

OCTOBER 2022

inspiration

M A G A Z I N E

YOUR COVENANT **BLESSINGS**

Are You
Ready for
Jesus' Return?

Supernatural
Beings Roaming
the Earth?

Building a
Fear Escape
Plan



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Your Covenant Blessings!



The promises of God are a sure thing! David's article on **page 5** unveils the power and beauty of God's covenant promises of blessing. Be assured that *goodness* and *mercy* are intended to *follow you all the days of your life*.



Our THANK YOU GIFTS for your partnership this month!

(See page 28 for details.)

EDITOR'S CORNER



With the arrival of fall comes a special season of blessing – the **Feast of Tabernacles**. God appointed this as a time for you and me to celebrate His loving care for His children.

While it's true that this life is full of challenges and difficulties, it's also true that life overflows with blessings from the Lord. My prayer as you read this month's articles and devotions is that your eyes are opened to the generosity of our Heavenly Father. Remember, He loves you more than you can comprehend, and He longs to give you the fullness of His love and joy.

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Transform YOUR LIFE!



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October 17 – 28

Peace IS possible! Join Jonathan Scott, and learn how to appropriate the divine resources God has already given you to soar above anxiety.



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God's Covenant Plan to Bless You



STRENGTHEN
your walk
with David Cerullo

A covenant is a contract...an agreement...a promise between two parties. While *people* can lie, change their minds, or decide to break their promises, God's Word assures us:

*God is not a man, that He should lie,
Nor a son of man, that He should repent;
Has He said, and will He not do it?
Or has He spoken, and will He not make it
good? (Numbers 23:19)*

When we obey God, honor Him, and do as He asks, we have a *right* to depend on Him to do what He says He will do!

Galatians 3:29 tells us, "*If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise*" (NASB). This means the blessings and promises God made to Abraham and the children of Israel belong to us as well. Because we belong to Christ, we've been made heirs of God's promises. Isn't that awesome?

An important part of living in a rhythm of God's supernatural covenant blessings is to celebrate the feasts He's designated as His appointed times to bless us (Leviticus 23:2). Many of His greatest promises are attached to the covenant

He makes with us as we obediently honor Him during these feasts.

Celebrating God's special feasts is NOT the basis of our *salvation*, but it IS one of the ways He intends for us to live in a rhythm and cycle of His supernatural provision and blessing in our lives.

GOD'S BLESSINGS FOR GIVERS

If you examine God's covenant with Israel, you'll see a significant part of their obedience was giving Him offerings. Giving was a part of their worship of God, not something to rush into and get over with.

The Lord gave clear instructions on *what* to give...*where* to give...and *how* to give. Giving was done with great rejoicing and celebration because God's people knew what they could expect from Him because of their obedience.

The children of Israel had a relationship with God, NOT a formula for getting their needs met.

The children of Israel had a *relationship* with God, NOT a formula for getting their needs met. In this relationship, there was no fear of lack or being in want. They knew that *if* they were faithful to God in their giving and their obedience to His commandments, *then* God would do everything He promised. It was that simple.

They believed God...acted on His promises...obeyed His commandments...and *then* there was no fear of crop failure, drought, famine, sickness, attack from their enemies, or barrenness!

God wants us to live in this same kind of supernatural covenant relationship with Him today. Honoring Him with our special offerings during His three special feasts each year is an important part of this, as Deuteronomy 16:16-17 tells us:

Three times in a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses, at the Feast of Unleavened Bread [Passover], at the Feast of Weeks

[Pentecost], and at the Feast of Tabernacles, and they shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed. Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you.

DOUBLE-PORTION BLESSINGS

When the children of Israel were in the wilderness, God provided manna for them daily. Surely He could have made the manna last longer than a day, but He didn't. God was teaching His children to be dependent on Him for their needs every day.

In the same way, God set up these three special feasts – Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles – to teach His children to be faithful throughout each season. If they would be faithful to keep their promise to God, He would be faithful to keep His promise to bless and provide for them.

During the Feast of Tabernacles, God's people lived in temporary booths or tents as a reminder of His care and protection while they journeyed from Egypt to the Promised Land. This is one of the three holy convocations that is to be perpetually observed and celebrated.

God says when you come before Him with your offerings during the Feast of Tabernacles – giving as you're able...giving according to how He has blessed you – then He promises to bless you in seven specific ways (Exodus 23:20-30):

He will send an angel before you to guard you, be an enemy to your enemies, bless you with provision, remove sickness from you, not let you die before your time, make you fruitful, and return to you what was lost. And that is just the beginning.

Joel 2 lists seven additional double-portion blessings the Lord wants to provide for His people during the Feast of Tabernacles.



The cycle of feasts was God's awesome plan of continually providing for His children.

1. **A double portion.** *“He will cause the rain to come down for you – the former rain, AND the latter rain in the first month”* (v. 23).
2. **Financial prosperity.** *“The threshing floors shall be full of wheat, and the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil”* (v. 24).
3. **Restoration.** *“I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten”* (v. 25).
4. **Special miracles.** *“Praise the name of the LORD your God, who has dealt wondrously with you [...] and I will show wonders”* (vs. 26, 30).
5. **God’s presence and favor.** *“You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel... My people shall never be put to shame”* (v. 27).
6. **Blessings for your children.** *“Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy”* (v. 28).
7. **Deliverance from harm or oppression.** *“Whoever calls on the name of the LORD will be delivered”* (v. 32).

DON'T COME EMPTY HANDED!

When God promised to give supernatural breakthroughs during His appointed times, He added this important word of

instruction: *“They shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed”* (Deuteronomy 16:16).

Today, I challenge you to live in the rhythm and cycle of God’s supernatural covenant provision and blessing. Obey Him. Honor Him. He says these days are important to Him. If the feast days are important to God, then surely they must be important to us as well.

Worship the Lord with your Feast of Tabernacles offering today. Honor His appointed times. Then watch as God will be faithful to keep His part of the covenant to bless you! This is part of YOUR inheritance in Christ.

God bless you during this special season on His calendar! I’m praying for the Lord to step into the circumstances of your life with His supernatural covenant promises as you are faithful to obey Him.

David

P.S. Turn to page 28 to see how you can sow your special Feast of Tabernacles Seed and receive this month's THANK YOU GIFTS.



Who's Coming to the
Celebration with You?

More than 4 MILLION
will be waiting to thank you!

The Feast of Tabernacles looks back toward God's care of the Israelites as they journeyed toward the Promised Land.

It also looks forward to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. We'll be celebrating with the millions of people who have come to know Jesus because you sowed seeds into Inspiration Ministries.

Imagine your joy one day in Heaven as stranger after stranger seeks you out saying, "Thank you for giving. I said 'YES!' to Jesus because of you!"

Sadly, BILLIONS of souls still do not know Jesus Christ. Will you help us invite them to the celebration today?

More than 4 Million Souls saved as of 9/30/22



Each leaf represents **10,000 SOULS** brought into the Kingdom through the outreaches of Inspiration Ministries!

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My Fortress

Moving beyond a fairytale faith.

Have you ever wanted to just run away and hide from life? Inexplicable tragedies, political bickering, and economic hardships piled on top of daily stresses and strains make life difficult! We know God's in control, but we can't always feel His presence. That's why we need one another and a strategy for faith-filled living!

Dozens of Scriptures remind us of God's protective care, and hundreds of verses call us to *fear not!* But good theology and nice words aren't enough. Only a personal friendship with God transforms the words in your mind into realities in your life. Listen to David's conversation with God as recorded in Psalm 31:2:

*Bow down Your ear to me, deliver me speedily; be my rock of refuge, a **Fortress** of defense to save me. For You are **my** rock and **my Fortress**.*

David's life was full of trouble, and he needed more than hearsay, more than knowledge about his

ancestors' relationship with God. He needed God as **his** friend – and so do you. David declared what he knew to be true “God, you are a **Fortress**”...and then he pleaded for God to make it **personal** for him. Friendship with God is the **Fortress** you need to overcome life's trials.

As **your Fortress**, God is your safety and strength – providing immediate protection when trouble comes near. He is a secure shelter, not a fantasy or a whimsical hope. Christian belief is not a retreat from life's difficulties. It is a solid place to stand in the midst of battle...a protected place to gather the troops and fight the enemy forces. Jesus was clear – in this world, we **will** have trouble, but we are soldiers of the victorious King (John 16:33; 1 John 5)!

Take heart, friend, your difficulties are there to bring your faith to life. You can live securely knowing God is **your Fortress** and victory is on its way. ❖

Harvesting a Home



When you give to God, the blessings flow!

