

INSPIRATION

Blessed to Be a Blessing

AUGUST 2019



Free

from Disappointment

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PERSISTENT PEACE

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This Month's Theme Is



Disappointed No More!

Everyone has experienced disappointment at one time or another. On **page 5**, **David Cerullo** shares encouraging Biblical principles for how you can find new beginnings from God amid every disappointment in life.

Our Featured Partners This Month

Everything changed when Sharon and Doris decided to trust God and take steps of faith (**page 16**).

10 **7 Keys to Persistent Peace**
by Joyce Meyer

Having an attitude of peace and calmness is priceless, especially during times of stress and testing.

14 **Things Are Looking UP!**
by Doug Preudhomme

No matter how gloomy things may look on the world stage, here's why you can have incredible optimism.

18 **The Power of Letting Go**

When you let go of the ordinary, God demonstrates the extraordinary.

21 **Your August Devotionals**

A daily guide to living in the covenant promises of God.

55 **The Pony Perspective**
by Jim Buchan

If life seems to be giving you "manure," keep your eye out for a pony right around the corner.

58 **Back from the Brink**

At the point of ending her life, Sherry heard a powerful word from God that changed everything.

60 **Breaking Free from Fear**
by Ben Cerullo

Don't let unbelief or anxiety undermine your ability to step into God's best for your life.

Where's Your Stockpile?

One day Jesus told His disciples that they could stockpile their treasures in one of two different places:

Don't hoard treasure down here where it gets eaten by moths and corroded by rust or – worse! – stolen by burglars. Stockpile treasure in heaven, where it's safe from moth and rust and burglars. It's obvious, isn't it? The place where your treasure is, is the place you will most want to be, and end up being (Matthew 6:19-21 MSG).

Jesus said that where we put our *treasure* is an indication of where we've set our *heart*. So it's vitally important to make sure we're putting our treasure in the right place.

With every seed you sow into God's Kingdom to win souls through Inspiration Ministries, you're investing in your heavenly account – the best possible place to entrust your future provision.

By becoming a monthly Inspiration Partner, you will declare the truth of Proverbs 11:30 that *"he who wins souls is wise."* 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 *automatically* partner with Inspiration Ministries to help fulfill the Great Commission each and every month.



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God's APPOINTMENTS



in Your DISAPPOINTMENTS



STRENGTHEN
your walk
with David Cerullo

Dictionaries describe disappointment as being “depressed or discouraged by the failure of one’s hopes or expectations.” This happens to *everyone* at one time or another...no one is exempt.

I’ve met people who are disappointed in their marriage, feeling that their spouse just isn’t living up to their expectations. Some people feel frustrated by the decisions their children or grandchildren are making. And many others are disappointed by their career path or financial hopes.

Most sadly of all, I sometimes meet Christians who have become disillusioned about the Christian life. They assumed their decision to follow Jesus would make all of their problems go away – but instead they encountered a completely *new* set of challenges. As a result, sometimes people end up mad at God because He doesn’t seem to be doing things like they think He should.

If you are experiencing any of these feelings today, I have good news...

In every one of life's disappointments, God has planned an appointment for your turnaround!

The Bible is filled with countless examples of this vital principle, but let me just share a few.

A HEALING... OR A RESURRECTION?

I love the account in John 11 of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. But to be honest, the story didn't begin on a very positive note.

After hearing that His friend Lazarus was sick, what did Jesus do? *Nothing* at first. In fact, He waited a few extra days before coming on the scene!

When Jesus finally arrived, He was blamed for His friend's death. Martha, Lazarus' sister, said in anger and bewilderment, "*Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died*" (John 11:21).

Understandably, Martha and her sister Mary were terribly disappointed by Jesus' failure to come quickly and heal their brother. Wouldn't you be?

Yet remember how the story ended. Instead of giving the sisters what they wanted – a **healing** for their brother – Jesus gave them a

much *greater* miracle: their brother's **resurrection!**

Friend, the next time God seems to delay in answering your prayers, keep this story in mind. Amid your *disappointment*, the Lord may be setting up an *appointment* to do something far better than you can dream or imagine (Ephesians 3:20).

A FEW FISH... OR A MIRACLE CATCH?

One day Jesus gave advice to Simon Peter, a professional fisherman, on how to fish: "*Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch*" (Luke 5:4).

The timing was perfect, for Peter was feeling quite disappointed at that moment: "*Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing*" (v. 5)! If you put yourself in Peter's shoes, you would be disappointed too. He had worked hard...stayed up all night...used all of his expertise... but caught absolutely NOTHING.

Despite this disappointment, Peter fortunately was willing to heed Jesus' instructions: "*Nevertheless, at Your word I will let down the net*" (v. 5).

Notice that one word from Jesus can change everything! When Peter obeyed the Lord's instruction, the resulting turnaround was swift and stunning:

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



What a beautiful illustration of God’s plan to schedule an appointment for our breakthrough during our times of disappointment. If Peter and the other fishermen had caught even a mediocre catch of fish through their own efforts that day, perhaps they would have been satisfied. But Jesus wanted to give them much MORE than that!

The lesson for us today is clear:

**During times of
disappointment, we must
draw near to God and request
His instructions for our
turnaround.**

WHEN THE BROOK DRIES UP

The final story is found in 1 Kings 17. Elijah had followed God’s instructions to live by the Brook Cherith, where he could

drink from the stream and be fed by ravens.

Elijah obeyed, and everything went as planned – for three years, at least. But then the situation changed: *“It happened after a while that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land” (v. 7).*

Friend, perhaps you’ve faced a time like this in your own life. You’ve tried to be faithful in following the Lord’s instructions, but one day, unexpectedly, *“the brook dried up.”* Perhaps you faced the loss of a job, the end of a relationship, or some other setback. But in your disappointment, remember...

**Every setback is just a
setup for a comeback!**

The brook drying up certainly wasn’t the end of Elijah’s story – far from it. This disappointment led to wonderful new appointments in his ministry:

Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, “Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. See, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you” (vs. 8-9).

You see, when the brook of God’s provision dries up, that doesn’t mean He’s being unfaithful to His Word. Instead, the Lord is providing you with a marvelous opportunity to draw closer to Him and receive your new assignment.

After the Brook Cherith dried up, can you imagine how foolish it would have been for Elijah to continue sitting there, demanding that God send more water? The Lord had a different plan – a much better plan – moving Elijah onward in the next step toward His ultimate calling.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

If you're dealing with disappointment in some area of your life today, God wants you to know that a turnaround might be right around the corner. He's offering you an appointment in His presence to hear new instructions on how to begin your fresh start.

Your friends at Inspiration Ministries are here for you in times of discouragement and testing. I encourage you to send us your prayer requests on the enclosed response form, or contact our faithful prayer ministers directly to agree with you in prayer (see page 59 for information).

I'm convinced that an exciting appointment awaits as you trust and obey the Lord!

God bless you,

David

P.S. Don't forget to order our life-changing THANK YOU GIFTS this month (see **page 32**). They were selected to help you move beyond *disappointment* to the new *appointments* God has prepared to bless you!



I hope you'll watch my video series this month. Starting August 12...



By following Inspiration Ministries on Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube, you can watch these videos on social media. And by visiting StrengthenYourWalk.org, you can browse the video archives or sign up to receive the videos via email.



Does Your Will Need a Checkup?

While everyone is familiar with the need for an annual *physical* checkup, time takes its toll on some other very important parts of our lives as well. And though it doesn't receive nearly the attention of an annual visit to the doctor, your Will and estate plan should be reviewed on a regular basis.

Sadly, more than 60% of the people in the United States don't have a Will. And many believers don't have a *Christian Will* – one that reflects their love for the Lord and their desire to continue winning souls after their death.

Here's a helpful checklist to decide whether your Will needs an update:

- 1. Have there been family changes?** Births, deaths, marriages, and divorces can impact the appropriateness of a Will.
- 2. Have you moved to another state?** If you move from one state to another, some provisions of your Will may become invalid.
- 3. Have there been changes in your property or income?** Make sure you still own the property gifted to your beneficiaries and possess the funds to satisfy your personal and charitable bequests.

If you don't yet have a Christian Will and estate plan, it's not too late! Contact our Partner Relations Team today for **FREE** information, or let us know if you've *already* included Inspiration Ministries in your estate plan:

1-855-702-7042

plannedgiving.inspiration.org

When you include Inspiration Ministries in your charitable giving, you'll find great personal satisfaction in knowing your legacy will bless people around the world with the hope, healing, and salvation of Jesus Christ. Through a Christian Will and estate plan, you may be able to win more souls for God's Kingdom than you did during an entire lifetime of faithful giving!



7 KEYS TO PERSISTENT

Peace

by Joyce Meyer

An attitude of peace and calm is priceless, especially during times of stress or testing. It's an attitude that says, "I'm trusting God," and it speaks powerfully to people.

One important way to develop consistent peace is to learn to live "in the now." While it's tempting to spend a lot of time thinking about the past or wondering what the future holds, you can't accomplish much of anything unless your mind is focused on *today*.

The Bible says God gives us grace for each day that we live. I believe that grace is the power, enablement, or energy to do what we need to do – and He gives it generously, whenever we need His help.

Every morning, we need to make a decision to say, "God has given me *today*. I will rejoice and be glad in it."

