

INSPIRATION

Blessed to Be a Blessing

JULY 2019



FEELING STUCK?

*Keys to Your
Fresh Start*

PRISON
BREAK

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SEEKING A WORD
FROM GOD?

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OF THE SKUNK

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Keys to Your Fresh Start



This Month's Theme Is



UNSTUCK...Keys to a Fresh Start

Are you feeling *stuck* in some area of your life today? Do you face some medical diagnosis...financial need...emotional paralysis...or relationship problem where you need a breakthrough from God? On **page 5**, David Cerullo shares some powerful Biblical principles for getting unstuck from the troublesome issues in your life.

Our Special Section of Unstuck Testimonies

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How Much is a Soul Worth to YOU?

Jesus asked His disciples a chilling question one day:

“What profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?

Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”

(Matthew 16:26).

What an important question! If a person could put every possible material pleasure or treasure on one side of a scale, it still wouldn't be an even exchange for the value of their **SOUL**.

Jesus, the Son of God, *demonstrated* the incredible value He places on souls. He values your soul so much that He gave His life for you on the cross.

Just as every soul is precious to Jesus, it should also be precious to us as His followers.

Monthly Inspiration Partners have recognized the truth of Proverbs 11:30 that *“he who wins souls is wise.”* They know that by partnering with Inspiration Ministries each month, they're sending the life-changing Gospel to more than *200 nations and territories* throughout the world.

Thanks to partners like you, last year over TWO MILLION people prayed to receive Christ as their Lord and Savior through our evangelistic outreaches!

Call one of the numbers below to find out more about this convenient way to be a part of fulfilling the Great Commission by *automatically* partnering with Inspiration Ministries on a monthly basis.



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How to Get UNSTUCK from Your Issues



STRENGTHEN
your walk
with David Cerullo

I love the story in Mark 5:25-34 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. In fact, we're told that she *"had suffered many things from many physicians. She had spent all that she had and was not helped at all, but rather grew worse"* (Mark 5:26).

She must have been feeling quite *stuck*.

The King James translation 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 some kind of 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? Everyone has their issues, so you are not alone.

FIND HOPE

Perhaps your situation today feels much the same as for this distressed woman. You’ve tried just about 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 NASB).

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. There are many *hearers* in our churches today who 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, there will surely be 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 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 for us He may have some other action in mind. Are you ready to obey Him, whatever He tells you to do?

SPEAK IN FAITH

When you’re awaiting your breakthrough, it can be very difficult to keep your hopes up and continue speaking words of faith. Yet that’s exactly what this woman did:

She said, “If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well” (Mark 5:28).

Many believers are willing to give a testimony *after* their breakthrough comes, but during the time of testing they’re full of moaning and groaning. So I love the fact that this woman 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 the case of this woman, her *life* was literally spared by the faith she exercised and proclaimed.

If you need a new beginning today, it’s important to pay attention to the words you are speaking. Many people who need a breakthrough are continually speaking words of hopelessness and defeat:

- “Things will never change, I guess.”
- “These trials seem to be my cross to bear.”
- “Maybe God doesn’t love me. Perhaps this is His judgment for my sins.”

It’s time to quit talking like that! Instead, you need to start speaking what God says about you in His Word:



- “God is for me, and He will overcome anything that comes against me.”
- “Jesus came to give me life, and life more abundantly.”
- “Nothing can separate me from God’s love.”
- “Because of God’s love for me, I am able to overcome any attacks of the enemy.”

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). In order to get unstuck from your negative circumstances, you must get away from the naysayers and the purveyors of gloom and doom. 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 “issue” – and I’m convinced that the same is true for you today.

A fresh start is available to you in Jesus. He wants to speak words of freedom, healing, and deliverance to you, just as He did to the distraught woman:

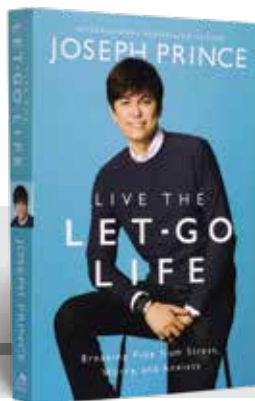
“Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of your affliction”
(Mark 5:34).

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

God bless you,

David

P.S. Don’t miss the special section of unstuck testimonies starting on page 10. In each case, an Inspiration Partner received an amazing breakthrough from God after they obeyed His leading to take a **step of faith**.



Turn to **page 30** to see how you can receive Joseph Prince’s powerful book, *Live the Let-Go Life*, as our THANK YOU GIFT for your partnership this month. It will help you get unstuck from the pressures and anxieties of everyday life, so you can experience God’s supernatural joy instead. *Supplies are limited, so please don’t delay!*

STRENGTHEN
your walk
with David Cerullo

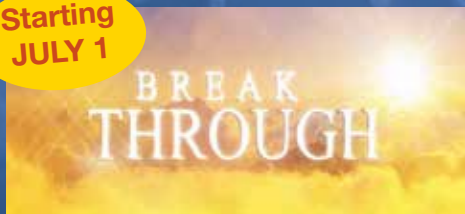
Get Unstuck from a Humdrum Christian Life!



David Cerullo's daily Strengthen Your Walk videos will empower you to experience new joy and peace.

Don't miss David's video series this month:

**Starting
JULY 1**



While these powerful daily Bible teachings are only three or four minutes long, the truths they contain are timeless and can change your life! If you're not yet receiving these free video teachings from David, it's easy to subscribe:

Follow Inspiration Ministries on Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube. And visit StrengthenYourWalk.org to browse the video archives or sign up to receive the videos via email.



Every week, we receive great testimonies like these from people being transformed by David Cerullo's daily discipleship videos:

"Thank you for this timely message, David. Satan tries to steal my joy and my passion to serve the Lord, but your video reminded me of God's love and favor even during times of weakness and spiritual dryness. I have been refreshed and reminded of the Lord's faithfulness through your message."

— Marilou

"David Cerullo's daily online videos have been God's instrument to show me how I can experience Him and feel His great love and promises for me."

— Ella

"Thank you so much for sharing this video. I am a witness to God's faithfulness and a recipient of favor from Heaven. I am seeing that God never fails, and He will never forsake me or let go of me. I experience Him with me both in good times and tough times. He is a God of mercy, kindness, generosity, joy, trust, and love."

— Joanne

Unstuck:



Everything Changed!

After obeying God's leading to take a step of faith, Angela received a new job, restored family relationships, and the salvation of her lost loved ones.

Angela was desperate for a supernatural breakthrough from God. "I had no job, no income, and no savings," she explains. "Unless the Lord intervened, I had no other hope left."

Right at her lowest point, Angela happened to watch an Inspiration Ministries broadcast about Uncommon Harvests. "Although \$100 was all the money had left in the world, I was compelled by the Lord to sow a financial seed into the Good Ground of Inspiration Ministries," she remembers.

Soon things changed for Angela: "Thank you, Inspiration Ministries," she wrote. "Because

I obediently planted a seed into His Kingdom, God greatly blessed me!"

The blessings were many: "First, I began a new job," she reports. "Then much-needed restoration began to take place within my family. Many of my unsaved family members have now given their hearts to Christ!"

How does Angela explain the turnaround in her life? God's favor! She writes: "Everything in my life has changed, and God has given me favor I've never had before!"

What God did for these Inspiration Partners,
He can do for YOU!

Visit [inspiration.org/souls](https://www.inspiration.org/souls) today to sow a Seed for Souls, and send your prayer request to our International Prayer Center at [inspiration.org/prayer](https://www.inspiration.org/prayer).

Unstuck: Healing and Much More!

Mary sowed a Seed for Souls during Campmeeting. Her daughter was healed, their relationship was restored, and the family received unexpected financial blessings.



Mary, a worried mother in New Mexico, had been praying for years for her daughter's healing from a mysterious illness.

"I was desperate for God to heal my daughter," Mary writes. "Her health started going downhill after she gave birth to her two children 13 months apart. She went to many doctors, but none could determine the cause of her illness. She wasted away to merely 95 pounds, and I was terrified she was going to die!"

Mary kept praying for God to intervene, and the breakthrough came in a surprising way – as she watched a broadcast of Inspiration Campmeeting.

"The speaker shared how

God can take a seed we sow for souls and bless us in return with a mighty harvest in the form of whatever breakthrough we need," Mary recalls. "Trusting in God's promises, I called and sowed a \$1,000 seed into His Kingdom."

Soon the family was receiving amazing blessings, starting with her daughter's healing: "My daughter's health got much better, as an incredible miracle took place right before our eyes!" Mary says.

God also restored the strained relationship Mary and her husband had with their daughter, who had stopped speaking to them for a while. The daughter apologized for the pain her silence had caused, and now the family's close bond has been restored.

Financial blessings have come as well: "Whenever we've needed extra money for a sudden expense, an unexpected check has come from some surprising source," Mary exclaims. "God surely is faithful!"

Unstuck:

An Unexpected Windfall



Marilyn's step of faith triggered a monthly financial provision that will continue the rest of her life.

Although she was living on a fixed income, Marilyn felt led by God to pledge a \$58 monthly seed for 12 months. Less than two months after this step of faith, she learned that her ex-husband was taking an early retirement.

This was a big deal, as Marilyn explains: "Our divorce decree stated that I was to receive a part of any retirement benefits, and I also discovered that he had already been taking some of this money and hiding it from me."

Her attorney filed for Marilyn to get her rightful benefits, and the outcome was stunning. "The court ordered that I receive \$3751 up front, plus \$328 a month for the rest of my life!" she reports.

But perhaps the biggest surprise came when Marilyn realized the amazing timing of this breakthrough: "When I looked at my bank records, I was shocked to realize that it had been exactly *58 days* from the time I made my pledge until I learned of my ex-husband's deception and contacted my lawyer! I don't think this was just a coincidence."

