. The experience of Daniel reminds us that we *always* owe *everything* to God.

The Bible makes clear that God looks for people who are humble, who serve Him faithfully in whatever assignments they are given, and who recognize that God still has all the power, all the wisdom, and all the authority. We are just His servants.

At every stage of life, seek to stay humble before God, and guard against spiritual pride. Remember that you are His servant, and you owe everything to Him.

Then I, Daniel, was exhausted and sick for days. Then I got up again and carried on the king's business; but I was astounded at the vision, and there was no one to explain it.

Daniel 8:27 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I submit my time, talents, and treasures to You. I know everything I have is a gift from You. In Jesus' name, amen.

What is your response to all the blessings God has given you?

SUNDAY

August

14

So I gave my attention to the LORD God to seek Him by prayer and pleading, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed.

Daniel 9:3-4 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I commit these issues to You: _____ . I cry out to You for answers. Give me your insight and understanding. In Jesus' name, amen.

Intense Prayer

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: DANIEL 9

God worked through Daniel, even revealing dreams no person could have grasped. Despite all this experience and sensitivity, Daniel was puzzled by the dreams and visions he received. He also struggled to understand the message God had given to Jeremiah before him (Jeremiah 25:11-12).

Daniel observed that God had told Jeremiah that Jerusalem would be desolate for 70 years. Daniel was *not sure* what God meant or what was to be done. He did not throw up his hands in despair but set his face to seek God. Daniel focused all his attention on Him.

Daniel did not just pray a calm prayer but with *passion* and *persistence*, earnestly seeking God. He called on the Lord with a sincere heart. Daniel *fasted*, so he might increase the intensity of his focus. He put on sackcloth and ashes as an expression of mourning and repentance, demonstrating that he was willing to humble himself before God. He confessed the sins of his people and admitted that they hadn't listened to God's servant.

Daniel sought God so intensely that he experienced extreme weariness. Because of this intensity, God sent an angel to give him insight with understanding.

Do you have questions? Needs? God encourages you to *seek* Him with intensity. If you don't receive an answer immediately, don't give up. Humble yourself before Him. Stay persistent, and focus on Him as Daniel did.

What needs are you seeking God intensely for?

Delays and Persistence

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: DANIEL 10

Daniel sought God to help him understand a vision. He had every reason to expect an answer. He had served God faithfully with a clean heart. In the past, God had given him revelations about dreams and visions (Daniel 1:7). Yet day after day, God did not answer!

Daniel must have wondered why. Had he displeased God? Was sin blocking his prayers?

Eventually Daniel did receive an answer. He may have been surprised that the delay was caused by *spiritual opposition*. His prayers had been heard, and the answer was on the way. Daniel simply had not yet received it. Finally, 21 days after he prayed, the answer arrived. But that answer *only* reached Daniel because of supernatural intervention by the archangel Michael.

We need to realize that we too are involved in spiritual warfare. We should not assume that every delay is the result of demonic opposition, but we still must recognize the reality of this kind of opposition.

What happens if your prayers aren't answered? First, be *persistent*. Pray and don't give up. Seek and keep seeking (Matthew 7:7). Keep your life pure from sin (Psalm 24:3-4). Be sensitive to possible spiritual opposition. Remain armed with the "*whole armor of God*," so you can "*stand against the wiles of the devil*" (Ephesians 6:11), and fill your life with praise.

Be confident that God hears your prayers. Trust that He will answer in His time.

MONDAY

August

15

*From the first day...
your words were heard;
and I have come
because of your words.
But the prince of the
kingdom of Persia
withstood me twenty-
one days; and behold,
Michael, one of the
chief princes, came to
help me.*

Daniel 10:12-13

PRAYER:

Father, I commit these needs to You: _____ . Thank You for answering my prayers. In Jesus' name, amen.

What have you been requesting from God for a long time?

TUESDAY

August

16

Your people shall be delivered... Many... who sleep... shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament.