God is faithful to His promises to those who trust Him – that is what the Feast of Tabernacles is all about. See how God provided for Casey W. and her family:

“I quit my job as an RN when I became pregnant with our third child...so we decided to sell our house [and buy a smaller one] to have a cheaper payment. We started sending seed for the sale of our house in August.

“I had already been told by God what to offer for the new house, but it was \$45,000 less than the asking price. They rejected the

offer, so we walked away. I still believed it was our home.

“Two weeks later, my Realtor called and said the sellers accepted our offer, and two weeks after that we closed on the house – right after our final seed offering. My husband and I and our children totally are amazed at what God has given us because it is so totally perfect! Thank you for your ministry.”

We celebrate how God blesses our partners – and we celebrate how their testimonies inspire faith around the world. ❖

Step into the promises of God, so you can share in His blessings and tell others about His goodness – become an Inspiration Ministries Monthly Partner today!

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Ready for Jesus' Return?



Five steps for waiting with wisdom and peace.

For thousands of years, people have speculated about the last days and the return of Jesus. The disciples were no different. Matthew 24 recounts one of the most important prophecies in the Bible. In that Scripture, we read how during the last week of Jesus' life, the disciples went with Him to the temple. As they strolled through the architectural magnificence, the disciples somehow forgot that Jesus was the carrier of the presence of God, a presence that had vacated that temple.

The disciples thought Jesus would be as impressed as they were at what men had done to build the Kingdom of God, but Jesus was not at all impressed. He said: *"Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down"* (Matthew 24:2).

Fast-forward 24 hours, and Jesus and the disciples were at the Mount of Olives, looking down on that same temple. Contemplating the words Jesus had spoken about the

temple, they asked Him, *"When will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"* (v. 3). And Jesus, in His unique way, instead of giving them the answer they wanted, said, *"Take heed that no one deceives you"* (v. 4).

Jesus didn't load the disciples down with the many signs of the times, nor did He tell them when He was going to come. They didn't need the exact time and every sign. What they needed most was simply to *"take heed"* of themselves. In other words, make sure they were on their toes. Make sure they were making the right, godly choices.

The same is true for us today. When responding to these return-of-Christ kinds of questions, Jesus said then what He is saying to believers all over the world today: *"What you know or don't know about the End Times isn't nearly as important as who you are when I return."* He also gave us five steps we can take that will help us explore who we are as we approach the End Times:

Step #1 – Look Within

“Take heed that no one deceives you” (v. 4).

Step #2 – Look to Him

“See that you are not troubled” (v. 6).

Step #3 – Look Ahead

“He who endures to the end shall be saved” (v. 13).

Step #4 – Look Out

“This gospel of the kingdom will be preached” (v. 14).

Step #5 – Look Up

“Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near” (Luke 21:28).

I love how Jesus shifted gears in Matthew 24. It's almost as though He did it on purpose. I'm sure by now He was used to people asking Him about the latest prophecy to satiate their curiosity or begging Him for a sign to bolster their faith. But Jesus knew what was most important – preparing His followers spiritually, emotionally, and mentally for what was to come.

We may be living in perilous times, but they are also times filled with tremendous opportunity. Don't be filled with worry. Be strong and courageous because we serve the God of hope. ❖

**To receive your copy of Franklin's new book
Overcoming When You Feel Overwhelmed see page 28.**



Jentezen Franklin is a *New York Times* bestselling author and the senior pastor of Free Chapel, a multicampus church with a global reach. Find out more at jentezenfranklin.org.

Excerpt from Jentezen Franklin's *Overcoming When You Feel Overwhelmed*, Chosen Books, Baker Publishing Group, 2022. Used by permission.

A Shocking Original Docuseries from
Inspiration Ministries

ANGELS & GIANTS

THE WATCHERS & THE NEPHILIM

INSPIRATION MINISTRIES PRESENTS ANGELS & GIANTS: THE WATCHERS & THE NEPHILIM

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Angels & Giants

The Watchers & The Nephilim

Don't miss our four-part series coming in November that explores evidence of giants and supernatural beings who once walked the earth.

In the Bible, we learn of fallen angels marrying women and having superhuman offspring. But do the archaeological, cultural, and even spiritual traces of these unholy beings still exist today?

Journey with us to five continents as we unearth long-forgotten evidence and consider startling questions such as:

- Could the skeletons of giants from across the US be tied to the giants of Genesis?
- Where did the knowledge to build the pyramids of Egypt and Peru originate?
- Did fallen angels introduce humanity to drug addictions?
- Are there portals between earthly realms and spiritual dimensions?
- What is the link between an historical site in Ohio and the biblical king of Bashan?

Join us for this powerful, original series, and discover the diabolical truths about the Genesis giants. Premieres on Inspiration On Demand in November.



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Supernatural Beings Roaming the Earth?

Check out our original docuseries
Angels and Giants!

If you're like most believers, you probably find the stories of angels and giants in the book of Genesis fascinating. Who hasn't read Genesis 6:4 and pondered the existence of giants roaming the earth?

However, along with this fascination are real-life questions that most of us would like to have answered. For example, is there any evidence of these beings existing today? What link is there between these beings and our modern-day civilizations?

To explore this further, our Inspiration TV production team spent the last several years investigating worldwide evidence related to giants – or Nephilim as the Bible calls them. Our research has unveiled many intriguing possibilities that you can explore in our newest release *Angels and Giants*, which premieres in November on

Inspiration On Demand.

We encourage you to join us for this special, four-part exposé that pursues a possible connection between the rebellious angels who followed Satan and the giants of history. Journey with us as we take an in-depth look at the topic using the apocryphal book of Enoch, archaeological finds, the Bible, and other historical resources to unearth shocking evidence of the Genesis giants' account.

EXPOSING THE MYSTERY

Inspiration Magazine recently sat down with Senior Producer Rudy Landa, who shared some fascinating insights about the docuseries. He expressed his belief that the most critical outcome of this show is to inspire viewers to dig more deeply into the Word of God: "We give the viewers enough material to

get started with studying, researching, and discussing this fascinating and important subject matter.

God's Word never returns void, so researching and studying will not only reveal so much about this, but the effort is also sure to transcend into other areas of understanding God's wonderful plan of salvation for mankind."

Another powerful purpose of the series, according to Landa, is to expose the link between dangerous spiritual practices and unholy beings that once walked among us. "I want our viewing audience to connect the dots that the dimensions that the Watcher Angels, the Incas, and the ancient Native Americans – and even the modern New Agers – operate in are the very same place the Bible speaks of as *'powers and principalities.'* The Bible warns us NOT to dabble in such things."

As Landa's production team traveled the globe, he said they discovered powerful links between secular history and the same giants the Bible mentions. Their investigations in Israel, for example,

exposed strong connections to accounts given in the Book of Enoch and Deuteronomy. The technology used in the building of Egypt's pyramids also held great fascination, but the megalithic constructions and marvels of Peru offered the greatest revelations. According to Landa, "The ruins that are found throughout places like the city of Cusco and beyond make it clear that the Incas built on TOP of a civilization that normal men could not have built. It would be a challenge to replicate those civilizations even now with current technology."

Most importantly, Landa believes that this groundbreaking production is a stepping-stone for nonbelievers to understand God's masterplan: "This series takes us far beyond our usual niche of Christian viewers. Our intent is to explore a really fascinating issue related to the supernatural realm, but most importantly, we want people worldwide to be exposed to the truth of God's Word and experience His amazing plan of redemption." ❖

JOIN US FOR THIS POWERFUL, ORIGINAL SERIES

Angels and Giants: The Watchers and the Nephilim premieres on Inspiration On Demand in November.

You can watch this and other life-changing TV programs via Roku, Fire TV, Apple TV, Chromecast, and our Inspiration TV mobile app.

One simple prayer
took away years of
guilt and shame.



No More Sleepless Nights

For more than 30 years, Cathy suffered from horrible guilt, shame, and depression as a result of an abortion she had while in college. Her heart constantly felt tight and tormented, and she had trouble sleeping at night.

But one day, everything changed as she was watching Inspiration TV. She was stunned when the speaker stopped in the middle of his message and spoke prophetically about a viewer who needed forgiveness for the abortion she'd had.

"It's time to stop being silent about your abortion," he said, "so you can help other women suffering with this guilt."

Cathy recalls in amazement, "I *knew* I was the woman he was talking about because God had been telling me the same thing for several months."

As the preacher prayed for those struggling with the guilt and trauma of past abortions, Cathy felt God's wonderful forgiveness wash over her. She was immediately delivered from decades of overwhelming guilt and depression.

"Ever since that prayer, the burden hanging over me for more than 30 years lifted," she says. "No more torment or sleepless nights!"

Now Cathy wants other women suffering from the aftermath of abortions to know that God has forgiven them too. "That night, the Lord Jesus healed me emotionally, mentally, and spiritually," she reports. "Through His forgiveness and lovingkindness, He freed me from the tormenting guilt I'd experienced for decades!"