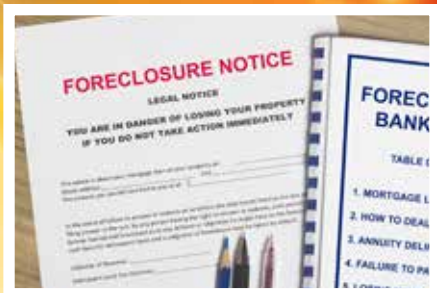
Imagine how grateful *you* would be if you received an unexpected windfall of thousands of dollars, followed by hundreds of dollars a month for the rest of your life. Marilyn writes: "God bless you, Inspiration Ministries! This unexpected income is helping me very much."

What God did for these Inspiration Partners,
He can do for YOU!

Visit inspiration.org/souls today to sow a Seed for Souls, or send your prayer request to our International Prayer Center at inspiration.org/prayer.

Unstuck:

Foreclosure Averted!



It looked like Nadolyn's foreclosure was inevitable, but God intervened just three days after she sowed a financial seed into God's Kingdom during Inspiration Campmeeting.

After living in her home for nearly 12 years, Nadolyn faced a financial crisis and imminent foreclosure. She was fighting a seemingly hopeless battle with her mortgage company, as she explains:

"The foreclosure was only a few weeks away, and the mortgage company refused to return my calls though I had left 16 messages. There seemed little hope of preventing the foreclosure."

Then Nadolyn stumbled across our Inspiration Campmeeting broadcast and heard the message of Seedtime and Harvest:



Nadolyn

"I had never watched Inspiration Campmeeting before, but when I heard the speaker ask viewers to sow a \$1,000 seed into God's Kingdom, I responded by faith. I knew the money I had in the bank would not solve my foreclosure problem, so I gladly sowed this seed for the Lord."

Just three days later, God did a miracle and gave her unexpected favor:

"Amazingly, I received a call from my mortgage company, telling me that my foreclosure was cancelled! They also decreased my house payment by \$539 per month, making it affordable again! Look at the favor of God!"



Unstuck:

A Loved One's Salvation!

For 23 years, Kathy prayed for her husband to come to Christ. But the turnaround came just months after she took a step of faith in obedience to God's leading.

When Kathy watched an Inspiration Ministries broadcast about the power of sowing \$58 monthly seeds for 12 months, she faced a difficult decision.

“The Holy Spirit told me to do it, even though I didn't feel like I could afford it,” she recalls. “When I sent my first check, the devil was screaming at me, ‘Are you crazy?! You can't do this...you don't have the money...you won't even be able to pay your bills!’”

However, Kathy never could have imagined the tidal wave of blessings that would result from her step of faith. “Just three months after I sent my first seed, my husband received Jesus into his life,” she marvels. “He was saved on Thanksgiving evening, after I had been praying for him for 23 years!”

Kathy is still amazed at her husband's turnaround. “Before I started planting my seeds into God's Kingdom, my husband would never listen to anything I had to say about God. But now he is saved, filled with the Holy Spirit, and a completely changed person!”

If you have a loved one who still isn't saved, you can understand Kathy's great joy at this surprising turn of events. “The months since my husband's salvation have been the most wonderful months in my life,” she says. “I'm totally convinced that this miracle is the result of my sowing the \$58 monthly seeds into the Good Ground of Inspiration Ministries!”

“We WILL reap a harvest if we do not give up!”

– GALATIANS 6:9

Are You Still Stuck?

God’s promises are true, and He wants to give you a breakthrough in your finances, health, emotions, and relationships! By taking these 7 vital steps, you can trigger your breakthrough and be sure your harvest is on the way:

- ☞ Walk in a loving, obedient, faith-filled relationship with God.
- ☞ Obey God’s Word and the voice of His Holy Spirit.
- ☞ Give each seed you sow a Specific Assignment for what you’re asking God to do on your behalf.
- ☞ Wrap your seeds with faith and expectancy.
- ☞ Sow your seeds into Good Ground in God’s Kingdom, continually and persistently.
- ☞ Patiently wait to reap your harvest.
- ☞ Thank God in advance, then honor Him with your testimony when you receive your breakthrough.

Visit inspiration.org/praise to send us YOUR stories of God’s breakthroughs in your life!

What God did for these Inspiration Partners,
He can do for YOU!

Visit inspiration.org/souls today to sow a Seed for Souls, or send your prayer request to our International Prayer Center at inspiration.org/prayer.

PRISON BREAK

Why *forgiveness* is the key to your *freedom*.



by George G. Bloomer

One of the most predictable truths of the Christian life is that those who have high callings will have to overcome great trials on the road to their destiny. I wish this weren't true, but I've seen few exceptions. If you want to have an extraordinary impact on the world, get ready for some difficult trials, often accompanied by injustices at the hands of other people.

The story of Joseph, the favored son of Jacob, illustrates this principle well. Of all of Jacob's children, he loved Joseph the most (Genesis 37:3). And as the story unfolds, we see that none of the other sons had the high calling Joseph had.

So did Joseph have a soft, easy life because of this special favor from God and special bond he shared with his earthly father? Certainly not! In fact, he had to go through *extraordinary trials* in preparation for the *extraordinary impact* he was destined to one day have.

DREAMS TURNED INTO NIGHTMARES

When Joseph was just 17, he had vivid dreams that provided a glimpse of his future. His brothers were already jealous of him, and these audacious dreams infuriated them all the more.

First the brothers threw him into a pit. Then he was sold into slavery to some Ishmaelite traders and taken to Egypt. Joseph ended up working for Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials, and things seemed to be going better for him at that point.

However, Joseph's trials weren't over yet. Potiphar's wife wrongfully accused him of attempted rape, and he ended up spending 13 years in prison as a result. He had successfully avoided temptation, but the outcome seemed completely unfair.

One of his prison mates was a butler who had a startling dream one night, which Joseph successfully interpreted. The butler would

soon be released, and Joseph encouraged him to put in a good word with Pharaoh. However, the butler forgot to mention Joseph to Pharaoh until two years later!

Despite the trials and injustices he experienced, the Bible repeatedly says, “*The LORD was with Joseph*” (Genesis 39:2, 39:21, 39:23). Through it all, he had God’s favor, but Joseph surely must have wondered about that at times. Most of us would have thrown ourselves an endless pity party, but there’s no evidence Joseph ever did so.

In retrospect, his numerous hardships were simply part of God’s refining process, preparing Joseph for future greatness. That’s something for you and me to remember the next time *we* have to deal with unpleasant or unjust circumstances. God has promised to work them *all* together for good when we entrust our lives to Him (Romans 8:28).

Joseph’s story is an example of the often-stated principle: “Tough times don’t last, but tough people do.” This man of destiny continued to patiently trust the Lord no matter what he faced, and eventually he *outlasted* his problems.

OPENING PRISON DOORS

Joseph used a vital key in order to successfully get unstuck from the *pit* and the *prison* so he could reside in Pharaoh’s

palace – ultimately saving his family and the entire nation of Egypt from starvation. That key is FORGIVENESS.

You see, many people get stuck and bound up in life because they refuse to forgive the people who have wronged them. From a human standpoint, Joseph had every right to be angry toward his brothers. And it must have been incredibly difficult to forgive Potiphar’s wife, whose lies resulted in Joseph being thrown into prison. And what about the butler? Joseph’s time in prison could have been two years shorter if the butler had remembered to tell Pharaoh about Joseph right away.

What would have happened if Joseph had failed to forgive these people? I’m convinced he would have remained stuck at some point in his journey. Instead of being able to fulfill God’s amazing vision for his future, he would have been in bondage to the past.

His brothers were terrified when they realized that Joseph was now the prime minister of Egypt, with power to kill them or enact some other kind of revenge. How shocked they must have been when their brother assured them of his love and forgiveness – even when they clearly didn’t deserve it.

Not only did Joseph refuse to seek revenge against his brothers, but he actively treated them with

unconditional love and undeserved kindness:

“Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.” And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them
(Genesis 50:19-21).

AMAZING GRACE

Joseph’s story is a beautiful picture of God’s abounding grace given to undeserving people like us, who had treated Him as our enemy (Romans 5:6-8). It’s also an astounding revelation of God’s ability to redeem even the most horrendous circumstances and turn them around for our good.

In Matthew 18:21-35 Jesus tells the story of another man who went to prison. Why? Because he refused to forgive. Not only was he *imprisoned* by his unforgiving attitude, but Jesus says he was *tortured* and *tormented*. While this may seem like an extreme outcome, it’s crucial to see what Jesus is describing here: Those who allow unforgiveness and bitterness to fester in their hearts will inevitably experience spiritual bondage and emotional torment.

Friend, now is a good time to pause and allow the Holy Spirit to search your heart. Is there anyone you’ve not forgiven? No matter how unjustly you’ve been treated, your freedom and deliverance depends on extending forgiveness and setting the other person free.

I know you may have faced some horrific treatment by someone along the way. Perhaps you’ve been sexually abused...physically beaten...lied about...wrongfully fired from a job...or betrayed by a spouse. But if you insist on hanging on to your hurts and offenses, you will inevitably find yourself stuck to the traumas of your past. Don’t allow that to happen! The Lord wants to set you free to fulfill His great plans for your future (Jeremiah 29:11).

Don’t wait a moment longer. Let God’s forgiveness fill your heart, and then extend that forgiveness to anyone who has hurt you. When you do, no pit or prison can keep you from experiencing the Lord’s incredible favor.



George G. Bloomer is a best-selling author and the founding pastor of the Bethel Family Worship Center in Durham, North Carolina.