Daniel 12:1-3

PRAYER:

Father, thank You that I will spend eternity with You. I am so grateful for the glorious home You have prepared for me. In Jesus' name, amen.

Our Eternal Home

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: DANIEL 12

Jesus said that *"in the world you will have tribulation"* (John 16:33). Our troubles can seem overwhelming, but the Bible gives us a unique perspective. We are urged to realize God has prepared a glorious new home for us who awaken *"to everlasting life."*

Instead of being discouraged, Jesus wanted us to *"be of good cheer."* Instead of feeling hopeless, we are to realize that He has *"overcome the world"* (John 16:33). He has gone to prepare a place for us that we might be with Him throughout eternity (John 14:3).

We cannot imagine how wonderful it will be! As Paul wrote, *"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him"* (1 Corinthians 2:9).

God revealed to John just *some* of what awaits us. In eternity, *"There shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away"* (Revelation 21:3-4). Daniel described how *"those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament."* Our focus should be on trusting Him, being right in His sight, and being excited about our eternal future with Him.

No matter what you go through, do not be overwhelmed. Praise God for the home He *already* has prepared for you. Seek to shine brightly, a beacon of hope for this world.

What are you most looking forward to in eternity?

Spirit of God

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOHN 14

Born in Dublin, Ireland, on this day in 1780, George Croly spent much of his adult life as a writer. The articles he contributed often focused on his Christian faith, but today he is most remembered for a hymn he wrote in 1854.

“Spirit of God, Descend upon My Heart” was an *honest* hymn in which Croly confessed his weakness. He acknowledged his thoughts were often dominated by his flesh and carnal pleasures. He had come to *depend* on the Spirit to wean him from earth’s attractions and to change his heart and mind.

He realized God, through His Spirit, could overcome the impulses of his flesh and overpower his human faults and make him love God as he ought to love.

Croly asked God to teach him that He was always near, to help him bear with those who struggled, and to respond with patience when prayers aren’t quickly answered. He realized he needed the Spirit’s help to love God. The Spirit would ignite him with a holy passion, and symbolically, his heart would be the altar and God’s love the flame.

Remember the Holy Spirit is with you in every situation. He is ready to empower you and give you the wisdom, power, and ability you need. He can fill you with a supernatural love for others, even those who seem unlovable.

Call on Him. Listen to Him. Trust in Him. He is your Helper!

How have you noticed the Holy Spirit’s presence and impact in your life?

The Father... will give you another Helper... the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.

John 14:16-17 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, may Your Spirit fill me and change me. Give me Your power. Help me impact this world for the Gospel. In Jesus’ name, amen.

THURSDAY

August

18

Carry no money belt, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the way.

Luke 10:4 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I commit my life to You. I commit my time, talents, and treasures to You. Use me to impact lives for Your Kingdom. In Jesus' name, amen.

Total Commitment

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: LUKE 10

There they were in Indiana on the American frontier in the early 19th century. Even though conditions frequently were foreboding, the Holy Spirit brought waves of revival. Lives were changed by camp meetings. Churches were established in surroundings that were often crude.

Many men followed the call into ministry even though they had few possessions. In his autobiography, Joseph Tarkington, one of that day's influential preachers, described how some ministers were forced to work in menial jobs just to get clothes to wear.

One of his focuses was James Sims, a man whose ministry had a significant impact. A woman who heard Sims speak described how he stood barefooted "as he delivered as good a sermon as she ever heard." He knew what it was like to face tribulation, to persevere in hostile conditions, and to serve God faithfully, whether he had shoes or not.

Men like Sims were called to preach and didn't let anything stop them. They were resolute, fearless men, full of power and the Holy Ghost. The opposition was strong, but these men made the breach in the wall of Satan and saved this country from heathendom.

God still looks for people with this same kind of commitment, who aren't distracted by the things of the world, who won't let anything stop them from serving Jesus, who are dedicated and unafraid. Dedicate yourself anew to the Gospel just as you are.

Reflect on a powerful sermon you've heard and how it impacted you.