What God did for Cathy, He can do for you! ❖

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A Safe Harbor

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PSALM 107

Claude-Joseph Vernet, an artist distinguished for his observation of light, was fascinated by storms and sunsets. Born in France in 1714, he also realized the importance of faith in God.

One of his most vivid paintings, *The Shipwreck*, is displayed in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. It is a scene dominated by utter darkness, with menacing clouds overhead and a strong bolt of lightning far on the horizon. In the foreground, Vernet depicted a ship wrecked against a rocky coast. Passengers are escaping to the shore, exhausted. Others struggle to save their cargo. A drowning woman is pulled to safety.

In its description, the National Gallery reminds us that paintings like this were “reminders of the transitory nature of life.” This painting “sent a message about the precariousness of life and the necessity of having faith in God to survive difficult times.”

Through this painting, Vernet echoed the teachings of the Bible and the experience of Christians throughout the ages. Truly, we all face many kinds of storms. But, as Vernet's painting reminds us, we can survive challenging times by having faith in God. We can know that he will bring us “*safely into harbor*.”

Are you going through any storms? Do you ever feel battered and shaken? In times like these, remember to stand on the promises in God's Word. Trust Him in every situation you face, and be confident He will bring you through.

What a blessing was that stillness as he brought them safely into harbor!

Psalm 107:30 NLT

PRAYER:

Father, I commit these storms to You: _____. Thank You for watching over me. Thank You for guiding and protecting me. In Jesus' name, amen.

What storm are you facing, and how can you stay focused on God?

SUNDAY

October

2

*The word of the LORD
which came to Micah...
Hear, you peoples, all
of you; listen carefully,
earth and all it
contains, and may the
LORD God be a witness
against you, the LORD
from His holy temple.*

Micah 1:1-2 NASB

Your Unique Ministry

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: MICAH 1

Micah was called to speak God's Word at a unique moment in history, but he was not the only prophet living at that time. Others had a similar call. Isaiah (Isaiah 1:1) and Hosea (Hosea 1:1), for example, were two prophets who lived about the same time. It would have been easy for Micah to be influenced by what they were saying. He might have been tempted to compare his prophecies or his ministry with theirs.

Micah seems to have realized that God gave him a special ministry and unique words to proclaim. His assignment was to be *faithful* to God's call and not worry about what anyone else might say.

The Bible reminds us that everything in our lives comes from God: our ideas and thoughts, skills, abilities, interests, and desires. Even our bodies and minds are unique, the result of His creation. We can *depend* on Him for everything. We don't have to struggle, but we can trust Him.

Remember that God has a unique call for you. You have a unique history and personality. He has a special destiny and assignment just for you! Make sure you commit your life to Him. Seek to be sensitive to His Spirit. Speak the words He gives you with *your* voice. Don't be paralyzed by worry or comparison. Faithfully follow Him and be the unique person He created you to be.

How are you fulfilling God's unique calling in your life?

Lover of My Soul

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: NAHUM 1

MONDAY

October

3

Charles Wesley was attacked when preaching in Ireland in 1740 by men angry about his message. He fled to a nearby farm where the farmer's wife hid him in the milk house. When the mob arrived, she distracted them with refreshments. This gave her time to direct Wesley to escape through a window and hide by a brook.

With his pursuers close by, Wesley focused on Jesus, realizing he could trust Him. He described how he could hide in Him, "while the nearer waters roll, while the tempest still is high." God would hide him "till the storm of life is past; safe into the haven guide."

Realizing he could trust Jesus, Wesley wrote, "Leave me not alone, still support and comfort me." He knew God would help him, covering his defenseless head "with the shadow of Thy wing." He realized Jesus was all He wanted and needed and that in Him he found "grace to cover all my sin."

Wesley recognized how, during daily life, we can become busy and distracted. But in every situation, we need to remember that Jesus loves us and wants an intimate relationship with us.

The words he wrote that day became the foundation for his hymn "Jesus, Lover of My Soul."

Spend time with Jesus. Listen to His voice. Linger in His presence. No matter what you face, you can hide yourself in Him! He loves you!

The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and He knows those who take refuge in Him.

Nahum 1:7 NASB

PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, thank You for loving me. Help me know You more intimately and share Your love with others. I love You. In Your name, amen.

Reflect on the many ways God shows you His love.

TUESDAY

October

4

Clean and Pure

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: LEVITICUS 23

Clean. Spotless. Pure – more than words for Israel's high priests. Once a year on the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*), their sacred duty was to enter the Holy of Holies and come into the presence of Almighty God alone.

The Day of Atonement was one of God's appointed times. On these days, there were to be holy convocations. Special offerings were to be made. The Day of Atonement was to be set aside for prayer, soul searching, confession, and repentance. It was so serious that no one was allowed to work or eat.

After the high priest made a sacrifice to atone for himself and other priests, he sacrificed a goat as an offering for sin. Then, another goat was sent into the wilderness, symbolically taking with it the sins of the people.

Through this symbolism, we are reminded of all Jesus did for us. He sacrificed His life so that we might be forgiven. He also became our high priest. Like the scapegoat, He took our sins away "as far as the east is from the west" (Psalm 103:12).

The Day of Atonement, which is celebrated beginning at sundown today, still has powerful meaning. It is a day to focus on God. Humble yourself before Him and spend time in prayer. Seek to be clean in His sight. Receive the forgiveness, freedom, and victory that are yours through Christ! And remember to bring Him your special offering.

The Day of Atonement...shall be a holy convocation for you, and you shall... present an offering by fire to the LORD. You shall not do any work on this very day...make atonement on your behalf before the LORD your God.

Leviticus 23:27-28 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I humble myself before You. Thank You for sending Jesus to die for me. I confess my sins and accept Your forgiveness. In Jesus' name, amen.

Write a prayer asking God to search your heart and forgive your sins.

The Lions of Assyria

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: NAHUM 2

Lions were important symbols for ancient Assyria. Scholars have described how Ashurbanipal II (who reigned in Assyria in the ninth century BC) built his Northwest Palace, a “magnificent complex” with entrances protected by “colossal human-headed winged bulls and lions.” Two centuries later, one of his successors, Sennacherib, carried on this tradition, building a portico with columns supported by solid cast bronze lions in his “Palace without Rival.”

Lions were significant because these animals, while stately in appearance, reminded visitors that Assyria had enormous power that could be unleashed at any time.

When God called Nahum to prophesy to Nineveh, He paid special attention to lions. God knew the Assyrians had taken advantage of His people. God promised to “*restore the splendor of Jacob*” (v. 2) even though they had been devastated.

God knew all about Assyria’s vast militaristic array and the massive building projects enjoyed by a series of its leaders. While Assyria (symbolized by its capital, Nineveh) seemed powerful, its time would end, and the lions that symbolized so much of their strength would be gone. God’s message was clear: “*Behold, I am against you*” (v. 13).

Kings and kingdoms have various symbols of might. In many ways, their rulers place confidence in their strategies and resources. But God *still* reigns. His power will ultimately triumph. Renew your faith in God, and trust your life to Him.

What fears are you asking God to replace with His peace?

Where is the den of the lions...where the lion, lioness, and lion's cub went with nothing to disturb them? The lion tore enough...and filled his lairs with prey and his dens with torn flesh.

Nahum 2:11-12 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You that You reign over all the earth. Thank You for holding my life. Replace my fears with Your peace. In Jesus' name, amen.

THURSDAY

October

6

God's Triumph

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: NAHUM 3

Your shepherds are sleeping... Your people are scattered on the mountains... There is no relief for your collapse, your wound is incurable. All who hear about you will clap their hands over you, for upon whom has your evil not come continually?

Nahum 3:18-19 NASB

Sometime around 1400 BC, a nation-state started becoming a major regional power near the banks of the Tigris River 500 miles from the Persian Gulf. Gradually this community, Assyria, became a commercial power, even establishing far-flung colonies. Eventually, they become more militaristic and determined to conquer, using terror and violence.

With this new commitment, their kings were *required* to *expand* their empires and even *conduct* military campaigns. Their conquests ranged as far as Egypt, with Israel and Judah becoming inevitable targets.

Assyria had its plans, but God used them in other ways, even to humble and correct His people (2 Kings 17). Yet God knew *everything* the Assyrians had done and sent Nahum to prophesy that their time of dominance was ending.

They had built impressive fortifications and mighty armies. They temporarily controlled natural resources. They amassed military and economic power, but they could not stand against God. Their empire would end. And no one mourned their demise.

Even today nations make their plans. Many are confident and arrogant, defiant and determined to impose their own will. But they forget that God is eternal. He sees from the perspective of eternity. They may reign for a season, but their seasons end. His Kingdom lasts forever.