Yet too often our stress level is tied up in our circumstances. You could be stressed because you're too busy, or struggling financially, or not getting along with someone you love.

What's interesting is that these situations are not the real *cause* of your stress. Stress is actually caused by your *reaction* to the difficult situations in your life.

However, you can learn how to embrace more of God's peace by practicing these seven powerful keys to a more peaceful lifestyle:

1. Be selective with how you spend your time. By trying to do too many things, you can end up doing none of them well. *Hurrying* is trying to do more than the Holy Spirit is leading you to do. Seek to be led by the Spirit instead of “the tyranny of the urgent.”

2. Be prepared to say NO nicely. Sometimes we take on things we know we shouldn't just because we're uncomfortable saying *no*. If you feel this pressure, ask God to put your spirit at rest and give you loving words that will take away the awkwardness of saying *no*.

3. Resist the spirit of procrastination. Don't just sit around until you *feel* like doing what you need to do. God's Word tells us to exercise self-discipline. Do what you need to do *NOW*, so you can fully enjoy your times of rest.

4. Eliminate distractions. If you know you're easily distracted, set some guidelines for yourself. Don't let worries keep you up late at night, so you oversleep the next morning and set yourself up for a hurried, stressful day.

5. Set appropriate boundaries for interruptions. Life is full of interruptions, but you can learn to set boundaries that help you manage them in healthy ways. Schedule times when you are “off-limits.” Let your calls go to

voicemail, turn off your email, and decide to get back to people after your off-limits time is over.

6. Modify your life. Ask God to show you out-of-the-box ways to save time and trouble. For instance, when I don't have time to do the dishes, I use paper plates. And if I'm having a birthday gathering for one of my kids and don't have time to make a meal, we just have cake and ice cream.

7. Listen to the Holy Spirit. If you see that your plan is not producing peace, go back to God. Pray for His wisdom to make changes that will benefit your life.

By learning to trust God “in the now” and employing these seven principles, you can become a peaceful person and a powerful witness for the Lord!



Joyce Meyer is a best-selling author and host of the *Enjoying Everyday Life* broadcast.

See What's New

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MINISTRIES

INSPIRATION TV

PRAYER

SPIRITUAL LIFE

LIVING

CONNECT

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GLIMPSSES OF GOD IN THE DARK
By Sarah Van Diest

Excerpt from God in the Dark: 31 Devotions to Let the Light Back In. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (Luke 12:34). You clamber up the precipice, over slick rock and crumbling gravel. Struggling, you reach the peak, and for just a moment, you're still, standing

[READ NOW](#)

INSPIRATION TV PREMIERES THE EDDINGS FAMILY STORY

BOOK REVIEW: HE WAKENS ME
By Gerry Wakeland

'INSPIRATION TV IS LIKE HAVING CHURCH IN OUR HOME'
By Inspiration Ministries

Inspiring testimonies, Bible teachings, and entertainment – all this and more awaits you on the Inspiration Ministries website, **inspiration.org**. Our expanded website features timely content to help you enjoy a better life! You can:

- Read news, reviews, and interviews from leading Christian authors and the world of family-friendly entertainment.
- Watch uplifting teachings from David Cerullo and other noted Bible teachers.
- Sign up to receive encouraging daily video and text devotionals.
- Send your prayer requests to our International Prayer Center.
- Find helpful resources for your finances, health, and relationships.
- Using the Inspiration TV link on our website, you can watch powerful 24/7 Christian programs featuring your favorite Bible teachers, including Joel Osteen, Joseph Prince, Isik Abila, and Dr. Charles Stanley. Inspiration TV also offers a wide variety of Christian talk shows, documentaries, apologetics, movies, special programs for children and teens, and more.

at inspiration.org!

Strengthen Your Walk™ Discipleship Center

In addition to our daily Bible study videos by David Cerullo, we're continuing to grow our library of free discipleship courses in our Strengthen Your Walk™ Discipleship Center. Available courses to enrich your relationship with Christ include:

- 30 Keys to Your Spiritual Growth
- Crossroads: Choices for a Better Life
- Ancient Secrets of the Tabernacle Revealed
- From Convert to Disciple

David's video teachings are changing lives all over the world.

"Your Bible teaching videos have given me hope in my trials and have helped me understand more about life."

– **CRISTINA, THE PHILIPPINES**

"When I watched David's video teaching today, it was like he was talking directly to me! I desperately needed that teaching."

– **MABEL, FLORIDA**

To find out more about the Strengthen Your Walk™ Discipleship Center or sign up for a course, visit sywlearn.org.



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David Cerullo's free Bible teaching videos at
StrengthenYourWalk.org



Things Are Looking UP!

by Doug Preudhomme

We live in AMAZING times – but they’re also PERILOUS times (2 Timothy 3:1).

Describing the End Times for us, Jesus said,

Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in various places (Matthew 24:7).

Can anyone doubt those days are here? When have there been more natural disasters and more unrest in the nations of the world?

So what are we to **DO** when we see all of this happening? Are we to despair or go into a time of depression? Should we just bury our heads in the ground and hope it all goes away?

Not at all. Jesus said,

*When these things begin to happen, **LOOK UP** and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near* (Luke 21:28).

When these things “begin to happen” on the earth, Jesus said we should look up and lift our heads. And since these things **HAVE** begun to happen, we know our Lord will return one day soon.

WHILE WE WAIT

Although it’s wonderful to live in the exciting expectancy of Christ’s return, Jesus said we need to have the correct perspective...

While we wait, we must be careful where we look!

In the midst of the difficult times on planet earth, the Lord’s message is...

“Get your eyes off your problems and look up!”

Notice that Jesus doesn't say to just **GLANCE UP** – He says we must **LOOK UP**. *Looking* is more proactive, focused, and purposeful than merely *glancing*.

Of course, there are alternatives to looking up. We can **look AROUND** at the problems, or even worse, we can be tempted to **look DOWN**. People look down when they feel depressed, ashamed, intimidated, or defeated. But none of this is God's will for His people!

- When you look DOWN, you see the darkness...when you look UP, you see the dawn.
- When you look AROUND, you see problems...when you look UP, you see possibilities.
- When you look DOWN, you see today...when you look UP, you see tomorrow.
- When you look DOWN, you see difficulty...when you look UP, you see destiny.

STARTING YOUR DAY

Friend, I encourage you to start every day by looking up! Take a few minutes and join the psalmist David in declaring: “*My voice You shall hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning I will direct it to You, and I WILL LOOK UP*” (Psalm 5:3).

Then take Psalm 121:1-8 and *personalize* it:

I will lift UP my eyes to the hills – from whence comes my help? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

He will not allow [my] foot to be moved; He who keeps [me] will not slumber...

*The LORD is [my] keeper...
The LORD shall preserve [me] from all evil...
The LORD shall preserve [my] going out and [my] coming in from this time forth, and even forevermore.*

When you confess the promises of God's Word, you'll find that things start to look brighter in your life.

Now pray with me:

“Thank You, Lord, for Your intervention in my circumstances today. In every situation, I will LOOK UP to You!”



Doug Preudhomme serves on the Board of Directors of Inspiration Ministries. He and his wife Denise founded a company in Phoenix, Arizona, that helps ministries fulfill their God-given mission.



The Money Kept Pouring In!



God gave sudden breakthroughs to Sharon, a single mom in London, England, after she sowed financial seeds into the Good Ground of Inspiration Ministries.

Sharon is a divorced mother raising three children in London, England. At a time when things were very difficult for her young family, she took a step of faith to sow her first seed into God’s Kingdom through Inspiration Ministries.

“The money kept pouring in,” Sharon says. “The government sent me 3,000 more pounds as an unexpected tax refund. Next, my ex-husband came into a financial windfall and finally was able to catch up on a large amount of money he owed me!”

“The bill collectors were coming to our door, and the situation appeared hopeless,” Sharon recalls. “But I reminded the Lord that I had sown into the Good Ground of your ministry, and that I’m a giver, like He is.”

Not only is Sharon praising God for her harvest of financial miracles, but she has also made an important decision: “I’m excited about being a lifetime Inspiration Partner!”

Sharon was feeling very discouraged when she went to an ATM machine to withdraw a small amount of money the following day. But she was astounded by what she found.

“I was shocked to see that my account suddenly held 2,000 British pounds!” she reports in amazement. Yet that was only the beginning of her surprising blessings.



Sharon discovered the power of God’s promise in 2 Corinthians 9:6, that he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully!

To take a step of faith and sow a Seed for Souls, use the enclosed response form or visit inspiration.org/souls.

God Pressed Delete on My Bad Credit!

Doris experienced a wonderful financial turnaround after she contacted our International Prayer Center for prayer and sowed a seed into God's Kingdom.



Doris was mired in so much debt that her credit rating kept getting worse. This prevented her from being approved for any loans or additional credit, and she was even turned down for a college loan for her daughter's tuition.

But God gave her a fresh start after she contacted the International Prayer Center for prayer and sowed a financial seed to win souls for His Kingdom.

"I asked your prayer ministers to pray for a turnaround of my negative credit rating and for cancellation of some of my debt," Doris shares. "I also requested special prayer for God's favor regarding a car accident I was in a few months before because the insurance company had decided not to pay for the damage to my car."

Doris received remarkable answers to both of her prayer requests. First, she checked her credit report again and found no sign of any negative statements against her. "God had pressed a delete button on my bad credit!" she exclaims.