5 Great Reasons...

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To find out more about how a Charitable Gift Annuity could provide greater security and benefit your long-term financial plan, contact our Partner Relations Team TODAY!



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Seeking a Word from God?

Often I meet people who are seeking some dramatic experience with God that will set them free from their problems. But I'm convinced that a better approach is to focus on our day in and day out walk with the Lord. Getting back to the basics of our faith will provide the supernatural growth we need for the breakthroughs we seek.

Be obedient. Stay in His presence. Stay in His Word.

I certainly believe in God's sudden, miraculous interventions. But too often we overlook the simple keys to victory – things like being obedient, staying in the Lord's presence, and spending time in His Word.

Several years ago, I had a friend who would go to one prophetic conference after another in search of “a word from God.” One day I told him I had an important word from the Lord for him. His eyes lit up. He was excited!

However, he seemed disappointed when I told him the message God had put on my heart

for him: *The word he needed was THE Word!*

This is as true for you and me as it was for my friend that day. Yes, God can supernaturally speak to us through His Spirit, but the most important word we need to seek is the Word He's already given us in the Scriptures.

Instead of chasing spiritual goose bumps, we need to open our hearts to the Lord daily, saying, “Speak to us, Father!” Dramatic changes will occur over time as we commune with Him day by day, eating a nutritious spiritual diet from His Word.

So quit looking for spiritual shortcuts, my friend. Only a deep, consistent, personal relationship with the Lord will bring you the true freedom and victory you seek.



Michael Brown is a nationally syndicated radio host, Bible teacher, and author based in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Stand Up for Jesus

MONDAY
July

1

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: EPHESIANS 6

Dudley Tyng was on fire for God. When he was just twenty-nine, his messages helped spark a revival in Philadelphia. Crowds flocked to his noonday services. Of the 5,000 people who attended one event (in March 1858), more than 1,000 committed their lives to Jesus.

Just a few days later, visiting the country, his arm was caught in farm machinery and had to be amputated. As he lay dying as a result of this accident, friends rushed to his side. With his last words, he urged them, "Tell the people to stand up for Jesus."

One of those visitors, George Duffield, was so moved that he preached a sermon the next Sunday based on Ephesians 6:14, concluding with a poem inspired by Tyng's dying words. Soon, the poem was transformed into the hymn "Stand Up for Jesus."

Duffield called believers to be "soldiers of the cross." Not to back down but "lift high His royal banner," confident in victory, that "every foe" will be vanquished and Christ will be "Lord indeed." We must not run away but enter the "mighty conflict." We cannot fight on our own, for "the arm of flesh will fail." We must stay alert, equipped with "the gospel armor" as people of prayer.

Remember: You are in a spiritual war. Be ready for battle. Put on the whole armor of God. Be committed to prayer. And stand for Jesus! You are a soldier of the cross.

*Stand firm therefore,
having girded your loins
with truth, and having
put on the breastplate
of righteousness.*

Ephesians 6:14 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I am a soldier in Your army. I will take the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit. Thank You for victory! In Jesus' name, Amen.

In God's Time

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: TITUS 1

In the hope of eternal life that God, who cannot lie, promised before time began. In His own time He has revealed His message.

Titus 1:2-3 HCSB

PRAYER:

Father, help me to grasp Your perspective on my life. I trust in You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Describing three different dimensions of time, Paul placed our lives in context. First, he reminded us that we face *limits*. But God is different. He is infinite and *beyond* time, dwelling in eternity. And He made promises “*before time began*.”

Paul also promised that all who are born again have “*the hope of eternal life*.” Right now, we may face the limits of time, but we can hope to enter that *timeless* dimension.

What is particularly unique about this promise is that it was made by God “*before time began*,” but it was revealed “*in His own time*” at the *precise* moment of His choosing. From His perspective in eternity, God chose the very moment when He wanted to reveal His message, completely separate from our concept of time, our desires, or perspectives.

We see this pattern in our relationship with God. We think sequentially, based on where we are in our journey through life. We can become impatient with God, frustrated when He does not act according to our timetable. We also can become presumptuous or try to force events. But God looks at everything from an eternal perspective.

Key to our relationship with God is being able to trust Him and being confident that He will act at just the right time. As the Bible promises, “*He has made everything beautiful in its time*” (Ecclesiastes 3:11). You can trust in Him for *your* life.

Finish Your Assignments!

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: TITUS 1

Paul provided Titus with a clear summary of his assignment. He had been left in Crete to “*set right what was left undone*” and “*appoint elders in every town.*” This was not a new assignment. In fact, Paul already had “*directed*” him to do these things.

We can speculate why Paul felt this reminder was necessary. Perhaps Titus had forgotten or become distracted. Perhaps he did not want to deal with these issues. It is possible that Titus did not want to confront prominent people in these churches. Perhaps he did not feel he received the necessary respect. But Paul encouraged him, “*Let no one disregard you*” (2:15).

Regardless of the cause, Titus needed to stay *focused* and *persistent* in order to accomplish his mission.

Throughout his letters, Paul made clear that it was important for believers to understand their God-given calling and then focus on *completing* those tasks. Paul himself was confident that he had been faithful. He wrote, “*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith*” (2 Timothy 4:7).

Each of us faces many possible distractions and excuses, personal interests and desires, things we like to do, or avoid. Many roadblocks might appear along the way. It is critical that we follow Paul’s advice to *remember* our assignments and seek to *complete* them, not giving in to excuses or distractions. Never leave anything *undone*!

The reason I left you in Crete was to set right what was left undone and, as I directed you, to appoint elders in every town.

Titus 1:5 CSB

PRAYER:

Father, remind me of the assignments You have given me. Help me faithfully fulfill Your tasks. Give me persistence and focus. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Praying for Your Country

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 1 TIMOTHY 2

I urge that entreaties and prayers...be made on behalf of...all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness...This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior.

1 Timothy 2:1-3 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, our country needs You. I pray for these specific leaders: _____. Raise up godly leaders who will serve You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

In May 1797, the young American republic faced a possible war with France. Once instrumental in America's fight for independence, France had become a thorn in their side. Many felt that war was inevitable.

But President John Adams was not convinced. Compelled to seek God, he called for a day of *fasting* and *prayer*. A recent biographer describes how many people were *critical* of this call. In fact, Adams "was roundly *mocked* in the press."

But believers throughout the country agreed that God was the answer. On the designated day, "the churches were filled." As people sought God, the crisis diminished and war was averted.

Today our world is filled with wars and rumors of wars and problems that don't seem to have solutions. There are divisions and clashes of ideas.

As in the situation John Adams faced, it is time to turn to prayer and seek God. When we seek Him, some may mock and ridicule. But we must realize that He is our only answer!

Make sure that you are doing your part in this spiritual battle. Follow the direction Paul gave to Timothy and pray for your leaders. Whether or not you agree with their edicts, pray for your local leaders. Pray for your national leaders and the decisions they make.

Commit yourself to pray diligently for your country. Seek God. Ask for His help, His wisdom, and His mercy.

The City of God

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JEREMIAH 29

After the church became dominant in the Roman Empire, some Christians felt that God's people had become too worldly. Many people debated how deeply they should be involved in politics and in the world.

Augustine of Hippo, a distinguished theologian, grappled with this subject for more than fifteen years. The result was a profound book, *The City of God*. He described how the true home for Christians was in a *spiritual* city.

He argued that “the earthly city” was not everlasting and that those in it seek the “good in this world.” While there might be “good things” associated with the earthly city, “better things” are associated with “the heavenly city, which are secured by eternal victory and peace never-ending.”

Today, Christians continue to debate how involved we should be in the world. We are reminded that “*our citizenship is in heaven*” (Philippians 3:20). But we also are commanded to pray for and support our leaders (1 Timothy 2:1-2) and submit to earthly authorities (Romans 13:1-7). We, too, remember God's command to Jeremiah to “*seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile,*” and to pray “*on its behalf.*”

Today, remember to pray for your country and its leaders. Ask God to help you be a responsible citizen and a good example. But always seek first His Kingdom, and remember that your citizenship is in heaven.

Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare.

Jeremiah 29:7 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I pray for my country and our leaders. Help me walk in Your ways. Help me to be a good example. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Good Works

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: TITUS 2

Make yourself an example of good works with integrity and dignity...

He gave himself... to cleanse for himself a people for his own possession, eager to do good works.

Titus 2:7, 14 CSB

PRAYER:

Father, may others see Jesus through my life. Work through me to demonstrate the impact of Your Spirit. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Ergonomics has become an important part of modern life. This applied science focuses on shaping and arranging places to foster efficiency and safety. For example, ergonomics is used to help design chairs and desks as well as lighting and flow in office buildings.

Every year, work-related injuries cause billions of dollars in damage. Ergonomics helps foster a healthier environment, reduces danger, and increases productivity.

The word ergonomics comes from the Greek word *ergon*, a word also used several times in the Bible, particularly in Paul's letter to Titus. The word often is translated *works*. In Titus, it's used to describe good works.

Paul wanted to make sure that his readers understood their works do not save them (3:5). But believers should seek to demonstrate the reality of their faith by what they do. We need to show in *convincing* ways the difference Jesus has made. We do this by being "*an example of good works*" (v. 7) and by being "*eager to do good works*" (v. 14).

Paul returned to this theme throughout the letter. Church leaders are to "*to be ready for every good work*" (3:1). All believers are to "*devote themselves to good works*" (3:8). Some are not fit "*for any good work*" (1:16).

Just as ergonomics fosters a healthier environment, so the Bible provides the resources we need to produce good works, to be more fruitful, and to have more impact.

Does God Hear?

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PSALM 4

David lay in bed, unable to sleep. As events flooded his mind, he could not find rest. He did not sense that God heard him or answered his prayers. And he did not experience peace.