Your Heart

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: HOSEA 1

God asked Hosea to take a wife whom he knew to be a harlot. In that culture, this was perhaps the ultimate disgrace. Prostitution also was a *symbol* of people who were not committed to God and who worshiped idols and false gods (Exodus 34:14-16). God had warned His people not to “*fall into prostitution*” (Leviticus 19:29). Infidelity resulted in harsh penalties (Deuteronomy 22:13-24).

By asking Hosea to marry a harlot, God was asking him to do something he never would have *considered*. Why would God tell him to take “*a wife inclined to infidelity*”?

Hosea was asked to be a symbol, representing all God's people had done to Him. Through his example, God would reveal His mercy, grace, and compassion despite their sins. He was also calling them to holiness, to remember His standards, and to repent from sins.

No longer to go after Israel's lovers, the people were to return to God and recognize God had blessed them and loved them (Hosea 2:1-8).

Today many are like the people of Hosea's time. They pursue the wrong goals. They're in love with the wrong things. They are deceived by the world. Like them, God offers us choices as individuals and nations.

Search *your* heart and mind to see if you have become spiritually unfaithful. Remember that Jesus loves you so much that He died just for you. Renew your love for Him.

FRIDAY

August

19

Go, take to yourself a wife inclined to infidelity and have children of infidelity; for the land commits flagrant infidelity, abandoning the LORD.

Hosea 1:2 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, show me if I am in love with the wrong things. Help me to serve You faithfully. Thank You for loving me! In Jesus' name, amen.

Are you more in love with things of the world than with things of eternity?

SATURDAY

August

20

They shall praise His name with dancing; they shall sing praises to Him with tambourine and lyre.

Psalms 149:3 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I rejoice in all that You have done for me. May I be a witness to others. I praise and worship You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Overflowing Response

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PSALM 149

We respond to God's presence and all He has done for us. Some are cautious, reluctant to express their feelings, or concerned about how others might react. Others are overwhelmed with gratitude, and willing to express these feelings openly and share their testimony.

The psalmist indicated this kind of gratitude can inspire rhythmic responses. "With dancing" is the response of souls who are moved by God. They feel the pulse coursing throughout their being. They are so moved they cannot sit still.

These are expressions of surrender by those overwhelmed by His presence. These people realize all He has done for them and are unable to contain the joy. They overflow with excitement and appreciation.

This is how David responded as the Ark of the Covenant was brought into Jerusalem. He couldn't contain himself and expressed his joy by "leaping and dancing before the LORD" (2 Samuel 6:16).

Think about all God has done for you: the joy of salvation, peace, blessings, answers to prayer, protection, meaning, purpose, forgiveness, and freedom.

Don't be shy about expressing all God means to you. Share your testimony. Let others know you are a believer, and don't be inhibited by what others may think. Be ready to sing. Raise your hands and lift your voice. Respond in the Spirit. Praise Him. Let your light shine others might know what is in your heart (Matthew 5:16).

Reflect on what all God means to you and what He's done for you.

Unconditional Love

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: HOSEA 3

When God asked Hosea to marry a harlot, he became a symbol. Through his example, God was demonstrating that He wanted a love relationship with *His* people. He wanted their *hearts*. He wanted them to give themselves to Him voluntarily. He was grieved they had gone after other lovers.

No matter what they had done, God still loved them. He *bought* them. They no longer needed to be prostitutes but could enter a new relationship with Him. Eventually they would realize just how much He loved them and how much He wanted them to return to Him.

Because of love, God reaches out to us, to everyone, even those who reject and deny Him. Because of love, he forgives our sins and corrects us when we make mistakes. He trains and disciplines us. Why? Because *“God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life”* (John 3:16).

Our lives change when we enter that love relationship. Through this relationship, love becomes our motivation. It inspires us and changes our attitude.

Think about the lessons from the life of Hosea and how much God loves *you*. Allow that love to transform your life, deliver you from fear, give you the right motives, open your eyes to spiritual truths, motivate you to reach out to others, and show everyone His love.