The next surprise was that her insurance company sent her a check for \$5,000. "This covered the total cost of repairs to my car, despite their previous refusal," Doris says in amazement! "God's favor is wonderful!"

What God has done for Sharon and Doris, He can do for YOU! Our prayer ministers would love to agree with you in prayer for the breakthrough you need.

We are Here for You!

US / CAN / CAR:

+1 803-578-1800

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inspiration.org/prayer

A hand is shown in the upper left, letting sand fall from it. The background is a blurred beach scene with blue water and a sandy shore. On the right side, there are white decorative swirls of varying sizes.

THE POWER OF *Letting Go*

Often there's nothing more frustrating than when you lose something that's important to you. The day is definitely off to a bad start if you can't remember where you put your car keys, your cell phone, or the computer file you worked on all day yesterday.

Everything else is put on hold until you find what you lost.

On the other hand, nothing is more *exhilarating* than finding something you thought might be gone forever. Jesus tells three stories about this kind of experience in Luke 15, where a lost sheep, lost coin, and lost son all were regained with great joy.

Have you ever had this kind of experience?

Take a look at the man in Matthew 13:44 who unexpectedly

found "*a treasure hidden in a field,*" and you'll find the key to living an adventurous, discovery-filled life. In fact, you may even say to yourself, "How could I have overlooked this 'treasure' for so long?"

The secret is amazingly simple, found in just two words. These words probably sound wimpy or even defeatist at first – yet they're anything but that.

The words are filled with explosive power and potential, but this may not be obvious at first. It's a lot like nuclear energy – power hidden away for millennia inside tiny atoms until activated.

Although this vital concept is found throughout the Bible, there's a good chance you've never heard a sermon that spells it out so clearly.

So here it is, the forgotten key to a happy, impactful, and prosperous life:

LETTING GO

God instructs us about this in Psalm 46:10, where the NASB says, “*Cease striving* [let go, relax] *and know that I am God.*” Dictionaries have other words for this principle: “surrendering, releasing, relinquishing, or yielding.”

You see, the secret to having God exalted in our lives is in simply letting go – relinquishing something we treasure and transferring it from our hands to His. Or, as Jesus told us, we must *lose* our life in order to *find* it (Luke 17:33).

AN EXTRAORDINARY LIFE

Letting go can take your life from ordinary to extraordinary... from bland to blessed... from victim to victor... and from boring to bold. In contrast, nothing is duller or more depressing than trying to *hold on* to what you already have.

There was nothing extraordinary about the five loaves and two fish the disciples had on hand

– until they *let go* of their supply into the hands of Jesus (Matthew 14:13-21). You see, it's only when *letting go* takes place that God performs miracles and life gets exciting.

Why is it so easy to miss this powerful and life-changing principle? The answer is simple: Because of fear and unbelief, we tend to hang on to our meager resources rather than entrust them into the hands of God. How sad, for He has shown throughout history that He can do far more with resources than we can.

Jesus relinquished the rights and privileges of His heavenly life in order to embark on the great adventure of redeeming humankind and giving us a right to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Still today, He beckons us to a life of letting go, where it is “*more blessed to give than to receive*” (Acts 20:35).

Friend, what could God do with that “thing” you are holding onto today... refusing to trust Him and let it go? You'll never know until you loosen your grip and give it to Him. That's when the adventure starts and the life of purpose returns.

This article is an excerpt from *Simple Steps to Lasting Happiness*, available from Inspiration Ministries this month for a gift of any amount. See [page 32](#) or the enclosed response form for details.

“Glory to God, who is able to do far beyond all that we could ask or imagine by his power at work within us.”

– Ephesians 3:20 CEB

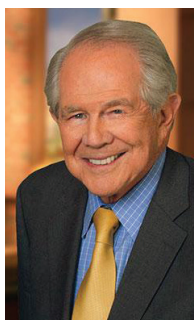


This Month...You Can Help Win More Souls Than You Can Even Imagine!

Your Seed for Souls will send the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to more than 200 nations and territories – reaching even into countries where traditional evangelism is illegal!

While many churches and ministries include evangelism in their mission statements, their actual effectiveness is often quite limited. However, God has blessed the soul-winning outreaches of Inspiration Ministries in an amazing way. Through your partnership, last year more than TWO MILLION people indicated decisions to make Jesus their Lord and Savior!

Pat Robertson, founder of the Christian Broadcasting Network, points out the remarkable opportunities we have at this strategic moment in history:



This is the greatest time to be alive in history, and those standing with Inspiration Ministries are saying, “God, the harvest of souls is ripe and we’re ready. Now give us the tools to reap this harvest all over the world!” The Lord has heard your prayers, and He is using this ministry as a beacon of Christ to a lost and needy world.

To send your Seed for Souls this month, return the enclosed response form or visit inspiration.org/souls TODAY!

Jealousy and Selfishness

THURSDAY
August

1

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JAMES 3

On this day in 1914, Germany declared war on Russia, officially beginning what became known as World War I (or the Great War). Theories abound regarding the causes of this war. However, in some ways it can be seen as a kind of family squabble.

Before the outbreak of the war, the ruling monarchs of Great Britain, Germany, and Russia were cousins. Various additional family members had been spread throughout the leadership of other nations for many years.

While knowing each other well, these family members had complex rivalries. From time to time, they would gather at special occasions. Several of them engaged in frequent, friendly correspondence. In spite of these interrelationships, the nations led by these men plunged their countries into a war that eventually claimed 8.5 million lives worldwide.

In many ways, these people and nations were guilty of the kind of “*jealousy and selfish ambition*” warned about in James. Many were driven by the desire for political control in order to dominate others.

Today, many churches, families, friendships, and organizations split because of this motivation. Does it impact you?

Ask God to search your heart and deliver you from jealousy and selfishness. Remember to seek His wisdom. Recognize that, unlike worldly wisdom, His wisdom is pure and peaceable. It is gentle not arrogant. It is reasonable and full of mercy and good fruits. It is steady, unwavering, and without hypocrisy.

Jealousy and selfishness are not God's kind of wisdom. Such things are earthly, unspiritual, and motivated by the Devil. For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and every kind of evil.

James 3:15-16 NLT

PRAYER:

Father, deliver me from jealousy and selfish ambition. Fill me with Your love. My desire is to serve You with my life. In Jesus' name, amen.

FRIDAY

August

2

Partakers

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: HEBREWS 3

We have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end.

Hebrews 3:14 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You that I am a partaker in the life of Christ. I declare Your promises to be true. I receive the fullness of your life. In Jesus' name, amen.

Hebrews makes it clear: Believers have become “*partakers*” of Christ. The Greek word here is used six times in the Bible; five are in Hebrews.

This word indicates being *united*, not being observers but *participants*. Throughout these passages in Hebrews, we see ways in which we *partner* or *share* in the life of Christ. We see how we are *united* with Him.

The Bible makes clear that our faith is not just a set of rules or stories. Through Christ, we have *changed* and become new *creatures*. We are *different*. And we actually can *share* in His life. This means that the full range of God's power and gifts are available to us.

But to share in this life, we must be persistent and hold our confidence in Him steady to the end. We must not give up.

We will experience things that might tempt us to become discouraged. In these moments we must have faith and remain steadfast. When in doubt, we must believe. When tempted, we must be resolved to stay fixed on Him and obey Him.

Today, remember that you are not an observer. You do not have to just read or think about God's power. You truly are a *partaker*, a *partner*, a person who *shares* in the life of Christ. Declare His promises to be true for you. Receive His victory, abundance, and the fullness of His Spirit.

Cannot Be Destroyed

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: HEBREWS 7

SATURDAY

August

3

The law symbolized the old ways of looking at life. It was based on human behavior, and enforced by priests who had human limitations. But the Bible reminds us that through His resurrection, Jesus demonstrated a power *“that cannot be destroyed.”* This supernatural power is beyond our natural abilities or understanding.

Yet many Christians still approach their faith based on their human understanding and the limits of their flesh. The fact is that Jesus came to set us free from these limitations. He is not restricted by our human minds, abilities, or the power of the flesh. He came so we could see life in a new way and experience a new dimension!

Hebrews tries to help us understand this change by teaching that Jesus was not like priests of old who came from the tribe of Levi. He does not have the limits of a human priest. He is a priest *forever* after the *“line of Melchizedek,”* which also encompasses His kingly traits.

Ask God to help you experience this dimension of spiritual life. He can change your attitude and give you an entirely new approach. He can solve your problems and meet your needs. He can give you power to help change the world for good and transform your own life.

Remember, your Savior has no limits. He is beyond time, and His power and life cannot be destroyed.

Jesus became a priest, not by meeting the physical requirement... but by the power of a life that cannot be destroyed... “You are a priest forever in the line of Melchizedek.”

Hebrews 7:16-17 NLT

PRAYER:

Father, thank You that Jesus conquered death. Thank You that His resurrection demonstrated a power that cannot be destroyed. In His name, amen.

SUNDAY

August

4

The Main Point

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: HEBREWS 8

The main point...is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle.

Hebrews 8:1-2 NASB

Hebrews is filled with many power teachings. We see how Jesus fulfilled the plans of God laid out in the Old Testament. We learn how things such as the law, sacrifices, and the role of priests all serve as “*a copy and shadow of the heavenly things*” (v. 5). We also see warnings to believers not to fall away from the faith.