Many people have had similar experiences. Through dark nights, their minds and hearts turn problems over and over. Learning from David, in these moments we see the importance of being *confident* in God, trusting Him through every situation.

David was reminded that the Lord had “*set apart the faithful for Himself.*” Circumstances might not seem to change but he *believed that “the Lord will hear when I call to Him”* (v. 3).

During times when he was worried, he was to “*reflect in [his] heart and be still,*” to focus on God, not his problems (v. 4).

Others might attack him, but he could pray, asking God to “*look on us with favor*” (v. 6). Most convincingly, he could look back and remember the ways God had blessed him. How He had “*put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and new wine abound*” (v. 7).

Trusting in God, he could say, “*I will both lie down and sleep in peace.*” He could know that through God he could “*live in safety*” (v. 8).

This is the peace God promises for all who call on Him. Circumstances may not seem to change, but we can rest in Him.

*Answer me when I call,
God, who vindicates
me. You freed me from
affliction; be gracious to
me and hear my prayer.*

Psalm 4:1 HCSB

PRAYER :

Father, thank You for hearing me when I pray. Thank You for giving me Your peace. I trust You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Asking Questions

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: MARK 9

They did not understand this saying, and were afraid to ask Him.

Mark 9:32 NKJV

One of today's brightest violinists recently was asked how she developed as an artist. One key was asking *questions*: "I love questions. They enrich your knowledge."

She described how easy it was to fall into bad habits and play in ways that were automatic, without insight or depth. But questions led to playing familiar pieces with fresh enthusiasm.

The same principles apply in the spiritual realm. Jesus encouraged His disciples to *ask questions*. He taught, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7). The implication is that those who don't ask will *not receive*. Those who do not seek will *not find*. Those who do not knock on doors will *not enter*.

This asking process is central to our relationship with God. As Jesus taught, "Whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive" (Matthew 21:22). But what happens when we don't ask? The implication is that we won't receive.

The disciples did not always understand this principle. As they traveled through Galilee, He tried to teach them about events to come. But "*they did not understand.*" Instead of asking questions, they remained silent. They "*were afraid to ask Him.*"

Are there things you don't understand about the Kingdom, the Bible, or God's direction? Don't be timid or afraid. Remember that Jesus encourages you to ask.

PRAYER :

Father, I seek to understand these issues: _____. Thank You for the answers. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Windows

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: LUKE 6

Born on this day in 1879, Italian composer Ottorino Respighi and his wife were staying on the island of Capri. It had been a particularly joyful time. He recently had been introduced to Gregorian chant, a sound that he found inspirational. As one biographer commented, Respighi was filled with “joyous wonder” and the “mystic exultation of profound religious feeling.”

In this atmospheric environment, he began working on a composition he later called *Church Windows*. Completed in 1925, each scene musically described key moments in his spiritual life.

The first “window,” entitled, “The Flight into Egypt,” portrays Jesus as a baby. The second window focuses on “St. Michael the Archangel,” and reminds us of the awe-inspiring presence of this powerful archangel. This window depicts a heavy battle, as angels battle with Satan’s demons.

The third window, “The Matins of St. Clare,” describes in delicate terms a spiritual pilgrimage, while the last window focuses on “St. Gregory the Great.” Revealing his spiritual intentions, Respighi wrote these words in Latin on the score: “Bless the Lord...Sing the Hymn to God. Alleluia!”

Windows are symbols for *how* we see the world, whether our view is distorted, or whether we see with clarity.

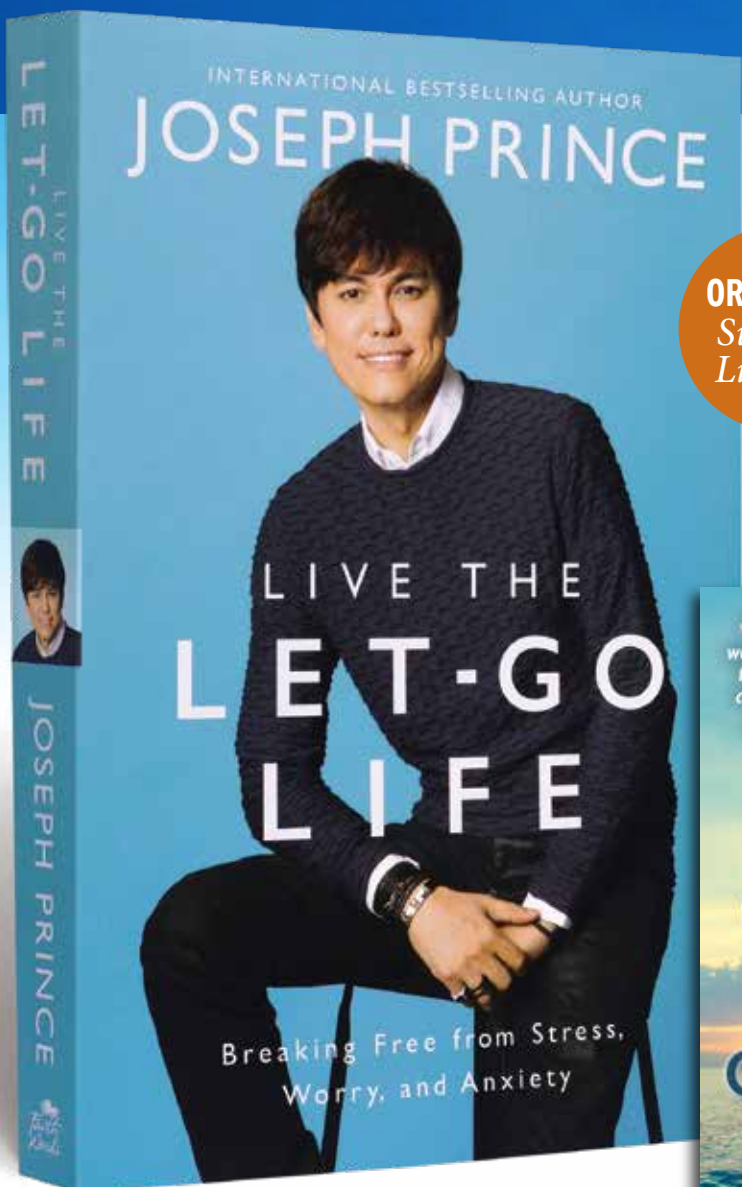
Make sure that *your* windows are clear and that you are looking at the right things. Ask God for discernment and clarity, to remove *anything* that causes distortion and clouds your vision.

First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck that is in your brother's eye.

Luke 6:42 NKJV

PRAYER :

Father, give me discernment about what I allow into my life. Remove anything that distorts my vision or keeps me from seeing the truth. In Jesus' name, Amen.



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TODAY'S BIBLE READING: EXODUS 24

Come up to Me on the mountain... I will give you the stone tablets with the law and the commandment which I have written.

Exodus 24:12 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for Your Word. Help me to put it into practice. Teach me and give me Your wisdom. In Jesus' name, Amen.

After practicing law for a time, William Blackstone decided to concentrate on teaching. Born on this day in 1723, he gave lectures about common law at Oxford University, the first lectures on English law ever delivered at a university.

His influence expanded after he wrote a commentary. *Encyclopedia Britannica* describes this as “the best known description of the doctrines of English law” and “the basis of university legal education.” It remains the most influential work on law ever written in English.

His work had such insight because he believed that law had its source in God. He wrote that in creation, God “established certain *rules*.” He did the same when He created man.

God created “eternal, immutable laws of good and evil.” His laws, in fact, are the source of all natural law: “It is binding over all the globe and all countries, and all times: no human laws are of any validity if contrary to this.”

These principles seemed obvious to Blackstone. However, in recent years, many people have ignored or forgotten them. Developing their own theories, they reject the idea that God gave us eternal principles that *always* are true, in every situation.

Today, don't exalt yourself or be dominated by worldly wisdom. Base your life on God and His Word. Remember: He is the Creator. *Everything* you have comes from Him. Fill your mind with His Word. Trust Him to give you success.

Fellow Soldiers

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PHILEMON 1

To Paul, Archippus was not just another Christian. He was a “*fellow soldier*.” A warrior. A man who recognized that believers are in a battle, that we have a real enemy and need to be armed and ready, spiritually prepared to fight. Archippus was willing to stand alongside Paul and other believers in this battle.

By calling attention to Archippus, Paul implied that others may have believed in Jesus but didn't approach life as *soldiers*. They may have attended church but weren't actively engaged in spiritual warfare.

Today, many Christians don't have this commitment. They don't seem to realize that we, too, are in a real war. We fight an enemy who will do anything to defeat us. He is the father of lies and seeks to distract us, destroy our testimony, and rob us of God's blessings.

Remember that you are a soldier in this battle. You have a real enemy who seeks to destroy and kill. He doesn't play fair, but will use any weapon he can to attack you: emotions, finances, health, and mind. If you let down your guard, he will attack you as well as your family and friends.

Commit yourself to being a soldier in God's army. Submit your life to Jesus, our Commander-in-Chief. Seek to stay sensitive to His Holy Spirit. Obey His Word. Serve in unity with other “*fellow soldiers*,” your brothers and sisters in Christ.

To Philemon our beloved brother and fellow worker... and to Archippus our fellow soldier.

Philemon 1:1-2 NASB

PRAYER :

Father, I am a soldier in Your army. Help me to be armed and ready for battle. I believe You for victory! In Jesus' name, Amen.

Concern for Others

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PHILEMON 1

I keep hearing about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all of God's people. And I am praying that you will put into action the generosity that comes from your faith.

Philemon 1:5-6 NLT

PRAYER:

Thank You for all You have done for me. Give me compassion for the lost and concern for others. I submit my life to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Onesimus was a slave who had run away from his owner, Philemon. For such an action in Roman society, a slave could be punished or even put to death. But an important change had taken place in Onesimus' life while he was gone.