SUNDAY

August

21

The LORD said to me, “Go again, love a woman who is loved by her husband, yet is committing adultery, as the LORD loves the sons of Israel, though they turn to other gods.”

Hosea 3:1 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for loving me. Help me to put aside anything that comes between us. Help me to show Your love toward others. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Do you believe deep down how much God really loves you?

MONDAY

August

22

*My people are destroyed
for lack of knowledge.*

Hosea 4:6 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I believe Your promises are true for me. Open my eyes to understand more of Your truth. I commit my life into Your hands. In Jesus' name, amen.

Lack of Knowledge

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: HOSEA 4

“Knowledge is power,” concluded Sir Francis Bacon. Born in London in 1561, Bacon held several important government positions, including lord chancellor. His extensive knowledge enabled him to take advantage of opportunities, influence projects, and fulfill his God-given potential.

Bacon's insights find a parallel in the spiritual realm, where God offers riches and blessings to all people. The Bible tells us, “*Eye has not seen and ear has not heard...all that God has prepared for those who love Him*” (1 Corinthians 2:9). We cannot even conceive of the *vastness* of these blessings.

Many believers fail to experience this potential because of a “*lack of knowledge*.” They don't know so much. To begin to grasp God's promised riches, we need to immerse our lives in His Word and deepen our relationship with Him. We must walk by faith and *believe* that His promises are true.

As God told Hosea, He has *already* provided answers. When we ignore His Word, we will not experience complete peace and rest, fulfillment and meaning, or joy and satisfaction. Without God-centered knowledge, we can easily seek the wrong goals and draw the wrong conclusions.

Today think about the promises of God, and realize they are *true* for you! Read His Word. Declare His truths. Seek Him. Don't be content with less than all He has prepared for you. Believe that His Word *really* is true.

Write out and reflect on one of your favorite promises from God's Word.

God's Standards

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: HOSEA 5

The Bible reminds us how easily we tend to criticize others, identify their mistakes, and judge them. In contrast, we can find ourselves blind to our weaknesses and ready to justify our actions and thoughts.

Hosea knew religious leaders could assume they were beyond criticism. Others assumed they were special simply because of their birth and considered themselves immune from judgment and criticism. Some people in positions of power felt above the law.

Hosea reminded them that people at all levels of society made mistakes. They sinned and needed forgiveness. This was true for religious and political leaders as well as common people, even those who are religious.

Through Hosea, God wanted them to know His standards apply to everyone, including politicians, leaders, and common people. God looks at *everyone*, regardless of their background or position. All of us need to humble ourselves before God and obey His Word.

These problems were true in Hosea's time, and they are true today. The Bible tells us, "*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23). We are deceived if we think we have no sin. God stands ready to forgive us, but we need to confess our sins and admit when we are wrong (1 John 1:8-9).

Be careful before you criticize others. Be honest with God. Let Him examine your heart, your thoughts, your attitudes, and your actions. Seek to be clean in His sight, forgiven.

Ask God to examine your heart and reveal any sin or wrong motives.

TUESDAY

August

23

*Hear this, O priests!
Take heed, O house of
Israel! Give ear, O house
of the king! For yours is
the judgment.*

Hosea 5:1

PRAYER:

Father, reveal any sins I have committed. Free me from a judgmental spirit. In Jesus' name, amen.

WEDNESDAY

August

24

It is destined...to die once and after this comes judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.

Hebrews 9:27-28 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for sending Jesus to die for my sins. Help me live for You. I trust You for today and the future. In Jesus' name, amen.

Living for God

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: HEBREWS 9

The people of Pompeii went about their daily lives as though nothing would change. Then on this day in 79 AD, Mount Vesuvius erupted.

Located about nine miles from Naples in southern Italy, this volcano was thought to be extinct. The explosion rained down debris on Pompeii that piled more than nine feet deep. The air filled with poisonous gas and fumes. More than 15,000 people died. This explosion was a sobering reminder that change can happen at *any* time.

Some Bible scholars believe that the letter to the Hebrews was written around the time of this eruption. Hebrews reminded readers of the shortness of life and the importance of being right before God. Remember that all of us will face His judgment.