But Hebrews identifies a main point as the revelation that Jesus now is *our high priest*.

Why is this so important? Because Jesus forever is at the Father's right hand. He is seated by the throne of God in a *permanent* position of power and access. He does not have limits, but is there for us as our High Priest all the time.

We *always* can approach God. We don't have to try to fit into His schedule, or wonder if He has time for us. He never gets tired and always is ready to hear our prayers. We can talk with Him anytime, about *anything*. When we do, He is in a position to take action. He can accomplish things that only can be done by the power of God that no human could even contemplate or consider.

Today, remember Jesus is *your* high priest, and He is at the right hand of the Father, just for you, right now. He is there to intercede for you. Don't wait! Call on Him now!

PRAYER:

Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for being *my* high priest. I commit these needs to You: _____. Thank You for interceding for me. In Your name, amen.

Higher Levels

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: HEBREWS 8

MONDAY

August

5

An important function of the Supreme Court is evaluating laws established by various legislative bodies and rulings made by lower courts. The Supreme Court, as the highest law in the land, determines such issues under its jurisdiction: Do lower courts really have the *right* to make the rulings they have made? Do lesser legislative bodies really have the authority to enact the laws they have created?

Through these rulings, the Supreme Court illustrates its preeminence with a Biblical principle: Within God's promises and the laws that apply to His people are different levels and hierarchies.

For example, Hebrews tells us that Jesus obtained a "*more excellent ministry*," compared to other ministries. The other ministries, in their own ways, were true and important. His simply is "*more excellent*." Jesus also is the mediator of a "*better covenant*" that was enacted on "*better promises*." Others were important, but the covenants and promises concerning Jesus are "*better*" and supersede previous ones.

God made various covenants with His people throughout the Old Testament, and each time He created a new one, the previous one (or at least parts of it) became obsolete. Jesus came as the fulfillment of the Old Testament covenants, thereby proving His superiority.

These are important principles in understanding our faith, particularly as we consider Jesus. He is that much more *important* and *authoritative*. That *different*. That *superior*. Let these truths strengthen your faith today.

He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises.

Hebrews 8:6 NASB

PRAYER:

Dear Lord Jesus, help me understand Your more excellent ministry. You are my Lord! In Your name, amen.

TUESDAY

August

6

Assembling Together

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: HEBREWS 10

Not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

Hebrews 10:25 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, use me in the lives of others. Show me how You want me to fit into the body of Christ. In His name, amen.

It is important for believers to know *what* they believe, to have a personal relationship with Jesus, and to follow His leading to fulfill their unique calling.

But the Bible also stresses the importance of interaction with other believers. Recognize that each of us is part of the same body. We need other believers, and other believers need us.

Each of us is to “*hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering*” (v. 23). In many ways, this is an individual matter. But holding fast can be strengthened through our relationships with other believers.

Through these relationships we find people who have gone through challenges like those we have faced. This process can help us recognize weaknesses and mistakes. We can be reminded of Scriptural principles that we might have forgotten or neglected.

Second, we are to “*consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds*” (v. 24). The interaction puts us in a position to be a source of inspiration for others, examples for them to follow, and reminders of the impact when we apply Biblical principles.

As Jesus has changed our lives, we can help spread His influence. We can demonstrate the truth and the power of the Gospel. The result will be an increase in “*good deeds*” as more and more believers let their “*light shine*” (Matthew 5:16).

Be sure you are fulfilling *your* place in the body of Christ.

Your Future

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ISAIAH 25

WEDNESDAY

August

7

Frederick Martin Lehman immigrated to America with his family when he was four, settling in Iowa. Born on this day in 1868, he became a pastor but dedicated much of his life to writing Christian music.

In 1914 as he struggled with severe financial problems, he wrote a hymn called "There's No Disappointment." Seeking perspective, he remembered that there will be "no weariness, sorrow or pain" in heaven. Everything will be "sunshine and gladness, with never a sob or a sigh."

He knew that he was "bound for that beautiful city" that Jesus "has prepared for His own." There he would join "all the redeemed of all ages" to sing praises to God. Life's burdens made him grow "homesick for Heaven, and the glories I there shall behold." But he knew "what a joy that will be" when he saw Jesus!

He knew that in heaven "we'll never pay rent for our mansion, the taxes will never come due." There will be no poverty, hunger, or thirst, for we will share "the rich bounties of Heaven." Age will mean nothing for "the old will be young there forever," and we'll be "transformed in a moment of time."

Ask God to give you a glimpse of heaven. Imagine life without pain or sorrow, worry or fear. What a glorious future! Let Him give you His peace. You can trust Him. He won't disappoint you!

*He will swallow up
death for all time,
and the Lord God will
wipe tears away from
all faces, and He will
remove the reproach of
His people from all
the earth.*

Isaiah 25:8 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for preparing a place for me. I give You all my burdens. Help me to please You and serve You. In Jesus' name, amen.

THURSDAY

August

8

Drawing Back

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: HEBREWS 10

You have need of endurance... Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.

Hebrews 10:36, 38 NKJV

PRAYER:

Father, forgive me for allowing doubt to enter my mind. Help me act with greater boldness. I trust in You. In Jesus' name, amen.

In the face of challenges, some are filled with confidence and faith, ready to go forward. But others retreat. The Bible warns us against a tendency described as *drawing back*. The picture is of a person who retreats, anxious and afraid, timid and hesitant.

Just like a ship on the sea without wind, if we don't see results, we can be tempted to "lower our sails." We can be tempted to give up, stop trying, and act as if we do not really believe or trust God. We can be tempted not to act in faith and obedience.

Instead, we need to *continue* living by faith, to *make* a habit of obeying God's Word and keep on obeying. We need to know His promises and keep believing them, even if we don't immediately see results, to endure and be patient in every situation, and not to change course.

The Bible, in fact, warns of serious consequences if we "*draw back*." God has "*no pleasure*" in those who act this way. These people allow doubt to control their minds and hearts.

The Bible warns that those who *doubt* should not *expect* to "*receive anything from the Lord*." Why? Because they are like "*a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways*" (James 1:5-8). Instead, we are to "*live by faith*."

Even when you don't see immediate results, don't give up or draw back. Persevere. Believe. Continue to live boldly by faith.

Your Heart

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: MATTHEW 6

FRIDAY

August

9

Many in the modern world grow weary of the relentless cycle of nonstop activities and constant pressures and worries that seems to dominate their schedules. Some, craving a simpler lifestyle, find inspiration in *Walden, or Life in the Woods*, published on this day in 1854 by Henry David Thoreau.

This book records Thoreau's experiences in a hand-built cabin, where he spent two years in partial seclusion at Walden Pond near his home in Concord, Massachusetts. There, he tried to be free from the pressures of daily life. In Jesus' words, this seclusion can be used to escape the tendency to be dominated by the material things of this world.

Today, many people, even believers, find themselves constantly busy, caught up in daily pressures. It may not be practical to drop out of everything, like Thoreau. Yet they wonder if there is a way to find balance and peace.

The world offers many suggestions for dealing with pressures and stress. But as many believers can confirm, the *best* answer is to apply Biblical principles and turn to God and His Word.

Do you feel these burdens? Consider your life and what you do with the time and resources God has given you. Remember Jesus' words: "*Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*"

Make a commitment to invest your treasures with God. Seek first His Kingdom. Let Him calm your heart and give you order and peace.

Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matthew 6:20-21 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I seek You with all my heart. Purge me of wrong influences. Give me Your peace. Help me live for You. In Jesus' name, amen

SATURDAY

August

10

At the End of the Day

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PSALM 141

*Let my prayer be
counted as incense
before you, and the
lifting up of my hands
as the evening sacrifice!*

Psalm 141:2 ESV

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for the world You have made. I join all creation in worshiping You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Mary Artemisia Lathbury had a gift for words. Born on this day in 1841 in Manchester, New York, she focused on art in her youth but eventually felt God's call to be a writer. A passionate believer in religious education, she became the general editor of important Sunday School materials.

She was associated with the Chautauqua Movement, a group dedicated to encouraging religious education, often meeting in picturesque surroundings in New York state. Mary became known as the "poet laureate of Chautauqua."

During the summer meetings of 1877, the leaders felt the need for an appropriate evening vesper hymn. Inspired by a spectacular sunset, Lathbury wrote the words to a hymn she called "Day is Dying in the West."

Observing a glorious sunset, her thoughts turned to God. Confident in Him, she wrote how "Heav'n is touching earth with rest." Her lyrics remind us that we can trust Him throughout the night, and we can rest in peace.

Just looking at the mysteries of the night sky reminds us of His creative power. Overwhelmed with awe, our hearts can cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts! Heav'n and earth are full of Thee! Heav'n and earth are praising Thee, O Lord most high!"

Think about the glory of creation in your life. God demonstrates power and diversity. Remember how amazing it is that He loves you and that you can trust Him.

God's Justice

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PSALM 10

SUNDAY

August

11

Just a few years after his death in 1610, the Italian painter Caravaggio seemed to be forgotten. Throughout his short, often troubled life, he consistently had been a distinguished innovator. But others with clearly less talent seemingly achieved the fame that eluded him.

Art historians agree Giovanni Baglione imitated Caravaggio's paintings and style. Baglione gained the popularity that Caravaggio *deserved*, as unfair as that seems to us.