During his flight, he was converted. As his advocate, Paul wrote Philemon, encouraging him to welcome Onesimus back. He appealed to Philemon, reminding him about the love he showed others. He asked him to remember how he had been so generous and given of his resources to help others.

In that spirit, Paul asked Philemon to think not like a *master*, but as a fellow *brother* in Christ, not in legal terms but in the light of God's mercy and grace. Instead of focusing on his rights, Paul encouraged him to remember all that Jesus had done for both him and Onesimus.

Today, many Christians allow their lives to be dominated by their own interests and forget to submit their lives to God. They think about their own rewards and pleasures and forget to focus on spiritual values or to seek first His Kingdom.

Ask God to help you be more concerned about others than about yourself. Ask God to deliver you from a spirit of judgment and fill your heart with faith, compassion, and love. Dedicate your time, talent, and treasure to influencing others with the Gospel.

Tact and Diplomacy

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PHILEMON 1

The US State Department defines diplomacy as “the art and practice of conducting negotiations and maintaining relations between nations.” Paraphrasing this definition, diplomacy means working with people to achieve desired results.

All of us engage in a variety of personal interactions with people in the world as well as with fellow believers. Paul’s letter to Philemon may be seen as a model of diplomacy in action.

Paul’s challenge was convincing his friend Philemon to welcome back Onesimus, a runaway slave Philemon had owned, but who had become a Christian. Paul’s goal was to persuade Philemon to welcome him back as if nothing had happened.

Paul started by placing God at the center of the relationship. This was a way to create a spiritual context for the dialogue. He also reminded Philemon of his own commitment as “a prisoner of Christ Jesus” (v. 1).

Then, Paul made his appeal. He wrote clearly, demonstrating how Philemon would benefit from agreeing with Paul. He reminded Philemon of the debt he owed Paul personally, but there never was any sense of humiliation, defeat, or surrender. Granting this request would not harm Philemon. It simply was the right thing to do.

The Bible is filled with examples of tact in action, principles that can help us know what to say and when to be silent.

Ask God to give you insights you can apply in *your* interpersonal relationships.

*I am sending him back.
You therefore receive
him, that is, my own
heart, whom I wished to
keep with me, that on
your behalf he might
minister to me in my
chains for the gospel.*

Philemon 1:12-13 NKJV

PRAYER :

Father, I commit these situations to You:

_____. Help me know what to do and what to communicate. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Worldly Reason

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PSALM 14

The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God"... They have all turned aside... there is no one who does good, not even one.

Psalm 14:1, 3 NASB

PRAYER :

Father, I depend on You. Fill my mind with Your truth. Free me from dependence on worldly wisdom. I trust in You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

As Louis-Charles-Antoine Desaix de Veygoux prepared to lead the forces of France into battle, he felt it was appropriate to say a few words to encourage the troops. Traditionally, this had been a time for prayer, but by 1798, the time of the Battle of the Nile, France officially had *rejected* God. As a result, a typical prayer was out of the question.

Instead Desaix decided to read from the philosophical writings of Montesquieu, who had been a brilliant thinker. Yet it can be hard to imagine how his writings could have inspired these troops.

These men in revolutionary France had become slaves of their concepts of reason to the point that they rejected anything associated with God. This is what can happen when we trust in human reason and reject God.

Many people today follow the same patterns. For answers, they look to worldly wisdom such as education and science. These pursuits have value, but they cannot replace God.

Tragically, some believers follow a similar path, basing their lives on worldly philosophies. As a result, it can be hard to distinguish between them and the lives of unbelievers. Meanwhile, God looks down from heaven *"to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God"* (v. 2).

Today, make sure that you have the right priorities. Place your hope in the living God. Seek first His Kingdom and His wisdom. And base your life on His Word.

Wolves

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: MATTHEW 7

At England's Cambridge University in the 1930s, the USSR recruited several bright students to spy against their own country. Eventually these men infiltrated the highest levels of British government.

One key to their success was they didn't *look* like spies. Even when evidence against them increased, many authorities couldn't imagine that they were spies. They didn't fit the expected profile.

One interesting recruit was art historian Sir Anthony Blunt. His father had been a pastor who was held in high regard.

During World War II, Blunt supplied classified information to the USSR. After gaining a position with high security clearance, he monitored diplomats from neutral countries and invented a system for discovering the contents of supposedly secure diplomatic bags. He also stole top-secret documents from officials' desks.

During the course of the war, Blunt passed nearly 2,000 documents to the USSR. Yet, as an expert in art and architecture, he was called "the most powerful and influential man in British art history." He was so beloved that one student commented, "We all wanted to be like Blunt."

The Bible reminds us of how difficult it can be to recognize deception. Remember, "*even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light*" (2 Corinthians 11:14 ESV) and false prophets can seem innocent and appealing. They can fool anyone. Even you.

Ask God to help you be discerning, to make decisions on face value, and to be sensitive to the Spirit's leading.

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

Matthew 7:15 ESV

PRAYER :

Father, I seek Your wisdom. Give me discernment to recognize "wolves." In Jesus' name, Amen.

Cycles of Life

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ECCLESIASTES 1

One generation passes away, and another generation comes; but the earth abides forever. The sun also rises, and the sun goes down, and hastens to the place where it arose.

Ecclesiastes 1:4-5 NKJV

Ecclesiastes helps us think about life as part of an endless flow, a cycle of coming and going. Some people are driven to amass wealth and power. But the Bible reminds us that life is like *“a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away”* (James 4:14).

Trying to develop the right perspective, we see that our lives are temporary, that we all are part of the passing of time. Generations come and go, yet *“the earth abides forever.”* The sun rises and sets. Winds whip from the south, then turn around to the north. *“All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full”* (v. 7).

We realize that life is filled with constant change. After completing one project, more projects arise. We end one day, only to face new challenges the next. We reach goals, but then make new goals. We get a paycheck, but soon must earn more. We cook a meal, but then must cook another.

It can be easy to react to these cycles with pessimism. Nevertheless, the Bible encourages us to realize that God wants us to have the right perspective and to realize that He gives *meaning* to life and promises eternal life.

In your life, remember that God has made *“everything beautiful in its time.”* There is a season for everything and *“a time for every purpose under heaven”* (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 11).

PRAYER :

Father, help me to have Your perspective on life. Thank You for giving me meaning. I trust in You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Jesus Reigns!

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PSALM 72

Thinking about world conditions, we can see nothing but problems. Our vision can be dominated by conflict and immorality. Looking at the world of 1719, Isaac Watts could have reached similar conclusions. There were problems everywhere. Instead Watts, by faith, saw Biblical prophecies fulfilled and Jesus ruling over everything!

Born on this day in 1674, Watts expressed this conviction in a hymn called "Jesus Shall Reign." He wrote that Jesus would reign wherever the sun would shine, and His Kingdom would "stretch from shore to shore, till moons shall wax and wane no more." He would reign over the "the islands," and "from north to south" princes would gather to "pay their homage at His feet."

Watts saw the Gospel spreading to distant lands and "people and realms of every tongue," young and old, would bless His Name. Prisoners would leap to loose their chains. The weary would "find eternal rest." Every need would be met. Where Jesus reigns, "He displays His healing power" and "death and the curse are known no more."

As we think about our Savior, how can we help but praise Him? As Watts declared, "Let every creature rise and bring peculiar honors to our King; angels descend with songs again, and earth repeat the loud amen!"

Today, commit your life to serving Jesus and bringing the Gospel to the nations. Praise His name. Make Him your Lord. Let Him reign!

May he also rule from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.

Psalm 72:8 NASB

PRAYER:

Dear Lord Jesus, use me to spread the Gospel. Bring revival to my country and the world. May You reign in my heart! In Your name, Amen.

Forgetting the Past

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PHILIPPIANS 3

Forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:13-14 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, help me to forget what lies behind and reach forward. Help me to press on toward Your goals. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Many people seem to be haunted by their past. They nurse grudges and relive moments when they felt slighted. They remind themselves of ways they felt hurt by other people and have been mistreated. Others are mad at God because He may not have answered a prayer they prayed years ago.

In times like these, we need to remember the lesson Paul taught: the importance of letting go and *forgetting*. The fact is that we cannot change the past. So why would we worry about things we cannot possibly control or change?

Yes, it is important to *learn* from the past and not to repeat past mistakes. But the Bible reminds us we should not spend our lives looking back. Instead we are to press toward the "*upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*" It is a call to move *forward*.

We also need to be free from our past mistakes and sins. If we have asked God for forgiveness, He has forgiven them (1 John 1:9). David declared that He has removed our transgressions "*as far as the east is from the west*" (Psalm 103:12). He literally has buried our sins in the depths of the sea.

Are you allowing things in your past to hold you back? Is your mind plagued by memories and mistakes? Have people said or done things that have *wounded* you? Ask God to help you move forward. Press onward!

Opinions

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JUDGES 21

In many ways, modern life can be seen as a war waged by opinion polls. These surveys measure how people view various subjects. When a recent study examined some prominent polls, they found that some methodologies were more accurate than others were. Some results were misleading.

Since there are countless ways to conduct research, there can seem to be a constant variety of conclusions. In fact, results can differ based on the way polls are designed. Asking certain kinds of question can yield one result, while other questions can yield different results. Politicians often cling to polls to help them decide what to do, but also as weapons against their adversaries.

In many ways, polls reflect the fickle ways people look at life. Opinions can change based on the circumstances at the time, or whether a policy seems to work.

These patterns are similar to life in Israel during the time of the judges. Once that nation had been governed by standards provided by God. However, gradually Israel became a nation in which everyone did “*whatever*” he wanted. The issues were like popularity contests or opinion polls.