You can trust God. Focus on Him. Serve Him. Let Him use you and direct your life.

PRAYER:

Father, I trust my life to You. Guide me. Lead me. Help me fulfill Your call. Use me for Your Kingdom. In Jesus' name, amen.

Which affairs do you need to commit to God and His plans?

The Only Option

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PROVERBS 7

Some think the Bible provides just one of many options to consider. They think we can believe what we want, do the things we like, and ignore guidelines that seem challenging. They want to choose what they concentrate on and pay more attention to ideas that sound more attractive.

In writing so many proverbs, Solomon reminded us of why it is critical to be *serious* about learning the Word and living by its principles. He shared his personal experiences, mistakes he had made, and things he wished he had taken more seriously. And he offered his advice to others, particularly his son.

Solomon learned the importance of having a *reverent* attitude toward God's Word, not just thinking about His words but *obeying* them and putting them into practice. We should not question His commands but *treasure* them, realize they are central to life, and guard His instructions as *precious* and critically important truths.

Solomon urges us to fill our minds with the Word. To *fill our minds*, we should not just read the Bible occasionally but spend quality time with the Word daily. We must apply biblical principles and be guided by those truths, realizing that it is critical for health, success, peace, and direction.

How *serious* are you about God's Word? How committed are you to studying His Word? Is it just one of many options for you? Or is it the very foundation of your life?

How is your attitude toward God's Word seen in the way you spend time?

FRIDAY
October
7

Obey my words, and treasure my commands. Keep my commands and live, and guard my instructions... Tie them to your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart. Say to wisdom, "You are my sister," and call understanding your relative.

Proverbs 7:1-4 CSB

PRAYER:

Father, give me a greater hunger to know Your Word. Help me apply Your principles in my life today. In Jesus' name, amen.

SATURDAY

October

8

Look among the nations and watch – be utterly astounded! For I will work a work in your days which you would not believe, though it were told you.

Habakkuk 1:5

PRAYER:

Father, I believe You can do anything. I commit my needs to You. Thank You for answering my prayers. In Jesus' name, amen.

Astounded!

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: HABAKKUK 1

Life did not make sense to Habakkuk. Everywhere he looked, he saw violence and injustice. The wicked seemed to triumph, and it appeared that God wasn't doing anything. Habakkuk asked, "Why do You show me iniquity, and cause me to see trouble?" (v. 3)

God assured him that He knew what was going on and would avenge every wrong. He promised to answer in ways that would surprise Habakkuk and be *hard to believe*. The prophet would "be utterly astounded!"

Through this experience, Habakkuk learned that it could *seem* that God isn't doing anything or answering our prayers. As we face needs, we can wonder if He really hears us or will help. At times like these, it can be easy to have questions and even be filled with doubt. We can stop believing and limit the flow of His blessings and power.

But, as Habakkuk learned, God hears and sees *everything*. His plans are secure. His judgments and timing are perfect. And He is faithful.

We also realize that, with Him, *nothing* is impossible. He can do "exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20). There are *no limits* to His power. His resources are *beyond counting*.

When you think about your needs, don't limit God. Think of His vast creation, His overwhelming abundance, and His promises. Commit every burden to Him. Trust Him. He may surprise and even amaze you.

What big needs are you trusting to God's providence currently?

Constant Care

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: DEUTERONOMY 16

SUNDAY

October

9

Today at sundown begins the annual celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles. This celebration was established by God Himself and was important to Him.

At this special time, His people were to assemble and present their sacrifices and offerings. They were to give to Him from the harvest He had given to them! Everyone was to bring offerings from what they had received. There were no exceptions.

Central to this celebration was the command to dwell in *booths or tents*. This reminded them of God's care and protection during their forty years in the wilderness. It was a reminder that He continued to care for them.

This was not just a religious ceremony but a central moment of the entire year. The tabernacle itself was filled with symbolism. It was a yearly reminder that God is *faithful*, that He watches over us, and that we are not to trust in earthly possessions or even other people but remember that everything in life is *temporary*. The only things that last are the things of God and His kingdom.

The message of Tabernacles is still important and relevant. It is an opportunity to remember all God has done for us, that this world is not our home, and that we must not trust in people, possessions, and things.

Trust your life to God. He has taken care of you in the past. He will take care of you today, tomorrow, and throughout eternity.

Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God...at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Tabernacles; and they shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed.

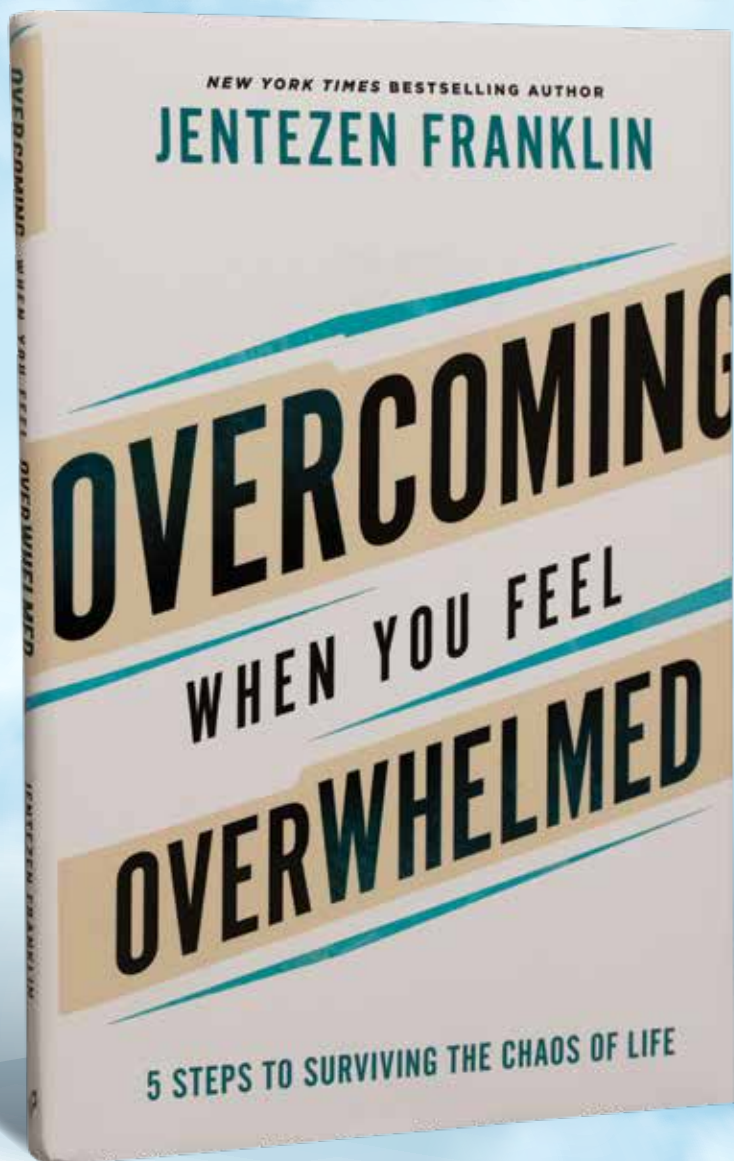
Deuteronomy 16:16

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for all You have done for me. Thank You that all Your promises are true. I trust my life to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

What are you thanking God for doing in this past year?

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MONDAY

October

10

The LORD...took an oath, saying, "Surely not one of these men of this evil generation shall see that good land...except Caleb...he shall see it, and to him and his children I am giving the land...because he wholly followed the LORD.

Deuteronomy 1:34-36

PRAYER:

Father, help me to follow you faithfully. Give me a greater sensitivity to Your Spirit. I trust You and believe Your Word. In Jesus' name, amen.

With Your Whole Heart

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: DEUTERONOMY 1

God's people should have remembered all He had done for them. He delivered them from bondage. He protected them and provided for them in *miraculous* ways. No foe was too big. There was no problem He could not solve. He *never* failed.

But when He directed them to enter the Promised Land, they hesitated. Instead of moving forward in faith, they sent spies into the land. Seeing giants and fortified cities, they concluded that defeat was inevitable. They even felt God must hate them.

It didn't matter that God *promised* to go before them. Instead of rejoicing in His promises or being confident because of His faithfulness, they became *discouraged* and *complained*, allowing their hearts to be filled with fear.

Because of this disbelief, most were not allowed to enter the Promised Land. But God made an exception: Caleb and his children would be allowed to see the land. Joshua also was allowed to enter. Why were they so blessed? "*Because [they] wholly followed the LORD.*"

Caleb demonstrated an important principle. God has prepared special blessings for those who serve Him *wholeheartedly*, who trust Him *completely*, and who *believe* Him totally.