Baglione even helped to diminish the legacy of Caravaggio by writing a biography of his rival, portraying him in unflattering ways. Among his conclusions were "some people thought he had destroyed the art of painting."

But as one historian commented, today, "Caravaggio is everywhere acknowledged as a genius, while Baglione has become one of the most reviled artists who ever lived."

Believers may go through experiences when life doesn't seem fair. As the psalmist observed, it can appear that God stands "*afar off*" while we go through problems. It can seem that He is doing nothing. But the psalmist realized that God is "*King forever and ever*" (v. 16). In reality, He has "*heard the desire of the humble*" and promises to "*strengthen their heart,*" incline His ear, and "*vindicate the orphan and the oppressed*" (vs. 17-18).

Today, remember that God knows your heart and the truth about your life. Seek to be a good steward. Trust Him. Believe that He will reward you for your faithfulness.

Why do You stand afar off, O LORD? Why do You hide Yourself in times of trouble?

Psalm 10:1 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I commit my time, talent, and treasure to You. Help me to be a good steward of Your gifts to me. I trust in You. In Jesus' name, amen.

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MONDAY

August

12

Faith and Understanding

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: HEBREWS 11

By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.

Hebrews 11:3 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, by faith I trust in You. I seek Your wisdom. Thank You for giving me the understanding I need. In Jesus' name, amen.

How do we gain understanding? Logically, we might point to experience, intellect, and accumulating information. These may be important. But the Bible reminds us of a factor that is even more important: faith.

Faith is so important because this is the path to knowing God, discerning spiritual issues, and having the right attitude. Without faith, we are left to depend on our highly flawed human abilities.

As history reminds us, every human being has limits, even those with the highest IQs. We cannot find one person in all of history who has all the answers, who can perfectly predict the future, or who always recommends the right thing to do.

These are reasons we need to *start* with God: to learn His timeless principles, to gain His perspective, and to realize that He alone can give us real understanding and wisdom.

However, this understanding only comes through *faith*. This means knowing Him and having a personal relationship with Him, not just knowing *about* Him.

As we embark on this walk of faith, we gain understanding about the world. We understand more about creation and patterns that are foundational for life. And we understand the invisible forces that have taken place and continue to take place.

Today, renew your *personal* faith in God. Fill your mind and heart with His Word. Strengthen your personal relationship with Him. Seek to walk by faith, putting His principles into practice.

Endurance

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: HEBREWS 12

TUESDAY

August

13

How do we react when we encounter problems that don't seem to have solutions? When we feel confused or uncertain what to do? When answers do not come easily? When the answers we have tried don't seem to work?

Like other experiences in life, we must operate in faith, following the example Jesus provided as *"the author and finisher of our faith"* (v. 2). He set an example of *endurance*.

He endured when a disciple betrayed Him, His closest followers denied even knowing Him, He was falsely accused, and He was humiliated, tried, and crucified. But, having endured, Jesus emerged in triumph.

It is not always easy to endure. This means not giving in to doubt or impatience. It means *persevering* when we feel like giving up. We must keep our eyes on the goal. This means *"looking unto Jesus"* (v. 2) and remembering that He *endured*.

Because He endured, we can endure. We need to remember the example Jesus set for us if we get discouraged or weary.

We must endure when we face disappointment and discouragement. We must endure when we experience delays. We must endure situations we do not understand and many types of problems.

We will endure as we stop being dominated by problems and focus on Jesus, remembering that our faith is *perfected* through endurance.

Today, remember the importance of *endurance*. Don't let anything discourage you. Never stop living by faith. Never give up.

Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

Hebrews 12:1 NKJV

PRAYER:

Father, I believe that You are with me and that Your promises are true. Give me a spirit of endurance. In Jesus' name, amen.

WEDNESDAY

August

14

Entangled

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: HEBREWS 12

Let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

Hebrews 12:1 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, help me to be sensitive to the things that entangle me. I lay everything aside that I might run the race to win. In Jesus' name, amen.

Runners who want to win a race must couple natural abilities with all the necessary *preparation* of training, exercising, and developing their minds, bodies, and emotions.

They wear special clothing designed to minimize resistance and run with optimal speed. They learn to take off quickly and maintain the ideal pace throughout each race. And they remove *every* kind of impediment, *anything* that might slow them down and keep them from performing their best.

The same principle applies in our spiritual lives. Like winning runners, we need to be aware of the things that could “*entangle*” us and can trip us up or ensnare us.

How do we get in trouble? How do we find ourselves straying from the right path? Doing things we wish we wouldn't do? Saying the wrong things? Thinking the wrong thoughts? Often this happens because of our *entanglements*.

But these entanglements can have a more practical impact. These things can *slow* us down, distract us, and complicate our lives. In the process, they can occupy more of our attention than our godly ideals. We don't see as clearly and even can pursue the wrong goals.

Anyone can become entangled in many different ways. The Bible reminds us to be sensitive to anything that entangles us and to be willing to lay it aside, so we can run our race “*with endurance*.”

Are you entangled? Ask God to help you be free!

Morning and Night

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: HEBREWS 12

THURSDAY

August

15

It had been a particularly complex time in England, marked by civil war. Even believers like Jeremy Taylor faced ongoing challenges. Born in Cambridge, England, on this day in 1613, he had distinguished himself as a student and later a professor at Oxford University before eventually moving to Ireland.

The crises of his times helped drive him deeper in faith. He expressed insights through his devotional writings, particularly in a book he wrote about holy living. Here, he encouraged believers to realize that a key to successful living was how we *start* and *end* each day.

He encouraged readers, “When you awake, accustom yourself to think first upon God.” Then at night, “Let Him close thine eyes.” This focus is essential for healthful sleep and preparation to make life fruitful and balanced.

He influenced readers to avoid idleness and to be diligent. They were to be careful about the people they associated with, and always to look for opportunities to fill “spaces of time” in prayer, reading, and doing works of charity. They were to avoid sin and bad habits, develop the gifts God had given them, learn to “know the worth of time, and the manner how well to improve a day.”

Remember the importance of spending time with God, particularly in the morning and at night each day. He can give you peace for any challenge. Trust Him to help you make wise decisions.

Work at living in peace with everyone, and work at living a holy life, for those who are not holy will not see the Lord.

Hebrews 12:14 NLT

PRAYER:

Father, I commit this day into Your hands. Help me make wise use of my time and be a good steward of my resources. In Jesus' name, amen.

FRIDAY

August

16

Victory Over Bitterness

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: HEBREWS 12

Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord...lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.

Hebrews 12:14-15 NKJV

PRAYER:

Father, free me from any trace of bitterness. Help me pursue peace. Guide me in my relationships with others. In Jesus' name, amen.

Peace can be described as a life without disquieting thoughts or emotions. It is a condition of the heart that reminds us of a machine with an abundance of *lubrication*. All the moving parts function *smoothly* with little wear and tear. However, the absence of peace leads to turmoil, just like the absence of lubrication leads to friction and, ultimately, destruction.

If we are at peace with our friends, family, and neighbors, we operate at maximum *efficiency* and can be more fulfilled and happy. Without peace, our minds and hearts can become focused on the wrong things.

In particular, the Bible warns that a root of “*bitterness*” can form that can “*defile*” us. Corrupted by this bitterness, we can find ourselves developing unhealthy attitudes such as feeling taken for granted, resentful, and unappreciated.

One way to have victory over bitterness is to live a holy life. In fact, “*no one will see the Lord*” without holiness. This is a lifestyle in which we seek to please God by being filled with His Spirit and guided by His Word. We should be constantly surrendered to the lordship of Jesus.

This also means pursuing “*peace with all people, and holiness.*” Without this peace, a “*root of bitterness*” may spring up within us. This root is guaranteed to “*cause trouble.*” And because of such roots, “*many become defiled.*”

In your life, seek to live in peace and be on guard against any bitterness.

We Never Know

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: HEBREWS 13

SATURDAY

August

17

It's human nature to become hyper-conscious of the status of the people with whom we interact.

In fact, most people likely would admit that they roll out the red carpet for the rich, famous, powerful, for the politicians, athletes, movie stars, business owners, generals, authors, and even celebrated ministers. In contrast, we might show no special regard for those at the other end of the scale. These attitudes are as common among believers as non-believers.

However, the Bible teaches us that believers are to act differently. At the core is an understanding that the differences we see on the surface such as clothes, homes, titles, and honors really aren't important to God. What really matters is the *heart*. As God told Samuel, He doesn't look "at the outward appearance" but "at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

In our flesh we may be inclined to "show hospitality" and favoritism to the rich and famous while ignoring the less fortunate. But the Bible reminds us that we are to "show hospitality" to *everyone*, even people we don't know. Why? In part because we really don't know who they are, or what they will become. They may even be angels!

The Bible tells us that we are to pay the same amount of "special attention to everyone," even to "a poor man in dirty clothes" (James 2:1-7).

Today, ask God to give you His accepting attitude toward *everyone*.

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.

Hebrews 13:2 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, help me to be Your instrument with the people You bring into my life. Help me demonstrate genuine love and hospitality. In Jesus' name, amen.

SUNDAY

August

18

Your Special Assignment

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: EPHESIANS 4

He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

Ephesians 4:16 NLT

PRAYER:

Father, I commit my life to You. Help me to fulfill Your calling. I will be Your servant. In Jesus' name, amen.