These patterns continued throughout history and are evident today. Even God’s people assume they can do “*whatever*” they want, based on what *seems* acceptable.

The Bible reminds us that disaster awaits any people who reject God’s laws, go their own way, and do “*whatever*” they want.

In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did whatever seemed right to him.

Judges 21:25 CSB

PRAYER :

Father, help me to stay obedient to Your Word. I submit to You. Help me live by Your standards. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Who Really Is Pure?

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PROVERBS 20

Who can say, "I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin"?

Proverbs 20:9 NKJV

PRAYER:

Father, forgive me for a critical spirit. I humble myself before You. I owe everything to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

In our most spiritual moments, we can imagine that we might have advanced to a special status. We might feel proud about our spirituality. With a sense of superiority, we might find it easy to criticize others and hold ourselves as models. We even might convince ourselves that we are without fault.

The Bible reminds us, "*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23). In fact, "*the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?*" (Jeremiah 17:9). These truths apply to each of us.

The Bible tells us these truths to remind us why we must stay humble. Whenever we have feelings of superiority, we should remember the horrible consequences of pride. This is an attitude that "*goes before destruction.*" In fact, a haughty spirit leads to "*a fall*" (Proverbs 16:18).

In contrast, the Bible reminds us of the blessings that result from an attitude of *humility*. As we stay humble, we are in a position to receive God's wisdom and favor.

The reality is that God knows each of us better than we know ourselves. In fact, He knows *everything* about us. He sees our hearts and minds and knows what we really think and feel (Psalm 139:1-4). He knows the reality. We can't fool Him!

Today, humble yourself before God. Approach life with the spirit of humility. Be careful before criticizing others. Stay on guard against pride.

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PROVERBS 21

Legendary pianist Bill Evans amazed listeners with dazzling solos and fresh insights. Music seemed to pour out from his fingers, complete with rich chords and lyrical melodies.

One famous pianist pointed to Evans' "musical intelligence and his exquisite harmonic system." Another musician commented that Evans had a "magical connection with the piano." Many peers found Evans to be an inspiration and wondered about the keys to his success.

While his playing sounded effortless, Evans surprised many with his response. Yes, he had natural ability. But he stressed that what *sounded* natural and effortless actually was the result of *diligence* and *practice*.

He explained, "I believe in things that are developed through *hard work*." This discipline led to greater depths of understanding and maturity.

Many others have attested to these same principles in their lives. The compositions of Johann Sebastian Bach, too, sounded natural. But he admitted, "I have had to *work hard*; anyone who works just as hard will get just as far."

The Bible tells us working hard is central to success in any venture. But some take their gifts for granted and never really develop their God-given potential. Others form bad habits or even are lazy.

In your life, be sure to be a good steward of the resources God has given you. Develop your raw talent. Take advantage of your opportunities. Hone your skills. Foster good habits and right attitudes. Be faithful and disciplined.

Good planning and hard work lead to prosperity, but hasty shortcuts lead to poverty.

Proverbs 21:5 NLT

PRAYER :

Father, give me the right attitudes. Thank You for the gifts You have given me. Help me to be a good steward. In Jesus' name, Amen.

A Forgotten Principle?

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: MATTHEW 7

Why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

Matthew 7:3, 5 NKJV

PRAYER:

Father, help me be clean in Your sight. Help me be wise and discerning and be careful before I criticize or judge others. In Jesus' name, Amen.

We see it every day. Social media circulates the latest rumors. Gossip circulates accusations. Politicians blast those with opposing views. Inspired by this activity, many Christians engage in similar tactics. But what does the Bible say about spreading lies and pointing out others' faults?

Jesus taught us to remember that no one is perfect. We may see a "speck" in someone else's eye, but before doing anything, we must address the "plank" in our own eye. Only when we are clean before God are we ready to address the problems in others.

There is one more important step: Before going public, go *directly* to the person with whom we have problems or see faults, as in Matthew 18:15-17. Then we take several others with us to speak to that person privately. We may not want to take this step. It is easier to attack or spread rumors. However, our attitude changes when we confront someone *privately* before speaking openly.

Appropriate confrontation forces us to think carefully about our words, realize our responsibility and accountability, and remember the ultimate goal of reconciliation. At times we need to identify errors and root out false doctrines. But the Bible makes clear that our overriding goal should be to strengthen the body in order to increase our impact in the world (John 17:21) and to heal wounds.

Ask God to give you discernment about the words you speak to and about others.

God's Character

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: HEBREWS 1

What is God really like? While “*no one has seen God at any time*” (John 1:18), Jesus came to show us what He really is like.

Hebrews explains that Jesus is the “*exact representation*” of the Father’s nature. The Greek word here is the source of the English word character, used here for the only time in the Bible. Thus, when we read about Jesus, we know *exactly* what God’s character is like.

This is why the Christian life *begins* with Jesus, and why Hebrews spends so much time telling us why Jesus is so different. It’s why our relationship with Him is so critical.

The more intimately we know Jesus, the more clearly we know and understand God the Father. His Word comes alive more, and we grasp His wisdom more. Our eyes open more to the depths of His plans. We receive more of His peace and grasp our personal destiny.

Today, seek to grow in your relationship with Jesus. Immerse your life in God’s Word, for Jesus *is* the Word (John 1:1-4). Like His disciples, leave everything behind to follow Him. Seek to obey Him in every area. Talk with Him throughout the day. Listen to Him. Learn to walk in the Spirit. Commit your problems and decisions to Him. Seek His direction.

When you do these things, not only will you draw closer to Him, but you will also understand more about God.

He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power.

Hebrews 1:3 NASB

PRAYER :

Dear Lord Jesus, help me to know You more intimately. Speak to me. Guide me. May my life bring You glory. In Your name, Amen.

Lest We Drift Away

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: HEBREWS 2

For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it.

Hebrews 2:1 NASB

All of us have the potential to drift away from God – *every* Christian, regardless of age or experience. The wrong things, thoughts of sin, and ungodliness can dominate any heart and mind. So, what should do?

The Bible says that we must “*give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard*” (v. 1 NKJV). It is not enough merely to know about the truths of our faith. We cannot just read the Bible, pray occasionally, or go to church. We must be vigilant. Serious. Prepared.

This means devoting our thoughts and efforts to spiritual things. Instead of being dominated by the world, we must be addicted to the things of God.

We must read and study the Bible and think and meditate about what it means. We must spend quality time in prayer and allow God to show us more about the “*things we have heard*” and the needs of our lives. We also need to make sure that we are living in obedience to His Word and being good stewards of the resources He has given us.

Today, ask God to revive your spiritual life. Do not be content with a lukewarm faith, or assume that you could not drift away. Ask God to pour His Spirit upon you as never before, open your eyes to more of His truth, and transform your life in new ways.

PRAYER :

Father, keep me from drifting away. I seek You with my whole heart. Give me a deeper understanding of Your Word. In Jesus' name, Amen.

You are Unique!

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 1 SAMUEL 8

Franz Xaver Mozart was the son of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, a recognized genius as a composer and performer. Many believe that Wolfgang was among the most gifted people in history. With such a legacy, some assumed his son would follow in his father's footsteps and become a great composer and soloist.

Reflecting on these expectations, one leading authority predicted he would have a career "not inferior to that of his celebrated father." Born in Austria in July 1791, Franz did show talent as a young boy. He then received training from respected teachers.

After he began appearing in public, he even changed his name to W. A. Mozart Jr., seeking to take advantage of his famous father.

Yet, while heading down this path, Franz consistently fell short. Despite all the opportunities, he never achieved the results others expected or hoped for. He spent most of his years as a teacher and soloist with modest success. The problem? He was not his father. A scholar concluded that Franz was burdened by the impossibility of living up to Wolfgang's reputation. It was a shadow cast over his life.

The Bible reminds us that *each* of us has a unique journey as well as unique gifts and opportunities. This is true regardless of our parents or upbringing.

What are *your* specific gifts? Ask God to confirm the unique *tasks* and *gifts* that He has given you. Remember, you are special to Him.

As Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons to be judges. They were not like their father.

1 Samuel 8:1, 3 NLT

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for Your unique calling on my life. Help me to be a faithful steward, focused on Your goals for me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The Real Thing

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 11

On the same night in which He was betrayed took bread...He also took the cup after supper, saying...As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.

1 Corinthians
11:23-26 NKJV

PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, thank You for all that You have done for me. I worship You. In Your name, Amen.

It has been called “spiritual,” “reverent,” even “holy.” These words have described Richard Wagner’s opera, *Parsifal*, from the moment it debuted, on this day in 1882. Many found the music mesmerizing. For example, Gustav Mahler, a fellow composer, left one performance of it in silence, so overwhelmed he could not speak.

For many, the opera’s high point comes from a scene Wagner adapted from the Last Supper. On his own terms, he succeeded in creating a work of beauty, filled with atmosphere and imagery. But it is important to remember that it is *not* the real thing. In fact, the Last Supper occupies an entirely different plane.

This Last Supper marked the fulfillment of God’s plans revealed at the Passover. It was a solemn moment that established one of the most *sacred events* in the Christian life. This is a moment to think about Jesus and remember all that He did for us. It’s an event filled with symbolism and power; it’s a critical moment when we confirm our faith.

More than a ritual, this brings us face-to-face with Jesus. It is not to be taken lightly. We are instructed to examine ourselves before partaking. In fact, if we partake “*in an unworthy manner*” we are bringing “*judgment*” on ourselves (v. 29).

Make sure that you are serious about the Lord’s Supper. Like the rest of the Bible, it is *real*. Life-changing. Examine yourself. Remember Jesus.

Tested

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: HEBREWS 2

Jesus has such impact in part because of His personal *experience*.