Caleb provides a model for us. We can trust God in every situation. What are the keys? Confessing His promises, believing His Word, moving forward by faith, not complaining but being thankful, and following Him with our *whole* hearts.

How are you ensuring that you are following the Lord wholeheartedly?

Waiting

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: HABAKKUK 2

It can be difficult to *wait* on God for answers. What we *really* want is to get our own way and to have our needs met *instantly*. Waiting on God can seem inconvenient.

We might understand why idols are attractive. These handmade objects could be manipulated to say whatever a person wanted.

But God is *different!* He is holy! The sovereign Creator is unlike the idols of the world. Habakkuk declared the basic truth that God is to be feared and worshiped.

Many people have a tough time waiting on God. It is more common to take Him for granted and not treat Him with holiness. Many have created their own kind of idols. They listen to their own gods, live by their own standards, decide for themselves what is right, and trust in things that satisfy their desires rather than the timeless principles of a holy God.

But the words of Habakkuk still ring true. God is our Heavenly Father. He wants a personal relationship with us. We must remember that He is not an idol we can manipulate. He is our Creator. He is pure. He is righteous. He is perfect.

Never take God for granted. Make sure He has first place in your heart. Approach Him with *reverence*. Seek Him with humility, a heart full of praise, worship, and thanksgiving. Wait for His guidance and timing, and always remember He is holy; He is God.

TUESDAY

October

11

Woe to him who says to a piece of wood, "Awake!" To a mute stone, "Arise!"... Yet there is no breath at all inside it. But the LORD is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him.

Habakkuk 2:19-20 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for being merciful to me. I humble myself before You. Help me serve You with my life. I worship You. In Jesus' name, amen.

How have you been tempted to treat God as an idol lately?

WEDNESDAY

October

12

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me...putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor...I obtained mercy...the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.

1 Timothy 1:12-14

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for Your grace. Thank You that I am forgiven! Thank You for setting me free. In Jesus' name, amen.

Wonderful Grace

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 1 TIMOTHY 1

Born in Norway, Haldor Lillenas immigrated with his family to America as a child. Although his family regularly attended church, he sensed that something was lacking in his spiritual life. This led him to a search for answers, which he found in a *personal* faith in Jesus Christ.

Transformed by the Gospel, he spent the rest of his life sharing that life-changing message with others as a pastor, evangelist, and composer. With the skills he taught himself, he composed more than 4,000 hymns and Gospel songs. Some were a collaboration with his wife Bertha. Many were published through a company he founded. Perhaps his most impactful composition was “Wonderful Grace of Jesus,” which summarized what Jesus had done for him.

Lillenas marveled at this grace, which was “greater than all my sin.” He found it hard to describe, for Jesus had taken away his burdens and set his spirit free. Through that grace he had been pardoned and saved. The chains of sin had been “torn asunder, giving [him] liberty.”

He realized how many people suffered under the weight of their sins, yet he knew that this grace was available to *anyone*. Even “the most defiled” person could be transformed.

This grace is available to you too. You can receive forgiveness for your sins and the opportunity for a fresh start. You can be clean in God's sight. Accept His gift of this *wonderful* grace today.

Compose your own hymn of praise for God's grace in your own life.

The Fountain

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ZECHARIAH 13

William Cowper seemed destined for political leadership. Apprenticed to a solicitor, he was called to the British Bar and was considered for a prestigious position in the House of Lords. Everything changed when he collapsed under the strain of an approaching examination. Suffering from depression and panic attacks, he was admitted into an asylum. There seemed to be no hope.

In that asylum, he spent much time reading the Bible. There, he experienced a breakthrough when he committed his life to Jesus. He wrote a hymn that described this breakthrough called "There Is a Fountain."

Reflecting on his personal experiences, Cowper described this fountain filled with Jesus' blood. It was a fountain of forgiveness. There, sinners "plunged beneath that flood, lose all their guilty stains."

We can be forgiven like the dying thief who was crucified next to Jesus. In our flesh we may be "vile," but through His blood, all our sins can be washed away. As Cowper realized, the blood of Jesus will *never* lose its power.

In his own life, he had seen the amazing way the Gospel could transform a life. He had committed his life to sharing the news about that message with others. He described how Jesus' "redeeming love has been my theme, and shall be till I die."

The Bible is filled with insights about the blood. Yes, the blood has power, healing, and protection. Jesus shed His blood just for you!

Write a praise to God thanking Him for sending Jesus to die for your sins.

THURSDAY

October

13

In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.

Zechariah 13:1

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for the forgiveness I receive from the blood of Jesus. Guide me. Direct me. Empower me. In His name, amen.

FRIDAY

October

14

John testified about Him...saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who is coming after me has proved to be my superior, because He existed before me.'" For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace.

John 1:15-16 NASB

PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, thank You for the abundance You make available. Thank You for Your unlimited supply. I seek to draw from this fullness today. In Your name, amen.

Fullness

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOHN 1

As John the Baptist testified about Jesus, he stressed one fundamental characteristic: His "fullness." Jesus has an *unlimited* quantity to give. There is *abundance*, and He *never* runs out or falls short.

John also spoke about "grace upon grace," that we have received "one gracious blessing after another" (NLT). While His supply remains endless, these blessings can be received in many ways. At times, we can be overwhelmed with a flood of blessings, like a dramatic outpouring of miracles, but they can also be received one at a time, day by day, situation by situation, or moment by moment.

The Bible reminds us that Jesus can meet *any* need. He has an *unlimited* supply of power, love, healing, wisdom, resources, and whatever else we need. He can bless us with "grace upon grace." If we received from Him yesterday, we need to remember that He *never* runs out. We can call upon Him afresh and anew each day.

Right now, He is ready to hear your prayers and meet your needs, whether mental, emotional, physical, spiritual, or relational. Call upon Him with faith and confidence. He has an unlimited supply of whatever you need.

Be ready to receive His grace, mercy, love, and wisdom. Accept His power and healing, and remember there will be more tomorrow. He *never* runs out, and the flow of His blessings never stops. What a wonderful Savior!

In which area of your life do you need God's fullness today?

Passion for God

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOHN 2

Jesus was passionate about the things of God. He demonstrated the depth of this commitment when, as a boy, He was in the temple talking with teachers. When Joseph and Mary asked Him why He spent this time in the temple without telling them, He answered, “*Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?*” (Luke 2:46-49).

The disciples realized how much Jesus cared for the things of God when He was in Jerusalem for the Passover. He saw people who were in the temple but were concerned only with profit and personal gain. This was *intolerable* to Jesus.

He poured out their money and overturned their tables. Seeing His passion, His disciples remembered the declaration quoted from Psalm 69:9, “*Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up*” (v. 17). Jesus was *consumed* with fervor for God’s House!

The Bible reminds us that God promises blessings for those who have this kind of passion for Him, for people who do not seek their own gain or glory but are consumed by His Word, people who spend time with Him and give themselves to His Kingdom.

Fill your heart with a burning desire to serve God. Spend time with Him. Seek Him. Listen to His voice. Fill your heart and mind with His Word. Seek first His Kingdom. Seek to become consumed with a zeal for the things of God. Watch as He blesses you with spiritual riches.

Are you passionate about the things of God? Do you need to change?

SATURDAY

October

15

He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business...He drove them all out... and overturned the tables...“Do not make My Father’s house a house of merchandise!”

John 2:14-17

PRAYER:

Father, may I be consumed with zeal for Your Word. Fill me with Your Spirit. Use me to impact this world with the Gospel. In Jesus’ name, amen.

SUNDAY

October

16

There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; this man came to Jesus at night.

John 3:1-2 NASB

PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, direct my steps. Lead people into my life with whom I can share the Gospel. Fill me with love for others. In Your name, amen.

Personal Ministry

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOHN 3

All of us can read the dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus. The exchange was packed with truths that apply to everyone. But it is intriguing to remember that this teaching was given not to the crowds but to *one* person. It was a private conversation one man had *alone* with Jesus at night.

This kind of personal interaction happened frequently in Jesus' ministry. For example, consider the powerful insights Jesus gave to a Samaritan woman (John 4:1-30), His teachings with two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-32), the many hours He spent alone with the disciples (Matthew 13:36), or the times He visited people in their homes (Luke 19:5).

We can learn much from Jesus' example. Every individual is important to Him. *Every* moment is special and packed with potential. Even private moments can provide the perfect setting for ministry.

No one may know about these private conversations. Our goal should be the opportunity to serve God, listen to others, help meet needs, and be a vessel for the work of God.

Ask God to help you be ready for the situations He brings into your life. Take seriously every opportunity He gives you to share the Gospel. Be sensitive if the Spirit opens the door for you to pray with others. Minister to them. Jesus cares about each person you meet. Treat them as He would treat them.