Flavius Ricimer was not considered eligible for leadership in Rome. After all, he was a pagan, a man with the wrong background. Although hardly known today, he became one of the most powerful men of his time. In fact, he became known as the “kingmaker” of the Western Roman Empire.

After becoming a general in the Roman army, his support became critical for elevating others to positions of power. From time to time, Ricimer's position was threatened, but he managed to survive and even maintain his position of influence until he died on this day in 472 AD.

His life reminds us of important Biblical principles about Christians' lives today. Each person has a unique place in the body of Christ. Some are called to positions of greater visibility and prominence. But more are called to serve behind the scenes. Some become well known; many will remain relatively obscure.

However, in God's sight, each person is equally special.

The key for believers is to surrender their lives to God, to let Him chart their course, and to be faithful to fulfill the assignments that He has given them. This is true whether or not they receive praise or attention. We can be confident that God knows the truth.

Today, surrender your life anew to Him. Seek to be faithful in whatever position He calls you, whether or not anyone else ever knows.

God Will Not, Will Not

TODAY'S READING: HEBREWS 13

MONDAY

August

19

The Bible makes this glorious promise: God “*never*” will leave or forsake us. But the promise actually is stronger than we might realize.

The Greek word here is a *double negative*, which is different from a double negative in English. We gain a clearer understanding of this emphasis through Kenneth Wuest’s translation: “I *will not*, I *will not* cease to sustain and uphold you. I *will not*, *will not* let you down.” This should give us extra confidence that, in every situation, we can be confident and delivered from fear.

This demonstrates how firmly we can entrust our lives to the Lord, and how completely we can be freed from worry about our future and our needs. And we never need to fear what other people say or think.

He is not merely saying He will not leave us. He is stating *emphatically* that He will not, will not leave us, and that He will not, will not let us down. God is *stressing* that He promises to sustain and uphold us.

The Bible gives us this promise that we might be free from worry or fear and to *know* that we can trust God in every situation. We *always* can be content and at peace. We always can be confident in Him.

Today, seek to make this promise real in your life. Remember, you have no reason to fear. What can man do to you?

Be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” So we may boldly say: “The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?”

Hebrews 13:5-6 NKJV

PRAYER:

Father, thank You that You never will leave me. I will not fear. I trust in You! In Jesus’ name, amen.

TUESDAY

August

20

Complete

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: HEBREWS 13

Now may the God of peace...make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight.

Hebrews 13:20-21 NKJV

PRAYER:

Father, thank You that You want to make me complete. I submit my life to You. Prepare me. Equip me. In Jesus' name, amen.

The Bible describes how God desires to make us “complete.” The Greek word reminds us that He works to *equip, shape, and prepare* us. He gives us the tools and resources we need.

Through this process, He acts to chisel, refine, and teach us. If we make mistakes, God corrects us. When we fail, He helps us learn how to succeed. We mature as we absorb more of His Word. We learn more about His Spirit and how He guides us, speaks to us, protects us, and empowers us.

Further, we are made complete in *every good work* to do His *will*. Yes, God has a will for each of us. His goal is that we become *complete*, so we can accomplish His purposes and do the things for which we were created.

How does He do this? He is “*working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ.*” He works in our minds and hearts, our thoughts and attitudes, our habits and experiences.

He does this in ways that are pleasing to Him. They may not seem pleasing to us, but He knows the benefits and the reasons. He teaches us, empowers us, and gives us talents and resources that we might be a blessing to others.

In your life, seek to cooperate with God that He might make you complete, mature, and always ready to serve Him.

Storms

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JAMES 1

WEDNESDAY

August

21

Images of nature fill many paintings by Joseph Turner. In 1842 at the age of sixty-seven, he decided to focus on storms in a fresh way. Instead of watching from afar, Turner felt compelled to *experience* the fury of a storm for himself.

He had himself tied to the mainmast of a ship, which sailed into the heart of a gale. It was an intense experience. Afterward, filled with personal insight, he painted “Snow Storm: Steam-Boat off a Harbour’s Mouth.” The painting puzzled some but amazed others with its intensity.

Observers *felt* what it meant to go through a storm. As one critic summarized, this painting “is the essence of all that Turner had discovered...during forty years of practice.”

In our spiritual lives, God may allow us to go through storms. As we do, we need to trust in Him and realize that storms have a purpose. They deepen our faith and change our character. And persevering through trials results in blessings and “*the crown of life*.”

In a similar way, Paul described how God wants us to “*exult in our tribulations*.” Why? Because they bring about perseverance, proven character, and hope (Romans 5:3-5).

Today, remember that God has an eternal plan for you. When you go through storms, have faith. Trust Him. Let Him perfect you and teach you. Let Him give you a more powerful testimony, change you, and prove Himself mighty!

Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

James 1:12 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, help me to persevere in every situation. I will not give up, but trust in You. I believe You for victory. In Jesus' name, amen.

THURSDAY

August

22

Partiality and Favoritism

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JAMES 2

My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism. If you show partiality, you are committing sin.

James 2:1, 9 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, change my heart. Fill me with a spirit of love and compassion. Free me from favoritism. Use me in the lives of others. In Jesus' name, amen.

Cultivating relationships that seem beneficial to us is understandable and almost inevitable. We tend to make decisions based on ways we think others can help us.

But the Bible encourages us to realize that pleasing God is more important than any human factor. We must seek *first* His Kingdom and *always* follow Biblical principles. This means not being governed by “*an attitude of personal favoritism.*” It is, in fact, realizing that partiality is a *sin*.

In describing favoritism and partiality, James used a Greek word relating to the face. He was warning against being motivated by external appearances and favoring someone because of their wealth, rank, or position. These biases can *corrupt* our hearts. What is most important is our faith and relationship with Jesus.

Instead of being blinded by external conditions, we should realize how worldly things can *distract* us and get our focus off serving God and living according to His Word.

God looks at the world in different ways. In His sight those living in remote regions are just as dear as real estate moguls who control vast property. People dwelling in poverty are just as important as powerful politicians are. He cares equally for people in all denominations, even those with different theologies.

Ask God to help you recognize ways you may be guilty of favoritism. Seek to be transformed by His Spirit, to walk in His ways, and to point *everyone* toward Jesus.

The Power of Mercy

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JAMES 2

FRIDAY

August

23

Society encourages judgment in many ways: business and politics, social media and relationships, education and church life. Showing judgment means being ready to criticize or even condemn others for what they do or say. It means acting like judge and jury, emphatically declaring someone's innocence or guilt.

It is important to have discernment and to seek wisdom. But a judgmental spirit is different. That is more about our *attitude*.

We might assume that judgment means strength while mercy implies weakness. However, the Bible reminds us that mercy is ultimately *more powerful* than judgment. In the world some may focus on short-term demonstrations of power and influence. But the Bible teaches that it is the merciful who ultimately triumph.

When we are merciful, we remember our limits. We adopt an attitude of humility and remember the mercy God shows us. We need to remember that Jesus said, "*Judge not that you not be judged*" (Matthew 7:1). Whenever we judge others, we place ourselves in a position to be judged by God!

If we react with judgment toward others, we will be judged ourselves. But if we seek mercy from God and others, we, too, must be merciful. As Jesus said, "*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy*" (Matthew 5:7).

Today, ask God to help you to be merciful toward others. Remember, the degree to which *you* are merciful is the degree to which He will be merciful toward you.

For to him who has shown no mercy the judgment [will be] merciless, but mercy [full of glad confidence] exults victoriously over judgment.

James 2:13 AMPC

PRAYER:

Father, help me to be merciful to others. Fill me with your Spirit. Thank You for being merciful to me. In Jesus' name, amen.

SATURDAY

August

24

What You Invest

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: GALATIANS 6

*Whatever a man sows,
this he will also reap.
For the one who sows
to his own flesh will
from the flesh reap
corruption, but the one
who sows to the Spirit
will from the Spirit reap
eternal life.*

Galatians 6:7-8 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I commit my time, talents, and treasures to You. Help me to sow seeds into Your Kingdom. I expect an abundant harvest. In Jesus' name, amen.

The violinist was bored. During a concert, the orchestra in which he played was being directed by a guest conductor most orchestra members thought was uninspiring. Like many others, the violinist admitted that he was just going through the motions.

Then for some reason, he decided to throw himself into the piece. Instead of being half-hearted, he started to care and exerted maximum effort. Suddenly, everything changed. Instead of being detached, he found himself involved. He described it as kind of a “spiritual experience.”

Many people have similar attitudes toward their jobs, homes, relationships, and even their Christian lives. They're just going through the motions and doing as little as possible.

In church when they don't seem to get anything out of a sermon, they blame the pastor. When they are bored on their job, they blame the boss. If they are unhappy in their marriage, they blame their spouse. In fact, often they just complain about everything.

They forget that the Bible says we reap what we sow. In other words, we determine the kind of harvest we are going to receive in every area of life.

Ask yourself what you are sowing with your time and resources. Are you giving minimum effort or your full effort? Are you doing everything as unto God? Ask Him to help you have the right attitude and invest aggressively in His Kingdom by giving your all in whatever you do.