The Bible declared that He was “*tempted*.” This was more than just facing opposition. The Greek word here suggests being *examined* or *scrutinized*, being able to *prove* that something is true.

His ministry was spent *enduring* tests. He faced situations in which He was examined and scrutinized. He continually needed to prove that what He taught would work. Hebrews declares “*we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin*” (4:15).

His example gives us confidence that He can “*come to the aid of those who are tempted*” and help us be victorious. Jesus had to endure uniquely intense tests. Moreover, He was able to be victorious through each one in ways that were “*without sin*.”

The same principle applies to each of us. We need to go through a process of testing and having opportunities for others to examine our lives. Realize that others are scrutinizing our decisions and actions, looking for proof that our beliefs are true, if, in fact, our lives are transformed, and whether the Gospel is *real*.

If you feel tested, remember these are important steps for your faith, opportunities for you to grow and to prove – to yourself and the world – that Jesus is Lord and that the Bible is true.

Since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.

Hebrews 2:18 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I surrender my life to You. Refine me. Purify me. Help me fulfill my potential. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Hardened

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: HEBREWS 3

Exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Hebrews 3:13 ESV

Not all steel is the same. Some special grades are distinguished by being called "hardened steel" because they undergo intense heat treatment. As a result, this steel lasts much longer and can be used in more extreme settings.

Many other materials can be "hardened." This takes place in the kitchen as foods are changed into more solid forms. Hardening takes place in the body as blood vessels harden and no longer are responsive.

The Bible tells us that *hardening* is a spiritual term. Ideally, we are to be soft and pliable, sensitive to the Spirit, ready to be changed as God directs. But we also can be hardened. This means *resisting* God's work, being set in our ways and blind to our weaknesses.

The Bible warns that we can be "*hardened*" by the deceitfulness of sin. The Greek word indicates that we can become stubborn, obstinate, and refuse to recognize the need to change.

This is the impact sin can have on our hearts and minds. Specifically we can be *deceived* into thinking that certain acts or thoughts are *harmless* or even *beneficial*. But they can make it harder for us to see the truth, to serve God, and to have the right perspective.

Be on guard against the deceitful impact of sin. Surrender your heart and mind to Jesus. Make Him your Lord. Seek to remain sensitive to the Spirit. Be a source of encouragement to others.

PRAYER:

Father, help me live according to Biblical principles and be a testimony to Your power. Use me to impact others. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Without Profit

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: HEBREWS 4

Everything seemed to be in place. The Israelites had seen God's power in action and experienced His supernatural presence. They had heard His voice. Yet they failed to enter His rest, and even "*provoked*" and angered Him (Hebrews 3:15). What was wrong?

Yes, they had heard His Word. But the Bible tells us that the word did not "*profit*" them. The Greek word here indicates that there was no *benefit*. It didn't do them any good, even though these words were spoken by God Himself.

Why? Because hearing the Word was not "*united*" with faith. The Greek here indicates being *combined* with elements, *blended together* to generate meaningful results.

These same principles are true today. How many people go to church and read the Bible occasionally, but don't experience the full benefits? Why? It is not enough just to hear the Word or know about it, but we must *believe* it, make His Word part of our very DNA, become "*united*" in faith with the Word, so thoroughly comingled that we are transformed and have such faith in His promises that we put them into practice.

In your life, remember that God offers you real truth and life-changing promises. Don't just dwell on the surface but make a commitment to go deeper, to walk by faith, to trust God, to be in tune with His Spirit, to be guided by His principles, and to *profit* from His Word.

The word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.

Hebrews 4:2 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I believe that Your Word is true. May it transform my life. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Growing

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: HEBREWS 5

Though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again...you have come to need milk and not solid food. Solid food belongs to those who are of full age.

Hebrews 5:12, 14

PRAYER:

I want to grow in my knowledge of You. Help me mature as a believer. Open my heart, and fill me with your Spirit. In Jesus' name, Amen.

All of us begin our spiritual lives as we do our physical lives – as babies. We must be “born again” as new creatures in God’s Kingdom. But some people never develop beyond this “baby” stage. For many different reasons, they remain babies and stay that way.

The Bible makes clear: God wants all of us to *grow* in our spiritual lives. He wants us to move beyond the stage in which we live on spiritual milk. He wants us to advance and start eating more of the “meat” of the Gospel. He wants us to mature and fulfill more of the possibilities and commands of His Kingdom.

The Bible gives us vivid descriptions of the riches God has prepared for us. God wants to reveal so much to us. There is so much more for us to know! As Paul said, *“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out”* (Romans 11:33)!

No matter how many years we have been Christians, how well we know the Bible, or what our position is in the world or the church, we can always learn and grow more. God has more to reveal to us.

In your life, make a commitment to grow. Cry out to Him that He would reveal more of His truth, wisdom, and unsearchable riches!

Waiting Patiently

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: HEBREWS 6

God made promises to Abraham. He never forgot those promises. Even when it did not appear to Abraham that anything was happening, God was in the process of bringing them to fulfillment.

Yet Abraham must have had doubts and wondered if God had forgotten about him or changed His mind. He even succumbed to pressure when he had a son through Hagar. But he continued to have to wait. Because he *waited patiently*, he *obtained* what God had promised.

The Bible reminds us that waiting is an important part of experiencing God's fulfillment. And if, like Abraham, we are called to wait, we are to wait *patiently*.

It can be easy to forget that God is sovereign. He has a different sense of time than we do. His timing is always perfect, and He had many factors in mind when He laid out His plans.

Ultimately, He wants us to be faithful and trust Him. We need to be persistent and unfaltering, even when nothing appears to be happening. When we wait patiently, God sees that we believe and trust Him.

Today, remember that God answers prayers and keeps His promises. He wants you to be persistent in prayer and continue to seek Him for the things you need. Also remember to wait on Him and have faith in every situation. While you wait patiently, worship and praise Him. He is faithful.

Having patiently waited, he obtained the promise.

Hebrews 6:15 NASB

PRAYER :

Father, I believe that Your promises are true. Thank You for answering my prayers. I have faith that You will meet my every need. In Jesus' name, Amen.



Firmly Rooted in the Word of God

When Judah and Gabriella sought to go deeper in their spiritual life, the Lord answered their prayer in an inspiring way.

Newly married, Judah and Gabriella were in search of devotionals to strengthen their faith and provide a firm foundation for their life together.

“We heard about Inspiration Ministries for the first time while looking on Google for online devotionals,” they write. “We found the daily online devotionals from Inspiration Ministries and really appreciate how they are firmly rooted in the Word of God.”

Before settling on our devotionals, Judah and Gabriella compared them with other resources that they found. “Many other devotionals only offer a

verse or two, but we love how the Inspiration Ministries devotionals add the extended reading, which allows us the opportunity to dig deeper into what God has for us in His Word.”

After discovering the online devotionals, this young couple took time to interact with Inspiration Ministries through Facebook, Inspiration TV, the inspiration.org website, and David Cerullo’s *Strengthen Your Walk*™ discipleship videos. Here’s their advice to others who are looking for faith-building resources: “This is a great ministry for anyone to get involved with!”

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DAILY DEVOTIONALS



Visit inspiration.org to see our wide array of resources to help you grow closer to God. And at inspiration.org/dailydevotional, you can sign up to receive our online devotionals in your email inbox each day.

The Parable of the

Skunk

by Jim Buchan

A man driving his car on a country road ran over a skunk without realizing it. Though bothered by the foul smell, he assumed there must be a skunk in the nearby woods.

However, the stink continued as he drove down the road, causing him to conclude that skunks were all around him – for miles and miles! What he didn't realize was that he was taking the skunk odor *with him* wherever he drove.

We, too, need to be careful that the bad odor we attribute to those around us is not actually emanating from our own life. Let's not be like those who unwittingly carry a stench with them from marriage to marriage, job to job, or church to

church, always blaming others for the stink.

God wants to replace any “skunk scent” we've been carrying with the sweet fragrance of Christ (2 Corinthians 2:14). Then goodness and mercy, not foulness or negativity, will follow us everywhere we go (Psalm 23:6).

What kind of fragrance are *you* carrying today?



Jim Buchan
is Director
of Partner
Communications
at Inspiration
Ministries.



Seize the Moment!

by Perry Stone

I once heard an old preacher say, “The opportunity of a lifetime must be seized in the lifetime of the opportunity.” In other words, there are strategic moments in time when we must take action or forever lose the chance.

Today we’re living in a time of great shaking upon the earth, and this provides a great opportunity for God’s people to heed Isaiah’s timely prophetic message:

*Arise, shine;
For your light has come!
And the glory of the LORD
is risen upon you.
For behold, the darkness shall
cover the earth,
And deep darkness the people;
But the LORD will arise over you,
And His glory will be seen upon
you (Isaiah 60:1-2).*

Most believers have faced serious spiritual battles the past few years, but God’s Spirit is on the move. Best of all, Satan’s time to

wage war against God’s people is getting short!

I’m convinced that the devil is more aware of God’s prophetic timetable than are most Christians. We can see this from an intriguing statement about the End Times in Revelation 12:12:

*“Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he **knows** he has a short time.”*

So *how* does the devil know that his days are numbered? He knows this because he recognizes the prophetic signs! Satan knows the Bible, and he sees that the Biblical signposts of the End Times are occurring at a rapid rate. Israel has become a nation again. Jerusalem has been built up as a great city. Jewish people have returned to the Holy Land from all over the earth. All of these signs are a clear fulfillment of Biblical prophecies.

PARTICIPATING IN BIBLICAL PROPHECY

The prophetic sign that most alarms the enemy is found in Matthew 24:14: *“This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and **then** the end will come.”* This is one of the most significant signs of Jesus’ return: He won’t come back until the Gospel has gone out to all the nations.