What opportunities have you had to share the Gospel recently?

Pinpoint Understanding

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOHN 4

MONDAY

October

17

Jesus started His conversation with a woman from Samaria by requesting, *"Give me a drink"* (v. 7). Gradually, He turned the conversation toward spiritual applications, describing the unique water only He could provide.

Intrigued, she said, *"Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty, nor come all the way here to draw water"* (v. 15). He responded, asking her to bring her husband to Him. This seems like a casual remark, but this precisely *pinpointed* a key problem in her life.

She responded, *"I have no husband."* But Jesus knew that she had had five husbands, *"and the one whom you now have is not your husband"* (vs. 17-18).

This was not what the woman *expected* to hear, but it was the response she *needed*. The result of this dialogue was life-changing for this woman and the Samaritans who came to see Jesus because of her testimony.

We need to remember how well Jesus knows us and how perfectly the Spirit illuminates every thought and emotion. He sees every action, even those done behind closed doors. He knows habits, thoughts, and words that need correction, as well as issues we might have denied or even forgotten about.

Jesus knows you inside and out. Let Him show you how you need to change. Surrender your life to Him. Let Him shape and mold you, so you can receive more of His bounty and blessings.

He said to her, "Go, call your husband and come here."

John 4:16 NASB

PRAYER:

Dear Lord Jesus, I realize that You know everything about me. Reveal anything that needs to change. I surrender my life to You. In Your name, amen.

Write a prayer confessing your sins and asking God to search your heart.

TUESDAY

October

18

Personal Proof

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: HABAKKUK 3

I have heard all about you, LORD. I am filled with awe by your amazing works. In this time of our deep need, help us again as you did in years gone by... remember your mercy.

Habakkuk 3:2 NLT

PRAYER:

Father, I commit these issues to You: _____ . I cry out for miracles, for demonstrations of your miracle-working power. In Jesus' name, amen.

Habakkuk had heard about God's mighty deeds, how He *spoke* the world into existence, *delivered* His people from Egypt, led them into the Promised Land, gave them *victories* in battle, and performed *miracle* after *miracle*.

But for Habakkuk, knowing these things wasn't enough. He had a hunger to *experience* these truths for himself. He longed to *witness* a move of God's power and see mighty miracles.

Many Christians are eager for the same kind of revelation. They have read the Bible and heard of God's actions in history, but they may never have seen a real display of this power. Some are dominated by doubt and don't really believe that miracles still take place, that God still heals, or that He speaks to His people. Some place more faith in the things of this world than in His Word.

What is your attitude toward these things? Have you allowed the world to shape your thoughts, or do you believe that His Word is *still* true? Do you really believe anything is possible if you ask in Jesus' name (John 14:14)?

Make the prayer of Habakkuk *your* prayer. Cry out to God. Ask that His power would be real, that you would experience real miracles, be bold, and step out in faith. Don't be crippled by doubt or questions or be content with just reading *about* God's power. Seek more of Him.

What's shaping your thoughts about miracles today?

A Biblical Foundation

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 3

A signer of the Declaration of Independence, Benjamin Rush achieved widespread respect, though his influence was hampered for a time by a disagreement with George Washington. Yet Rush gained the trust of many leaders and was appointed by President John Adams as treasurer of the US Mint.

A student of the Bible, Rush lobbied tirelessly for biblical values. In 1788, he wrote, "I never read a chapter in the Bible without seeing something in it I never saw before." Some opposed biblical Christianity, but he stressed to President Adams that the Bible "is the only correct map of the human heart that ever has been published." Christianity must be the only foundation for a country: "Without this, there can be no virtue, and without virtue, there can be no liberty."

Rush never apologized for his faith: "My only hope of salvation is in the infinite, transcendent love of God manifested to the world by the death of His Son upon the cross. Nothing but His blood will wash away my sins."

Today, we are in a cultural and spiritual war. Many try to silence Christians and eliminate Christianity from society. Benjamin Rush would remind us that our only hope as believers is a commitment to God's Word and a bold stand for Christ and Christian principles.

Don't be silent or compromise *your* convictions. Stand on God's Word. Live according to His principles, and be passionate about sharing your faith.

The foundation that has already been laid is Jesus Christ, and no one can lay down any other foundation.

1 Corinthians 3:11 NCV

PRAYER:

Dear Lord Jesus, I declare that You are my Lord. I will follow You. Help me remember that Your Word is my ultimate authority. In Your name, amen.

Are you building the foundation of your life solely on the Bible?

THURSDAY

October

20

The Resurrection

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOHN 11

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live."

John 11:25

Jesus knew His friend Lazarus had died. To His disciples, this seemed to be the end of the matter. When Jesus announced that He would go to Lazarus, they decided to go with Him even though it seemed pointless. After all, Lazarus had died.

Jesus had a different perspective. While His disciples saw only limits, Jesus had no *limits*. While His disciples saw only the human dimension, Jesus saw the *eternal*. He told them this would be an opportunity for them to "*believe*" (vs. 12-15).

Martha, Lazarus' sister, had similar doubts. When Jesus arrived, she said, "*Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.*" She told Him, "*But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You*" (vs. 21-22). She had a limited faith.

When Jesus told her Lazarus would rise again, she thought only of the "*last day*" (vs. 21-24), but He wanted to demonstrate His miracle-working power right then. *Nothing* was too hard for Him. No enemy existed that He could not defeat. Simply, He is the resurrection in *every* situation. He is the *life*.

These truths apply today. They apply to you. In every situation, do not give up or doubt. Instead, commit every need to Jesus. Just believe Him. Trust Him. Let Him bring life to the problems that seem hopeless. Let Him restore that which seems finished. He is the *resurrection!* He is the *life!*

PRAYER:

Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for the promise of eternal life. Nothing is impossible with You. In Your name, amen.

What dead things in your life do you need to ask Jesus to resurrect?

Leading by Example

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOHN 13

On the night He was betrayed, Jesus did something none of His disciples anticipated. He *“took off his outer clothing”* (v. 4) and wrapped a towel around his waist. Then He put water in a bowl and washed and dried the feet of His disciples.

Peter seemed shocked to see Jesus engaged in such lowly actions. He declared, *“No, You will never wash my feet.”* But Jesus told him, *“If I don’t wash your feet, you are not one of my people.”* Peter was convinced: *“Lord, then wash not only my feet, but wash my hands and my head, too!”* (vs. 8-9).

Jesus was providing an example of what it meant to be His disciple. They were to have the attitude of servants. He didn’t just tell them; He became a living *example*.

As the disciples *thought* about His ministry, they *remembered* that He was constantly providing examples and being sensitive to the leading of His Father. He made prayer a priority. He was always ready to heal the sick. He had the attitude of a servant.

These patterns apply to each of us. People are watching us – in our jobs and churches, in our neighborhoods and homes. Wherever we go, and whatever we do, we have the opportunity to be examples of Christlike living.

Seek to be an example for the people you meet, and seek to have the attitude of a servant in everything you do.

How can you serve those around you?

FRIDAY
October
21

He poured water into a bowl and began to wash the followers’ feet [...] “I did this as an example so that you should do as I have done for you.”

John 13:5, 15 NCV

PRAYER:

Father, help me have the attitude of a servant. Help me to be an example to everyone who sees me. Thank You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

SATURDAY

October

22

When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.

Titus 3:4-5 ESV

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for giving me freedom in Christ. I release my burdens to You. Thank You for Your forgiveness. In Jesus' name, amen.

Set Free!

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: TITUS 3

It was a horrible feeling, like being trapped in quicksand. The harder he tried to escape, the deeper he sank. Deeper and deeper, the pull could be fatal.

This was how Charles Gabriel, prolific hymn and anthem composer, pictured the impact of sin in a hymn he wrote, called "In Loving-Kindness Jesus Came," also called "He Lifted Me." Born in Iowa in 1856, Gabriel described how he had been sinking under the pull of sin until he gave his life to Jesus. Then, He lifted him out of a sense of hopelessness and the feeling of constantly sinking deeper into despair.

Instead of wallowing in "the depths of sin and shame," through Jesus he was able to experience the grace of God. Gabriel realized he had been *forgiven* and set free because Jesus had died for him. Inspired by His great love, Jesus endured the agony of the cross. It was a freedom beyond Gabriel's understanding and something that totally changed his life.

The world may suggest its remedies and tricks, but only Jesus can provide such a profound change, such total freedom.

Do you feel trapped by the sins of your past? Are you weighed down by guilt and worry? Do you feel like you are sinking under the weight of mistakes? Are the pressures of life making you hopeless and discouraged? Turn to Jesus. Confess the truths in His Word. Accept His forgiveness. Live in freedom.