The Bible reminds believers that we can know His peace in every situation and be freed from worry. Remember that God sent Jesus to die for us. He was sacrificed to take away our sins, deliver us from fear, and enable us to receive eternal life.

You don't have to be afraid or worried. Jesus died for you. He came that you might be freed from sin, that you might have peace. Remember, "*The world is passing away...but the one who does the will of God continues to live forever*" (1 John 2:17). Always seek first His Kingdom. Trust Him to protect and provide for you.

What would you do right now if you knew today was your last day to live?

Pressing On

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: HOSEA 6

Israel had allowed their lives to be filled with sin. They had turned away from God and gone their own way. He was ready to restore them, but they had choices to make. Hosea told them they needed to “*press on to know the LORD.*” They could not be passive. This had to be a real commitment.

God allows us to make choices every day. We choose what to do and say, where to go, and what to do with our time and resources. He allows us to reject Him or follow Him. Even if we are Christians, we still can go our own way and not experience all He has prepared for us.

So, what are to do? First, we need to *know* God. We should not just know about Him but have an intimate, personal *relationship* with Him. We must spend time with Him, seek Him, and fill our lives with His Word. We need to press on to know Him.

This requires effort and initiative. We need to follow God, be proactive, and be so eager that we will not give up until we are sure we know His will.

Today ask God to help you make the right choices. Commit each decision to Him. Seek Him. Read His Word. Cry to Him for discernment. Don't be content with less than His best for you. He is waiting to hear from you.

Let's press on to know the LORD. His appearance is as sure as the dawn; and He will come to us like the rain, as the spring rain waters the earth.

Hosea 6:3 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, give me discernment to make the right decisions today. I seek to do Your will. I commit all my choices to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Make a list of the pros and cons of an upcoming decision you're praying for.

FRIDAY

August

26

Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, "Be taken up and thrown into the sea," and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him.

Mark 11:23 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I commit these situations to You:

_____. All things are possible with You.

Thank You for meeting my needs. In Jesus' name, amen.

Only Believe

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: MARK 11

Daniel Paul Rader felt called to the ministry. Born in 1878, he became a pastor. However, in 1908, finding the attractions of the world too strong, he left the ministry to enter the business world. Three years later, his faith was renewed, and he reentered full-time ministry.

After returning to ministry, his preaching had a greater impact. People sensed this anointing after he became pastor of the Moody Church in Chicago. He later founded the Chicago Gospel Tabernacle, which he pastored for eleven years.

Besides working as a pastor and evangelist, Rader also was a pioneer Christian broadcaster and an important songwriter. In 1921, he felt inspired to write a hymn about what he had learned about faith. To many people, living in victory seemed complicated. But Rader wrote that the essence of faith was *simple*: "Only believe; all things are possible, only believe."

Some people were reluctant to exercise faith, so Rader encouraged believers to remember that we have no reason to fear, for "all power in earth, all power above, is given to Him for the flock of His love."

Rader encouraged us to remember that Jesus goes before us. If doors seem shut, we should remember that He is always with us. We can "count on His presence in darkness and dawn."

What problems do you face? Today remember all things are possible with God. Put your faith into action! Only believe!

Are you having trouble believing that God can meet certain needs?

Trust in God

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ISAIAH 2

On this day in 1883, four detonations took place over five hours at Krakatoa, a volcanic island located between Java and Sumatra in the Pacific Ocean. Intensely hot debris began falling for hundreds of miles. The eruption could be heard 3,000 miles away and ejected ash to a height of 50 miles.

The volcano produced waves towering more than 135 feet. Traveling at hundreds of miles per hour, these waves rippled throughout the world, causing deaths and untold destruction. Of the 36,000 people who died in this catastrophe, all but about 2,000 were killed by water. Krakatoa, which had been an island 2,600 feet high, was completely destroyed.

The people on Krakatoa began that day assuming life would continue as normal. There was no clear warning that an explosion of this magnitude would take place. Most simply were not ready.