An Overwhelming Conqueror

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ROMANS 8

SUNDAY

August

25

Soon after arriving in America in 1915, a young immigrant was drafted into the US Army. Eventually he was sent to Europe to fight in World War I. And like millions of men on all sides of that bloody war, he became a victim – not of bullets but of the flu epidemic that ravaged populations around the world.

Suffering from the effects of flu, he lay among soldiers who had died in combat. His body appeared lifeless, and he was hauled out among the dead. But nurses checking the bodies discovered that he was alive. He was given care and recovered, returning to America in June 1919.

Throughout the conflict, this soldier carried a New Testament in his pocket. When the nurses found him, they noticed that his testament in particular highlighted Romans 8:35-38. This soldier had clung to that passage day after day.

Through the horrors of war and the ravages of flu, he continued to trust that Jesus still was with him, that *nothing* could separate him from His love, and that, in every situation he faced, he would overwhelmingly *conquer* because of Jesus.

These principles are just as true today. They were true for that immigrant soldier. And they are true for you.

No matter what you face, you can trust in God. He is with you and nothing can separate you from the love of Christ! Through Him, you are more than a conqueror!

Who will separate us from the love of Christ?...In all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.

Romans 8:35, 37 NASB

PRAYER:

Dear Lord Jesus, thank You that nothing can separate me from Your love and that I can overwhelmingly conquer because of You! In Your name, amen.

MONDAY

August

26

Faith & Works Together

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JAMES 2

Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did... You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.

James 2:21-22 NIV

PRAYER:

Father, help me to put my faith in action and act on the things You have promised. Thank You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Faith and works are often pictured somewhat as *opposites*. Those who emphasize faith can feel at odds with those who stress works. Those emphasizing works can feel that those who emphasize faith are out of balance.

However, the reality is that faith and works are *interrelated*. In fact, both faith and works are necessary for a victorious living.

The Bible demonstrates this principle by examining the life of Abraham. Yes, he was a man of faith, but in fact, *“his faith was made complete by what he did.”* Faith and works were both essential elements of his life.

In fact, faith and works were *“working together.”* The Greek word here is the source of the English word “synergy,” which literally means “to work together.”

James was saying that faith and works need to be *synergistic* in our lives. We need *both* of them. Our faith is made stronger as we put Biblical principles into action. And our works become more genuine and have more impact as we increase in faith.

It is true that we are saved not through our works but on faith alone. But this does not mean that our actions are not important.

Today, ask God to help you be a person of faith. Stand on His Word. Believe His promises. But also seeking to put those principles into action with faith and works in harmony and synergy.

Gentle Behavior

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JAMES 3

TUESDAY

August

27

Each of us is different. We have different skills and attributes. Different habits and hobbies. When compared with others, some simply know more about some subjects while knowing less about others. The question is, what do we do with this knowledge? What is our *attitude*? And how does this impact us?

One frequent tendency is for those considered smart to become arrogant, to feel *superior*, and to look down on those who seem to know *less*.

The Bible warns us against attitudes like these. We constantly are reminded that these attitudes lead to *pride*. In contrast, real maturity and understanding are based on humility and realizing our dependence on God.

In fact, the Bible teaches that we should have an attitude of “*gentleness*.” This kind of mildness and meekness can be difficult, particularly for those considered knowledgeable.

But believers are encouraged to remember that they owe *everything* to God, and we all know just part of the whole picture (1 Corinthians 13:12). We all make mistakes and have considerable limits, no matter how much we know.

It is not enough to talk about such things. Instead, we should seek to demonstrate how our lives have been transformed by good behavior, the things we say and do. We need to cultivate a spirit of humility and act with “*the gentleness of wisdom*,” a wisdom that comes from God and is based on being filled with His Spirit and guided by His Word.

*Who among you is wise
and understanding?
Let him show by his
good behavior his deeds
in the gentleness of
wisdom.*

James 3:13 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, forgive me for pride. I humble myself before You. Give me a spirit of gentleness as I interact with others. In Jesus' name, amen.

WEDNESDAY

August

28

Waiting on God

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JAMES 5

Be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains.

James 5:7 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for the seeds that You have given me. I will continue sowing into Your Kingdom. I trust You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Today, reproductions of “The Angelus,” a painting by Jean Francois Millet, are found in millions of homes around the world. Yet his name is comparatively unknown. Few know the name of the painting, but are inspired by its image as it appears on calendars, prints, and other items.

Born in 1814 in northwest France, Millet had a difficult life. After his first wife died, he married again in 1845. He and his family often struggled, experiencing hunger and financial problems. Millet slowly gained respect as an artist, often being inspired by pastoral scenes and the life of common people.

“The Angelus,” completed in 1859, moves us not because of Millet’s technique but rather because of the *subject matter*. A man and women stand alone in a field with their hands folded in prayer. They have sown their seeds. All they can do is trust God for the results.

Ultimately, all of us are just like this French couple. No matter our “field” of endeavor, God calls us to do our part by sowing seeds with the resources He gives us. But for the results, we *must* trust in Him.

This is the essence of faith – trusting God, being patient, and waiting on Him for the results.

Whatever you need, make sure to do your part. Sow seeds with the time, talents, and treasures that He has given you. Then pray and have faith! And trust God for the results!

Endurance

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JAMES 5

THURSDAY

August

29

The fact was clear to James: people tend to focus on temporary conditions. So he reminded us that our lives are *“a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away”* (James 4:14).

Because life is short, we need to focus on God, remembering that no one knows the future. What happens is what “the Lord wills.” Sadly, some don’t have this perspective and only live for the moment.

James encouraged us to be patient, to think about eternity, and *“the coming of the Lord”* (5:8).

James recalled people who stayed faithful and endured. Job was the ultimate example of this attitude. He endured many trials and tests, and in the end was rewarded and blessed by God.

Job’s life provides a powerful example of why we need to stay faithful and focus on eternity. To help us keep this perspective, James reminded us that *“the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.”* We may not understand His actions, but we must remember that He *constantly* tries to help us develop an eternal perspective. Tragically, some people never realize these basic truths and constantly focus on things that are temporary.

Don’t let short-term issues shape your life. Remember, life is short; nothing in this world will last. As you make choices, *think about eternity* and the eternal consequences of your actions. Always speak the truth. Always seek to serve God. Always seek first His Kingdom.

You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord’s dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.

James 5:11 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, my desire is to please You. Direct and guide me. I dedicate my time, talents, and treasures to You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

FRIDAY

August

30

Human Nature

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JAMES 5

Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months.

James 5:17 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I commit these situations to You: _____ . I believe that You can do anything. I trust You for the answers. In Jesus' name, amen.

What was different about Elijah? What set him apart? Special training? “Super human” abilities? Unusual gifts?

In fact, Elijah is described as a man “*with a nature like ours.*” He was not a “superstar” or a “superhero.” He wasn’t perfect. He was a human being with very typical human flaws.

What made him different? The difference noted by James was that “*he prayed earnestly.*” This sounds like his prayers had a particular intensity. But the Greek here gives us a somewhat different perspective.

In fact, James used two related, but almost identical words, both essentially meaning “prayer” or “to pray.” A more accurate translation would be that Elijah “prayed with prayer.”

This is less about the “earnestness” of the prayer and more about the fact that Elijah *simply prayed*. He didn’t just *think* about the challenges he faced. He didn’t just fill his mind with speculation and curiosity. He didn’t hesitate. No. He turned to God and “prayed with prayer.”

This is a critical perspective for us. We are reminded that none of us is perfect. But we can unleash God’s power through prayer. This means having *faith*. It means *believing* in God and the power of prayer. As we look at the challenges of life, we are not to sit back and do nothing or just think nice thoughts. We actually are to pray earnestly, even about things that seem impossible to us.

Witnesses

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ACTS 1

SATURDAY

August

31

In their last meeting with Jesus before His resurrection, the disciples wanted to know if the time had come to restore “*the Kingdom to Israel*” (v. 6). In essence, they wanted information.

But Jesus told them that, instead of information, they would be given a new dimension of power “*when the Holy Spirit has come upon you*” (v. 8). With this power, He called them to be His “*witnesses*.”

The Greek word here (source of the English word *martyr*) describes telling what they had *seen* or *heard*. In short, their mission wherever they went was to tell what had happened to them.

This also becomes our calling. This does not mean that it is wrong to seek understanding, or that God cannot increase our knowledge.

The fact is that *anyone* can be an effective witness. Anyone can share what they have seen and heard, what Jesus has done for them and the changes He has made in their lives.

Others may disagree with our conclusions and argue with our information, but they cannot change the reality of what we have witnessed. They can reject our testimony or question our perception, but they have a more difficult time questioning our sincerity, the conviction of our heart, and the confidence of our experiences.

What has Jesus done for you? What have you seen and heard? As He opens the door, prepare to tell your story to others.

It is not for you to know times or epochs...you will receive power...you shall be My witnesses.

Acts 1:7-8 NASB

PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, thank You for changing my life. Give me opportunities to be Your witness. Give me boldness. In Your name, amen.



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The Pony Perspective

by **Jim Buchan**

A story has been told about twin boys who were celebrating their birthday.

“This year for your birthday, we have a special surprise for you,” their parents said. “Your present is in the backyard, and we want to show it to you one at a time.”

The first boy eagerly went to the backyard to see this special gift. However, to his dismay, the only thing he found was a huge pile of manure.

“What a terrible present!” he complained. “This is my worst birthday ever.”