Write your burdens as a prayer, asking God to lift them from your heart.

Thanks to God

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 1 THESSALONIANS 5

One day in 1891, August Ludvig Storm began considering reasons to be thankful. Storm, who was born in Sweden on this day in 1862, knew it was easy to thank God for pleasant things, but he remembered that we should be thankful for *everything*.

In this spirit, Storm wrote a hymn called “Thanks to God,” in which he listed 24 things for which he was thankful.

He thanked God “for my Redeemer” and all He provided. He thanked Him that Jesus was by his side. He thanked Him for “pleasant, balmy springtime” and “for dark and dreary fall!” He thanked Him for tears and “for peace with my soul!”

Storm recognized that we should “*in everything give thanks.*” We ought to be thankful for prayers answered and requests denied. We should be thankful for storms and all He supplies. Storm thanked God both for pain and pleasure. He thanked Him “for comfort in despair,” for “grace that none can measure,” and “for love beyond compare.”

Instead of just thinking about “roses,” we need to be thankful “for thorns their stems contain.” We can be thankful “for heavenly peace” with God and hope for tomorrow and through all eternity!

No matter what you're facing, consider reasons to be thankful. Remember God's promises. He has a plan for you. He is with you! Think about what He has done. Tell Him how thankful you are!

What are you most thankful for today?

SUNDAY

October

23

*In everything
give thanks.*

1 Thessalonians 5:18

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for all You have done for me. Here are things I am thankful for: _____ . I trust my life to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

MONDAY

October

24

I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.

John 15:1-2 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I want to be more fruitful. I submit my life to You. I trust You to cleanse and purify me. In Jesus' name, amen.

Pruning

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOHN 15

Pruning is essential to the healthy development of plants. Experienced gardeners know it is necessary to prune vines in their care. Any element that prevents full potential must be cut out. Selected branches must be removed. Excesses must be trimmed away.

This mirrors a key process in our spiritual lives. As Jesus taught, pruning describes what the Father does for “*every branch in Me,*” for all disciples, *everyone* who follows Jesus.

God *prunes* us continually. Through this pruning, He *examines* our thoughts, emotions, habits, and lifestyles. He assesses what we do with our time, money, friends, and influences. His pruning identifies patterns that may be pointing us in the wrong direction. He may need to reshape our thoughts, weed out distractions or false ideas, or encourage a change in our attitude.

Just like a wise vinedresser, He wants the best for us. He wants us to be as fruitful and *productive* as possible. This *requires* pruning. And He determines how much we *need* to be pruned. Pruning may take place in parts of our lives where we don't think we need pruning or at times when pruning isn't expected, like when we are satisfied or content.

Remember that God promises to prune *you* when and where He thinks it is necessary. Why? Because He loves you and wants you to be more *fruitful*. Welcome His pruning. Cooperate with Him. He wants the best for you.

How do you react when God prunes away unnecessary pieces of your life?

Heinrich Schütz spent much of his life serving political and church leaders. Writing music, he became known as the greatest German composer of his time.

However, his primary impact may have come after being released from these official duties. This gave him the freedom to focus on his passion: composing music for the glory of God. His sacred compositions included settings of the Psalms of David and the Gospels.

His music inspired many people, including Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was later martyred by the Nazis for his faith. Bonhoeffer found inspiration from Schütz, particularly in his setting of the hymn “O Good Jesus, Have Mercy on Us.” This was so important to Bonhoeffer that he wanted it sung at his funeral.

Bonhoeffer gained spiritual insights from studying Schütz's hymn, which inspired him to dig deeper into Paul's letter to the Ephesians. The sacred compositions of Schütz helped Bonhoeffer realize that all things were *fulfilled* in Christ, and in eternity everything will find its proper perspective.

Schütz demonstrated how our relationship with Jesus can impact each person in unique ways. The Bible reminds us that *every* generation can find its *fulfillment* in Him.

Remember that the Father put all things under the feet of Jesus and “*gave Him to be head over all things to the church*” (v. 22). Make your life count. Point people to Christ to find their fulfillment.

[So] that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth – in Him.

Ephesians 1:10

PRAYER:

Father, thank You that I can be fulfilled through my relationship with Jesus. Use me to impact others with the Gospel. In His name, amen.

Which Christian song has had the most impact on your life and why?

WEDNESDAY

October

26

Personal Appointment

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOHN 15

You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit...that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.

John 15:16 NASB

How would your life change if you *really* thought God had a *specific* plan just for you, and He chose *you*? Jesus taught His disciples these truths the night before His death. As He looked at each of them, He stressed that it was not an accident they had followed Him. He had *chosen* them!

When they realized these truths, these disciples could look back at their lives and realize how they had been called. Some had been fishermen. One was a tax collector. No matter the details, each had a story, skills, and experiences. Jesus was saying that their lives had not been accidents. He had chosen each of them at *specific* times that they might do specific things and “*go and bear fruit.*”

This same principle is true for you. God has chosen you to fulfill a special destiny! There are special assignments He has given to no one else. You have special gifts and abilities that are uniquely yours. You are in situations because He wants you to be there. He has called you to be His representative.

If you face challenges, remember that God is by your side. Have faith in Him. Focus on fulfilling your destiny. Seek to produce fruit that will last. You can approach Him in prayer, knowing that the Father will give you whatever you ask for in Jesus' name. You are special!

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for calling me. Help me to be ready for Your timing in my life. I will sow seeds into Your Kingdom. In Jesus' name, amen.

How will you change your life knowing God has a specific plan for you?

Transformed by the Spirit

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOHN 16

The men and women of the Bible College of Wales *thought* they were spiritually mature. Then, in December 1936, everything changed.

This transformation began after a new *dedication to prayer*. A staff member described how “there was an increasing consciousness of God’s presence.” An “awesome sense of God’s nearness” swept over the college.

Gradually, they became more conscious of the reality of the Holy Spirit. The conviction of the Spirit was so strong that some wept for hours. Previously, they *thought* they knew the Spirit, but “now the revelation of His Person was so tremendous that all our previous experiences seemed like *nothing*.”

They felt His conviction as never before. They no longer were content treating Christianity as just a religion, a subject to be studied. The Spirit had transformed them. They became prayer warriors and fearless disciples.

The world is filled with skeptics who think Christianity is just a religion. At the same time, many Christians have never been *transformed* or really filled with the Spirit. But God calls us to a *new dimension*, a deeper *relationship*, and a new reality.

Like those students in Wales, this change can start with a new dedication to prayer. It can begin when we get serious about seeking God and are more sensitive to His Spirit. We must have a hunger for His presence and no longer be content with the ordinary. We should be ready to be transformed.

How can you cultivate an attitude of transformation?

THURSDAY

October

27

It is best for you that I go away, because if I don't, the Advocate won't come. If I do go away, then I will send him to you.

John 16:7 NLT

PRAYER:

Holy Spirit, I seek Your presence. Help me to put aside the petty things of this world. Speak to me. Change me. Use me. In Jesus' name, amen.

FRIDAY

October

28

Raising His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come."

John 17:1 NASB

The Right Time

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOHN 17

Jesus was sensitive to the importance of time. He demonstrated that sensitivity throughout His ministry.

At a wedding in Cana, His mother wanted Him to help the bridegroom who had run out of wine, but Jesus responded, "*My hour has not yet come*" (John 2:4). When He appeared in Jerusalem, some sought to seize Him, but no one touched Him "*because His hour had not yet come*" (John 7:30). When He spoke in the treasury, "*no one arrested Him, because His hour had not yet come*" (John 8:20).

As Jesus approached the last Passover, He knew, "*the hour [had] come*" (John 12:23). Then on the night before His crucifixion, He declared His awareness: "*the hour has come.*"

The Bible tells us, "*God has made everything appropriate in its time*" (Ecclesiastes 3:11). Jesus was sensitive to this principle. Throughout His ministry, He stayed faithful in every moment, seeking to complete His mission, waiting, and preparing for the right moment. Then, Jesus acted when the time was right. He was ready. He had been obedient.

These same principles apply to each of us. We must realize there is a right time and place for everything in our lives. Ask God to give you His discernment and guidance and a sense of His timing. Ask Him to reveal His will for you. Concentrate on being prepared for those special moments, so you may know when it is *your* time.

Are you currently waiting for God to reveal the right time for something?

Calm and Prepared

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOHN 18

Soldiers surrounded Jesus and His disciples that night. In an isolated location, the darkness was penetrated only by lanterns and torches. Those who opposed Jesus were working together.

In this emotionally charged moment, Peter reacted with violence, cutting off the ear of one of those who approached. But Jesus acted differently. He did not give in to the threats or emotions. He was not afraid or worried. Having spent time in prayer, He was *prepared* and remained *calm* (Luke 22:41-45).