The Bible reminds us circumstances can change at any time in ways small or large. Thinking about the future, we are warned not to put our trust in human beings who “*are as frail as breath.*” We may boast about our accomplishments and power, but in God’s sight, all of this is so insignificant.

Today remember that trends will come and go. Kingdoms can rise and fall. People may fail you and fall short of your expectations. Conditions may change, but you can depend on God. Stand on His Word. Place your trust in Him.

SATURDAY

August

27

When the LORD rises to shake the earth, his enemies will crawl into holes in the ground. They will hide in caves in...rocks from...terror of the LORD...Don't put your trust in mere humans. They are as frail as breath.

Isaiah 2:19-22 NLT

PRAYER:

Father, help me fix my eyes on you. No matter what is going on, I trust You. Thank You for Your faithfulness. In Jesus' name, amen.

How can you ensure that you are standing only on God's Word today?

SUNDAY

August

28

*Ephraim is himself
thrown about with
the nations; Ephraim
has become a round
loaf not turned over.
Strangers devour his
strength, yet he does not
know it; gray hairs also
are sprinkled on him,
yet he does not know it.*

Hosea 7:8-9 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, search my heart and mind. Root out anything that is displeasing to You. I give You first place in my life. In Jesus' name, amen.

Mixing with Nations

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: HOSEA 7

Why did Israel (“*Ephraim*”) have so many problems? Hosea warned that they had become *polluted* by the attitudes of people around them. They should have recognized how far they had drifted from God, but they had become proud and spiritually *blind*. They needed to *return* to the Lord and seek Him.

Instead of focusing on God, they had “*become like a gullible dove, without sense*” (v. 11). God had provided a sure foundation, but they had become unstable, not even sure of what they believed or whom to trust.

Israel demonstrated a pattern that is still true: It is easy to focus on kings, resources, powerful reputations, and articulate personalities. We often become self-centered and stop seeking the Lord. The Bible urges us to trust God *all the time*. We should never become self-confident or allow our lives to be influenced by ungodly ideas. We need to stay humble before Him and depend on Him.

Ask God to examine *your* life. Has the world corrupted you? Have you become proud? Are you trusting in the people or resources around you, or are you depending on Him and seeking first His Kingdom?

Today evaluate your loyalties and priorities. How are you spending *your* time? Your resources? If you have drifted, return to Him. Seek God with your whole heart. Humble yourself before Him. Recommit your life to Him. Fill your mind with His Word. Depend on Him!

Are you trusting anything or anyone more than God?

Price of Compromise

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: HOSEA 8

Israel had abandoned God and forgotten all He had done for them. They had “paid fees for lovers,” been “swallowed up,” consumed by these peoples and nations. They had given in to compromise and lost control of their lives. They were deceived into thinking they would find delight “among the nations,” but instead they lost everything God had given them. Their “lovers” had abandoned them.

This is the price we pay for compromise, seeking the wrong things, having the wrong kind of relationships, embracing the wrong goals, and not having the discernment to make the right decisions.

The Bible urges us to realize just how fickle the world can be. The benefits it promises can seem fulfilling but can lead us in the wrong direction. Its rewards, which can seem so exciting, can quickly fade. We can easily find ourselves deceived, abandoned, and forgotten.

Make sure you are on guard against these constant temptations. Be careful whom you listen to and believe. Honor God in your relationships, how you spend your time, and the goals you pursue.

Remember how much God loves you. He wants to give you true riches and eternal rewards, but you need to stay faithful to Him. Live according to His principles. Ask for His help for the *discernment* you need to be able to resist temptation. If you have strayed, confess your sins and return to Him. Don't give in to compromise!

Do you need to redirect any area of your life where you've compromised?

MONDAY

August

29

Israel has been swallowed up; they are now among the nations like a vessel in which no one delights. For they have gone up to Assyria, like a wild donkey all alone; Ephraim has paid fees for lovers.

Hosea 8:8-9 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, help me guard my affections. Keep me from compromising. Give me spiritual discernment. In Jesus' name, amen.