But then it was the second boy’s turn. Although he saw the same pile of manure, his reaction was entirely different.

“Thank you, thank you, thank you!” he told his parents with gratitude and great joy. “Where did you put the PONY?”

THE LESSON FOR US

As the second boy recognized, when we’re faced with situations that seem like manure, it’s time to

look for the *pony*! Right around the corner from life’s stinkiest circumstances, we’re likely to soon discover a wonderful blessing from our Heavenly Father.

Writing from a dark, smelly prison cell one day, the apostle Paul wrote:

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice... Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things... and the God of peace will be with you (Philippians 4:4-9 NASB).

My friend, no matter what difficulties you may be facing today, make sure to look for the pony. It may be closer than you think!



Jim Buchan is Director of Partner Communications at Inspiration Ministries.



Inspiration



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INSPIRATION

‘You Will Not Commit Suicide!’

On the brink of ending her life, Sherry heard a powerful word from God that changed everything.

After years of marriage to an unsaved alcoholic, at age 34 Sherry finally left her husband. Brokenhearted and attempting to escape her pain, she became an alcoholic too.

“For 16 years, I struggled with addictions and toxic relationships with men,” Sherry says. “I also destroyed my relationships with my mother and children, and I was physically malnourished and spiritually empty.”

Finally, Sherry decided she couldn’t go on living with her overwhelming emotional pain. She called in sick to work, took some pills, and grabbed a knife to slash her wrists and end her life.

But at that decisive moment, she found herself crying out in utter desperation...

“God, please help me if You can!”

Suddenly, Sherry heard a voice coming from an Inspiration Ministries television broadcast – even though she hadn’t even been aware that her TV was on.

Amazingly, the speaker said...

“You will not kill yourself today!”

Sherry was dumbfounded. “I sat straight up in bed, and the buzzing high from the amphetamine pills quickly evaporated, making it possible for me to focus my attention on the minister preaching on the screen,” she recalls.

Seeming to point directly at Sherry, the minister said again...

“You will not commit suicide today because you are a precious child of the Most High God!”

Recognizing that this word was for her, she responded back and said...

“Okay. I choose to live!”

Despite her decision not to kill herself, Sherry realized that she would need God’s supernatural help if she was going to overcome the many challenges in her life. She boldly asked Him...

“If You want me to live, how can I face all the struggles and addictions in my life?”

To this valid question, she sensed God clearly but gently replying...

“I will be with you.”

Sherry reports that the Lord has indeed walked with her in the

years since that fateful day. She’s now free from addictions, and God has restored her health and her relationships with her mother and children.

“I’m grateful for the impact Inspiration Ministries and your partners have had on my life,” Sherry says. “Now the Lord is dealing with me to sow back into the Good Ground of your ministry. As God has blessed me, I want to be a blessing to others!”

As God transformed Sherry’s life, He can help you and your loved ones. Contact our faithful prayer ministers today to join you in praying for the breakthrough you need:

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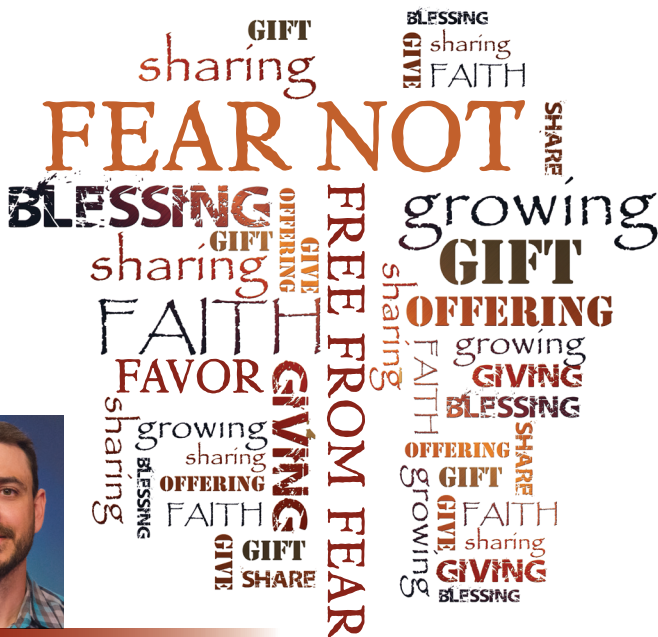
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by Ben Cerullo



Breaking Free from Fear

Some of the most beautiful words in all of Scripture are found in Matthew 25:21:

Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.

Each one of us should long to hear these breathtaking words when we stand before our Lord in eternity one day. But in order to receive this greeting, we will have to be set free from fear. Of all the strongholds that keep people from fulfilling their calling and destiny, fear is probably the most common.

Make no mistake about it: Fear is your enemy, not your friend. The Bible is quite clear about this: “God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7). Over and over again in the pages of His Word, God tells people: “FEAR NOT!”

Before we go any further, I want you to pause and ask yourself what you would do if you had no fear of failure...no fear of harm...no fear of financial lack...no fear of rejection. What mighty work would you endeavor for God’s Kingdom if you knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that you had His favor,

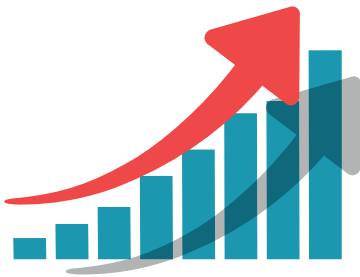
provision, and protection?

Jesus' statement about the "good and faithful servant" comes in the context of the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25:14-30. Before going on a long journey, the master had entrusted his money to three different servants. The first man was given five talents (a form of silver) and the second was given two talents.

The master was pleased with *both* of the first two servants. Although they had been given different amounts, they each had invested wisely, doubling the amount they initially received.

The first two servants each received exactly the same words of praise from their master. Pleased with their faithful stewardship, he assured them of his favor and said, "Well done!"

RECEIVING AN INCREASE



The first two servants both had taken steps of faith to invest their master's resources, and they each received an *increase* as a result. Because they had been "faithful

over a few things," the master made them "ruler over *many things.*"

What a fantastic picture of the scene in Heaven for those who are faithful with the resources God entrusted to them on earth. Can you imagine what it will be like to hear your Master embrace you and say...

**"Enter into the
joy of your Lord!"**

Too often, I meet believers who complain that they haven't been given much to invest into God's Kingdom and the work of spreading the Gospel. "I hardly have enough to provide for my own family," they say.

Yet the master in the Parable of the Talents didn't judge his servants based on how many resources they *started* with. Instead, he judged them on their faithfulness to *invest* and *increase* whatever resources they had been given. By doubling their investment, the first two servants each received a *100% return!*

THE FEARFUL SERVANT

There was *another* servant in this story – one who sadly missed out on his master's favor. Instead of investing the money he had been given, he chose to bury it. He apparently assumed the master would be pleased just to get his money back when he returned.

Yet instead of being pleased, the master was livid, calling the man a “wicked and lazy servant” (v. 26). While the third servant thought he was playing it safe by burying his money in the ground, his cowardice ended up costing him everything. The master gave his money to the man who had grown his investment from five to ten talents.



This outcome may seem harsh to us, but we need to see what had motivated the man to make such a tragic error:

*Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was **afraid**, and went and **hid your talent** in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours (vs. 24-25).*

You see, it was FEAR that had hindered this man from investing his master’s resources. Unwilling to take a risk, he hid the resources where he thought they would remain safe.

SABOTAGING GOD’S FAVOR

Look how this servant allowed *fear* to sabotage his master’s favor:

- FEAR prevented him from acting in FAITH.
- By failing to act in FAITH, he was unable to be FAITHFUL with the master’s resources.
- Because he wasn’t FAITHFUL, he forfeited the FAVOR and INCREASE he would have received from the master.

How blind this servant was! Everyone else in Jesus’ parable took steps of faith instead of steps of fear. The master and the first two servants were sowers, investing the resources they had and expecting an increase.

The only one who failed to receive an increase was the third servant – because fear kept him from investing!

My friend, which of the servants are you most like today? If you allow fear to govern your life, you’ll fail to take the steps of faith necessary to experience God’s best for you as His son or daughter.

But when God delivers you from fear, you will courageously invest your life and your resources into His Kingdom and the lives of others, confident of His bountiful provision. Best of all, instead of fear and frustration, you’ll be able to “*enter into the joy of your Lord.*” What a great reward!

A Merry Heart...o

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



A kindergarten teacher was walking around observing her classroom of children while they were drawing pictures. As she got to one girl who was working diligently, she asked what the drawing was.

The girl replied, "I'm drawing God."

The teacher paused and said, "But no one knows what God looks like."

Without looking up from her drawing, the girl replied, "They will in a minute!"



BULLETIN BLOOPERS



The rosebud on the altar this morning is to announce the birth of David Alan Belzer, the son of Rev. and Mrs. Julius Belzer.

**Tuesday at 4 p.m. there will be an ice cream social.
All ladies giving milk please come early.**

Eight new choir robes are currently needed due to the addition of several new members and to the deterioration of some older ones.

For those of you who have children and don't know it, we have a nursery downstairs.

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.

Be Free From Your Disappointments!



These life-changing resources are available as our **THANK YOU GIFTS** for your Seed to win Souls this month! Send your gift with the enclosed response form or by calling our special resource line:

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