Each of us will face many kinds of challenges with many ways to respond. Unless we are prepared, we can be like Peter, giving in to the emotions of the moment, retaliating, and reacting in the flesh with fear, anger, worry, or panic.

What challenges will you face today? How will you respond? Are you ready?

The Bible reminds you that you can prepare for any situation in important ways. First, fill your mind and heart with God's Word. Think about those truths. Then, follow the example of Jesus, spending quality time in prayer until you are at peace and ready spiritually.

Don't be controlled by your flesh but by the Spirit (Romans 8:5-9). Seek to be led by the Spirit and filled with the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). Let Him equip you and help you control your emotions. Trust Him, and look for opportunities to turn your challenges into moments for ministry.

How do you plan to prepare spiritually for today's challenges?

SATURDAY

October

29

Judas...came there with lanterns, torches, and weapons. [...] Peter... struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear... Jesus said to Peter, "Put the sword into the sheath; the cup which the Father has given Me, am I not to drink it?"

John 18:3, 10-11 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, help me to be strong in the Spirit and prepared for the events of life. I trust You to direct me. Use me. In Jesus' name, amen.

SUNDAY

October

30

The LORD smelled the soothing aroma... “I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man’s heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done.”

Genesis 8:21 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, may my life prove to be attractive to others. Fill me anew with Your Spirit. May others see the Spirit through me. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Aroma

TODAY’S BIBLE READING: GENESIS 8

Aroma is a central part of the dining experience. A byproduct of the combined elements in the cooking process, the aroma gives important clues about how food will taste. It tells us whether the dish is appealing.

In similar ways, the Bible uses aroma to describe the *character* of our lives. Central to God’s relationship with His people was the aroma given by their offerings. We see this in the offering Noah made after the flood. Just from the aroma, God could discern much about His people.

The Israelites were to offer a burnt offering with “*a soothing aroma*” (Exodus 29:18). The Bible describes how priests were to make offerings “*as a soothing aroma to the LORD*” (Leviticus 1:9).

We read how believers are to be “*a fragrance of Christ*” (2 Corinthians 2:15), and we are to be an offering and sacrifice “*as a fragrant aroma*” (Ephesians 5:2).

In sharp contrast, the Bible reminds us that idols made by human hands don’t hear, see, or smell (Deuteronomy 4:28). They simply cannot smell this kind of fragrant aroma. They are *imposters*.

Think about the impact you have on people around you. Everything about your life should produce an aroma pleasing to the senses. Like delicious food, your life should be appealing. It should make people want more. It should make them long to know more about the Gospel, experience it for themselves, and follow Jesus.

Is your life a pleasing aroma to God and those around you?

Living by Faith

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: HABAKKUK 2

Martin Luther just wanted to stimulate a debate at Wittenberg University where he was a professor. Instead, he launched a spiritual revolution.

The Reformation began on this date in 1517 when Luther posted his "95 Theses" on the door of the Wittenberg Castle Church. He had been disturbed to see how corruption in the church had grown. There was an unbalanced focus on working to get rewards – and even salvation. He saw how even in the Old Testament, the Bible taught that *"the just shall live by his faith."* This changed his life.

In May 1515, Luther began lectures on Romans. He reminded students, *"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood"* (Romans 3:23-25). He taught that no one is saved according to their actions. We must depend on God's grace. Jesus alone is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29), and God laid on Him the iniquities for every person (Isaiah 53:6).

What Luther began was the Reformation, a revolution founded on faith. But these principles still are true! All of us are saved *only* by grace, through faith. Renew *your* faith in God. Seek to live by faith, and always trust in God and His Word!

MONDAY

October

31

*The just shall live
by his faith.*

Habakkuk 2:4

PRAYER:

Father, thank You that I am saved by faith. Help me to *live* by faith. Help me to serve and please You. In Jesus' name, amen.

In what areas of your life do you need to display more faith?



Building a Fear Escape Plan

Leave fear behind and live confidently in the love of God.



by Ben Cerullo

Despite statistics that say we live during the safest time in history, fear lurks on every street corner. The 24/7 bombardment of bad news and social media doomsayers creates a deadly environment. Fear infects our minds and takes control of our bodies. The contagion quickly spreads to others.

God included the ability to fear in our design as a defense for the times we find ourselves in life-threatening situations. But living in a constant state of fear literally kills us. It leads to high blood pressure, adrenal failure, hormonal imbalances, and a lower quality of life. When fear sets up camp in your life, you have an enemy invader to conquer.

Do you remember fire drills from elementary school? Let's modify that idea to protect against fear. In a fire escape plan, you:

1. Map out exits
2. Learn practical dos (crawl low) and don'ts (hide)
3. Identify a safe meeting place away from danger
4. Practice your plan

Your fear escape plan is similar:

False
Evidence
Appearing
Real

EXIT FEAR AND ENTER GOD'S LOVE

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love (1 John 4:18 NKJV).

Faith rejects fear because it sees everything in life as filtered by the love of God. That doesn't mean there aren't scary things, and it doesn't mean you won't feel fear. It means you won't accept fear as your leader. You choose to follow God's instructions and stomp out fear. Remembering God's love opens the door to His power and presence and gives you the courage to take the next step.

LET GOD FIGHT FOR YOU, AND DON'T RUN!

You shall not fear them, for it is the LORD your God who fights for you (Deuteronomy 3:22).

Don't run from your fears; turn and face them knowing God will fight for you! Identify your fear, give it a name, and expose it to the light of truth from the Word of God. It's often said, "Don't look at how big your problem is. Look at how big your God is!" When you face your fear, you get to watch God work on your behalf. Nothing is too big for Him. Your faith will grow as He eliminates every fear you face.

SEE YOUR SMALL STEPS AS A SAFE PLACE

Who dares despise the day of small things, since the seven eyes of the LORD that range throughout the earth will rejoice when they see the chosen capstone in the hand of Zerubbabel? (Zechariah 4:10).

Once you expose your fear to the light of the Word, it begins to shrink. But don't retreat – now is the time to advance! Be proactive in eliminating your concern. If money worries you, learn money management wisdom from the Word and set some biblical goals. Taking small steps toward financial security is not a lack of trusting God; it is sound stewardship. Good management of what is in your control keeps fear from finding a foothold.

PRACTICE REJECTING FEAR DAILY

The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe (Proverbs 29:25).

God spoke the world into being and lovingly prepared a beautiful garden for Adam and Eve. They lived in abundance, enjoying creation and the Creator until they opened the door to danger by doubting God's goodness. Trusting Jesus is your doorway to safety! Your confidence in the goodness and love of God becomes seeds of hope that powerfully drive away all fear. ❖

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What would you call the ghost of a door-to-door salesman?

A dead ringer.

What do skeletons always order at a restaurant?

Spare ribs!

Who was the most famous French skeleton?

Napoleon Bone-apart

What runs around a cemetery but doesn't move?

A fence!



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

Email it to: MerryHeart@inspiration.org



What did they award the man that invented the door knocker?

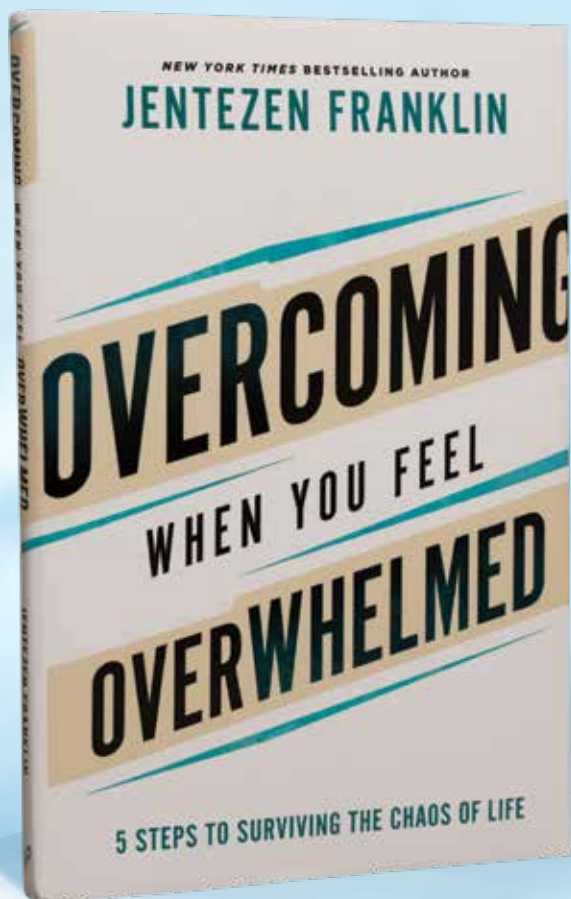
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