TUESDAY

August

30

I pulled them along with cords of a man, with ropes of love, and I became to them as one who lifts the yoke from their jaws; and I bent down and fed them.

Hosea 11:4 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, help me do my part in the body of Christ. Help me share Your love. Use me to reach others with the Gospel. In Jesus' name, amen.

Bound in Love

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: HOSEA 11

For John Fawcett and his wife, it was an emotional moment. He had been saved under the ministry of George Whitefield. Called to ministry, he pastored a small church in northern England. Then he was asked to become the pastor of a larger church in London. This seemed like an opportunity he could not pass up, so he accepted the call.

As Fawcett and his wife prepared to leave, their parishioners gathered around them, expressing their appreciation. Pondering this display of emotion, John and his wife had second thoughts about their decision. They decided they just could not go.

John was so moved by this demonstration of Christian fellowship that he wrote a hymn, "Blest Be the Tie that Binds." He had seen how Christian hearts were bound together "in Christian love" and how this fellowship was "like to that above."

He realized, in Christ, we all are one and, "before our Father's throne we pour our ardent prayers; our fears, our hopes, our aims are one, our comforts, and our cares." He realized we need to "share our mutual woes, our mutual burdens bear." Someday, all believers will be united in Heaven where we shall be free from "sorrow, toil and pain, and sin," and "perfect love and oneness [will] reign through all eternity."

Remember, you are part of the body of Christ. Worship God together. Pray together. Share each other's burdens. Together, seek first God's Kingdom.

How can you promote unity within the body of Christ?

Hold Fast

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: REVELATION 2

Attending a camp meeting in Bloomington, Indiana, in 1820, everything changed for Joseph Tarkington. He felt the conviction of the Holy Spirit and gave his life to Jesus.

He came from a family that was not particularly religious. When he returned home, his mother told him she had heard about his conversion. To his surprise, tears rolled down her cheeks as she confessed that she had backslidden. She told him she had hidden her light as if putting it under a bushel. She encouraged him to hold fast to his profession.

In his autobiography, Tarkington described the impact of his mother's message. He developed a special burden for the lost and became a full-time preacher. He studied at Indiana Seminary, but most of his education came from experience, preaching, listening, and studying.

Tarkington went on to impact countless lives. He never forgot his mother's encouragement to *hold fast*.

Holding fast is important for the Christian life. This message was given to three different churches in the book of Revelation. In the last of the three, Jesus said, *"I am coming quickly; hold firmly to what you have, so that no one will take your crown"* (Revelation 3:11). Holding fast means resisting temptation, being sure of what we believe, and staying faithful.

Make sure you are *holding fast*. Don't compromise, but stay committed to the Kingdom of God. Don't give up or be discouraged. Serve Him faithfully.

How can you hold fast to God's promises today?

I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is... you hold firmly to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

Revelation 2:13 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I commit my time, talents, and treasures to You. Use me to impact others for Your Kingdom and glory. In Jesus' name, amen.



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A COVID Miracle!

Deborah's frightening crisis became a time of miraculous healing and restoration.

Deborah knew she didn't have time to be sick. Her life revolved around meeting the needs of her husband, son, and parents and with a job outside the home as well, she didn't have time to focus on herself. Others admonished her to slow down, but she didn't see how that was possible.

Then COVID interrupted her plans. She became very sick with the virus, but God had prepared her beforehand by leading her to watch a Campmeeting broadcast. Responding to that night's message, Deborah felt as if she had a shield that blocked fear from entering her heart. "Planting my seed gave my faith roots, and I knew I would be okay," she explained, "but it was a very difficult time. I didn't eat for twelve days and spent three days in the hospital. Those twelve days were like a fast for the Lord."

On the twelfth day of not eating, Deborah called the Inspiration

Ministries Prayer Center. The Lord led our prayer minister to use Psalm 103 as an encouragement. The Word soaked into Deborah's spirit, and she gained enough strength to take a refreshing, hot bath.