You and I have a vital role to play in fulfilling this Bible prophecy! Partner with Inspiration Ministries as we broadcast God’s Word 24 hours a day to a vast audience of people who have never heard the Gospel.

Many of these precious souls live in nations where it’s illegal to tell people about Jesus by traditional preaching. But we live in a new day, when technological advances have erased many of the governmental and cultural barriers. People all over the world are getting Internet connections in their homes and satellite dishes on their rooftops!

As Isaiah prophesied, *“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined”* (Isaiah 9:2). Hallelujah!

A STRATEGIC TIME

During this strategic time in history, we have such a privilege to partner with Inspiration Ministries to take the Good News into all nations.

Satan sees that the light of Jesus Christ is overcoming the darkness, setting millions of people free from the lies of Islam and other false beliefs. He knows his time is short, yet he is powerless to stop these new ways of sending out the Gospel.

Let’s not let harvest time pass us by!

As you partner with
INSPIRATION
MINISTRIES

in this exciting outreach to the nations, you are helping to fill the earth with the knowledge of the Lord (Habakkuk 2:14). Sow your Seed for Souls with the enclosed response form or by visiting inspiration.org/souls TODAY!



Hope for Layla & Fatima – and Countless Others

Through your financial support, we are piercing the spiritual darkness and transforming lives throughout the Muslim world.



God has given us everything we need to fulfill the Great Commission in this generation, but the task is enormous. Nearly eight billion people are alive today, and more than two billion of them have never heard the name of Jesus even once.

The challenge is compounded by the fact that many lost people live in nations where it's illegal to share the Gospel by traditional preaching or witnessing. This is particularly true in countries aligned with Islam.

Television, the Internet, and other forms of electronic media have a huge potential to pierce the darkness and reach people for Christ. However, the Bible calls Satan “*the prince of the power of the air*” (Ephesians 2:2), and he

currently dominates much of the media. As a result, people's minds are often filled with hate, immorality, godlessness, and false beliefs.

Since 1990, Inspiration Ministries has used various forms of electronic media to reach people with the saving message of the Gospel and disciple believers worldwide.

Each year, people in over 200 nations make Jesus their Lord and Savior through our outreaches – 2 million people last year alone!

TWO LIVES THAT WERE CHANGED

Thanks to the faithful financial seeds of our Inspiration Partners, we are penetrating the spiritual

darkness in Muslim nations through **Inspiration TV** and our Internet outreaches. Our original program, ***A Muslim Journey to Hope***, shares powerful testimonies of former Muslims who've been transformed by Christ.

One of these testimonies comes from Layla, a woman who found herself on the brink of suicide before she heard the Gospel message. As a Muslim, she believed in a harsh, judgmental God who would weigh her good and bad deeds, but probably throw her into eternal fire in the end.



But when Layla heard about the God of the Bible, she was shocked to discover that He could be her Heavenly Father and closest friend. She cried out, “*God, if that is really You, would You please show Yourself to me?*”

Because partners like you cared enough to send her the Gospel, Layla found a life-changing relationship with Christ:

He transformed me in such a way that I am a completely different person. Now I know what it means to call God “Father”!

I have a passion to tell other Muslims that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. He is the ANSWER!

Another testimony comes from Fatima, who was a young Muslim living without Christ and without hope in London, England. Her life was transformed when she got saved through ***A Muslim Journey to Hope*** which airs on Inspiration TV worldwide:

I came to know the Lord Jesus Christ through your program and now I really love the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Please help me to know how to financially support this ministry so I can help other souls find Christ. I want to do anything I can to help your ministry in Jesus’ name. I love you and thank you. May our wonderful Lord and God continue blessing and protecting all of you who are involved in this wonderful outreach to followers of Islam.

Fatima is a great example of someone who wants to bless others as God has blessed her. As her life has been changed by the Good News shared on ***A Muslim Journey to Hope***, she now wants to sow seeds to reach other Muslims.

**Thanks to your financial seeds,
God is transforming lost and
hurting people all over the world
– just as He transformed
Layla and Fatima.**



Have You Watched Inspiration TV Lately?

Here are a just a few of the powerful,
programs airing this month on our
24/7 Christian network.

FEATURED DOCUMENTARY



These two men were once fierce enemies on opposite sides of a brutal civil war in Cambodia. Years later after accepting Jesus Christ into their lives, they're able to leave the past behind and live in love and peace as brothers in the Lord.

Friday, July 26, 10 p.m. US Eastern, 22:00 UK

Saturday, July 27, 2 p.m. US Eastern, 14:00 UK

Look what you're missing! You can watch Inspiration TV 24/7 on Roku, Apple TV, Amazon Fire TV, Chromecast, via livestream at ini.tv/livestream, or on the free Inspiration TV mobile app.



Reel Inspiration Movie Premiere



Don't miss this faith-based story of Barrett Lennox, an aspiring young boxer struggling to escape a life of anger, trouble, and betrayal. Although boxing seems like the best way to cope with his stress, doubt, and fear, the young hothead soon realizes his biggest fight is his resistance to putting his life into God's hands. Will he surrender before it's too late?

Saturday, July 27, 9 p.m.
US Eastern, 21:00 UK

Sunday, July 28, 5:30 p.m.
US Eastern, 17:30 UK

Featured Programmers



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on other great programs,
visit ini.tv/schedule.



5 Steps to Victory in Christ

by Ben Cerullo

Many believers become disappointed when things don't go their way. They fall prey to the common misconception that all their problems and struggles will vanish once they start a relationship with Jesus.

However, let's be honest: Life can be tough. Even as Christians, we'll face many challenges – including some *new* ones we didn't have to deal with as unbelievers.

You see, before we were saved, we were no threat to the devil. But when we accepted Jesus into our heart, something changed. We took up a new residence in the *spiritual battlefield* and immediately became an enemy of Satan.

If your struggles seem overwhelming today, these five steps will help you to find a place of victory in the Lord:

- 1. Quit relying on your own strength.** Realize that the only way to experience lasting victory is through the power of the Holy Spirit and reliance upon what Jesus accomplished for you on the cross.
- 2. Cry out to God, and repent of any known sins.** Ask God to forgive you and deliver you. Turn away from your chains, sin, and bondage, and run into the arms of your loving Father, Savior, and Deliverer.
- 3. Be accountable.** Surround yourself with solid believers to lean on for prayer and support to help you during times of temptation or struggle.
- 4. Passionately pursue God.** Commit yourself to spending daily time with Jesus and get to know Him intimately. Press into His Word and His presence until He's your everything.
- 5. Fight the good fight.** The Bible says there's a fierce spiritual battle for your soul (Ephesians 6:10-18). You must stand in the victory Jesus has already won for you. Defend it, stand on it, and walk in it!

A Merry Heart...

A merry heart does good, like medicine. – Proverbs 17:22



Advice to preachers...

Famed London pastor Charles Haddon Spurgeon was sharing some preaching tips with a class of ministerial students. He emphasized the importance of making their facial expressions harmonize with their sermons: “When you speak of Heaven, let your face light up, let it be irradiated with a heavenly gleam, let your eyes shine with reflected glory,” he advised. “But when you speak of hell... well, then your ordinary face will do!”



BULLETIN BLOOPER'S



When parking on the north side of the church, please remember to park on an angel.

If you need to heave during the benediction, please do so quietly.

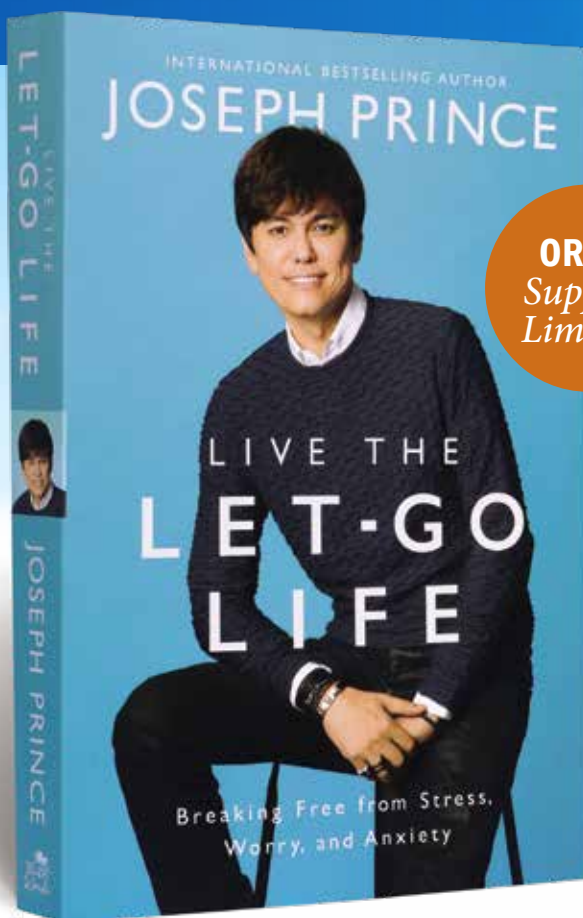
Let us join David and Lisa in the celebration of their wedding and bring their happiness to a conclusion.

Scouts are saving aluminum cans and other items to be recycled. Proceeds will be used to help cripple children.

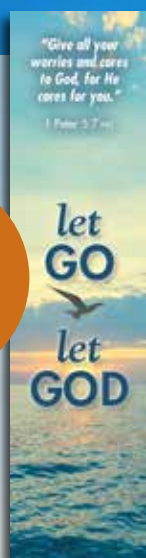


The Inspiration devotional magazine is looking for examples of humor in the church or the Christian life. If you have humorous stories, jokes, or photos you would like to share, please write to MerryHeart@inspiration.org.

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