"I was so weak, walking to the tub was an act of faith. I felt like the woman who simply believed touching the hem of Jesus' garment was the key to her healing. Every step I took declared my faith in His healing.

"COVID became my opportunity to surrender everything to God. And when I did that, He worked miracles in my life! For two months, all I could do was read. COVID gave me an incredible time of restoration and renewal. I've learned to make time for myself, and I am healed of all diseases, just like He promised!"

What is YOUR testimony of God's faithfulness or His miracles?

Share it with us and our Inspiration partners by visiting inspiration.org/praise TODAY!

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Working with Inspiration Ministries in my estate planning has been a real blessing from the Lord. It was something I knew I needed to do but simply had not taken the time to pursue. It's been a wonderful feeling to get some guidance and help.

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– Georgia B., South Carolina

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A Merry Heart...

does good, like medicine. – Proverbs 17:22

What did the left eye say to the right eye?

Between you and me, something smells.

What do you call an alligator in a vest?

An investigator.

What did the duck say when she bought lipstick?

Put it on my bill.

What happens to a frog's car when it breaks down?

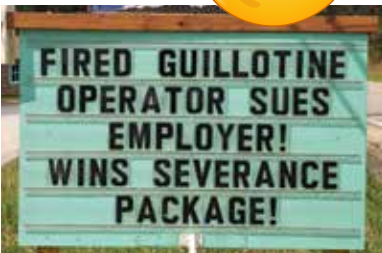
It gets toad away.

What do dentists call their x-rays?

Tooth pics!

When does a joke become a dad joke?

When it becomes a-parent.



PROFESSIONAL HYMNS

Contractor's hymn:

"The Church's One Foundation"

Electrician's hymn:

"This Little Light of Mine"

Gossip's hymn:

"Pass It On"

IRS Agent's hymn:

"I Surrender All"

Shopper's hymn:

"Sweet By and By"

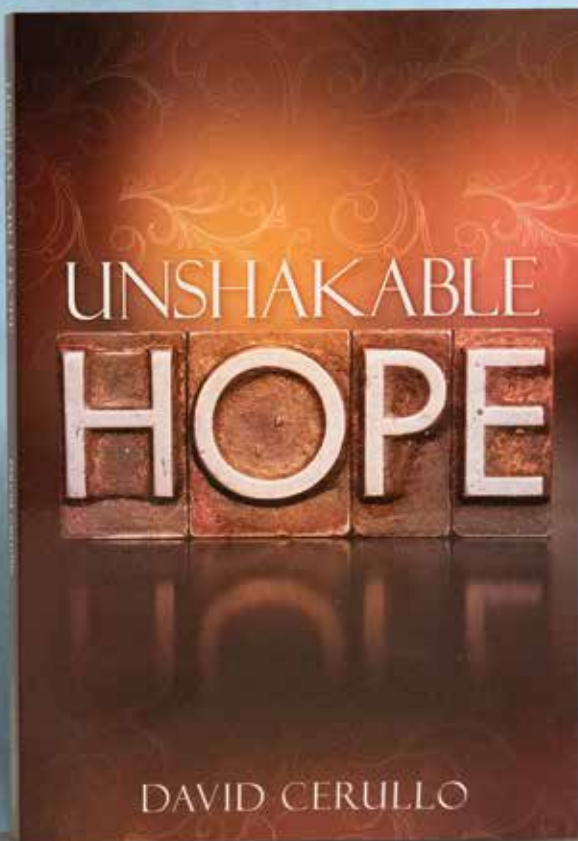
Weatherman's hymn:

"There Shall be Showers of Blessings"

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***Unshakable Hope* will energize your faith and show you how to experience God's hope in these uncertain times!**

Join author David Cerullo on a life-changing journey as he unpacks God's promises of hope through Scripture. You'll not only learn practical insights of faith, but you'll also discover the surprising keys to help you experience God's amazing blessings and favor.



NEW!

Turn to page 28 for details on how to receive ***Unshakable Hope***, and step toward your future in the confidence of God's promises and power!