

## Turning Bad Days Into Better Days

February 1

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*"Is your life full of difficulties...? BE HAPPY, for when the way is rough, your patience has a chance to grow. So let it grow and do not try to squirm out of your problems. For when your patience is finally in full bloom, then you'll be ready for anything, strong in character, full and complete." James 1:2-4 (LB)*

Have you ever thought you had a bad day? Listen to the story of Mr. Jones:

"One day Mrs. Jones decided to get rid of some bad hair spray that she had. She decided that a good way to dispose of it would be to spray it into the commode. Shortly afterward, her husband Mr. Jones came home. As was his usual custom, he went to the reading room (bathroom) to relax. As soon as he was comfortably seated, he lit a cigarette and tossed the match between his legs into the commode. You guessed it; the hair spray exploded and blew Mr. Jones heavenwards. Unfortunately for Mr. Jones, the shower bar stopped his ascent. After the ambulance arrived, the driver asked Mrs. Jones how Mr. Jones incurred a burnt backside and a concussion at the same time. She began to explain what happened as the ambulance attendants were carrying Mr. Jones downstairs. The ambulance drivers were so tickled; they dropped Mr. Jones down the stairs and broke both of his arms! Poor Mr. Jones, it definitely was not his day. He suffered one burned backside, one concussion and two broken arms." (Charles Lowrey - SBC Life - October 1995. p. 10)

Mr. Jones definitely had a bad day. However, not all of our days that we label bad are as bad as Mr. Jones. The majority of our days are exactly what we make them. Many circumstances outside of our control effect our days. However, there is one thing not seen on the inside - it is something called *attitude*. So how is your Attitude today?? How Important Is Your Attitude?????

Charles Swindoll spoke no small truth when he wrote concerning attitude, "We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have and that is our attitude. I am convinced that life is 10% of what happens and 90% how I react to it. And so it is with you, we are in charge of our Attitudes."

The Bible says, "Is your life full of difficulties...? BE HAPPY, for when the way is rough, your patience has a chance to grow. So let it grow and do not try to squirm out of your problems. For when your patience is finally in full bloom, then you'll be ready for anything, strong in character, full and complete." James 1:2-4 (LB)

**Your Attitude Determines Your Approach to Life.**

**Your Attitude Determines Your Relationship With People.**

**Often Your Attitude Is the Only Difference Between Success and Failure.**

Your Attitude at the Beginning of the Task Will Affect its Outcome More Than Anything Else.

**Your Attitude Can Turn Your Problems Into Blessings.**

Remember - Only You Control Your Attitude!!!



# The Question of Protection

February 2

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*"If God is for us, who can be against us?" - Rom 8:31 NIV).*

The question is simply, "Who can be against us?" Who is against you? Is disease, inflation, corruption or exhaustion against you? Do calamities confront and fears imprison you? We can list our foes much easier than we can fight them, but that is not the question. The question is, "If GOD IS FOR US, WHO CAN BE AGAINST US"?

## PREVIEW

Four words in this verse deserve your attention. Read slowly the phrase, "God is for us". Please pause for a minute before you continue. Read it again, aloud. God is for us. Repeat the phrase four times, this time emphasizing each word. (Come on, you're not in a big hurry!) God is for us! God is for us! God is for us! God is for us!

God is for you! Your parents may have forgotten you, your teachers may have neglected you and your siblings may be ashamed of you, but within reach of your prayers is the maker of the oceans, God!

God is for you; not "may be", not "has been", not "was", not "would be", but "God is"! He is for you today, at this hour and at this minute. There is no need to wait in line or come back tomorrow. He is with you. He could be no closer than he is at this moment. His loyalty will not increase if you are better or lessen if you are worse. He is for YOU!

## INNERVIEW

God is for you. Turn to the sidelines; that's God cheering your run. Look past the finish line; that's God applauding your steps. Listen for him in the bleachers, shouting your name. Too tired to continue? He'll carry you. Too discouraged to fight? He is picking you up. God is for you!

## REVIEW

God is for you and if he had a calendar, your birthday would be circled. If he drove a car, your name would be on his bumper. If there is a tree in heaven, he has carved your name in the bark!

God is FOR YOU and WITH YOU! Knowing that, who is against you? Can death harm you now? Can disease rob your life? Can your purpose be taken or your value diminished? No. Though hell itself may set itself against you, no one can defeat you. You are protected. God is with you!

*Praise God For:* His strength

*Thank God For:* friends I have been able to bless

*Ask God's Forgiveness For:* not helping when I could have

*Ask God To Help:* the blind and deaf

*Ask God To Supply Our Need For:* someone to assist

**DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:**

*Write down one problem that is causing you to experience a lack of joy. Ask God to give you back your joy and to grant you a willing spirit to sustain you in the days ahead.*



# Three Philosophies Of Life

February 3

"Care about each other as much as you care about yourselves."-Philippians 2:4a (LB)

There is a marvelous story found in Luke 10:30-37. It is the story of a man who was beaten, robbed, and left for dead on the side of the road. Several people passed by, some looked, some showed concern, but only one stopped.

This story demonstrates three attitudes in every day life. You will see them in offices, in churches and just about everywhere in life.

**What Is Yours Is Mine** – This was the attitude of the robbers. People who want whatever they see and will do whatever is necessary to get it, demonstrate this attitude. These people are selfish and think that everyone around them owes them something, just because they are there. "Selfish people cause trouble, but you will live a full life if you trust the Lord." (Proverbs 28:24) "Greed has two twins, each named, "Give me!" (Proverbs 30:15a)

**What Is Mine is Mine and What is Yours is Yours** - This was the attitude of the Priest and Levite who did not stop and help the man who had been beaten and robbed. "You do your job, I'll do my job – just leave me alone" demonstrates it. These people exude arrogance – "I am too good to help you, and I will never need your help." Remember, what goes around comes around.

"Do not get tired of helping others. You will be rewarded when the time is right, if you do not give up." (Galatians 6:7) "If you do not do what you know is right, you have sinned." (James 4:17)

**What Is Mine Is Yours** – This is the attitude demonstrated by the Samaritan when he

stopped and helped the man who had been beaten, robbed, and left for dead. This is a true picture of a person who is willing to help others around him . . .even when it is not convenient. This is a true picture of a leader. "Care about each other as much as you care about yourselves." (Philippians 2:4a) Which of these philosophies represents you? I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; And because I cannot do everything I will not refuse to do the something that I can do. - Edward Everett Hale

*Praise God For:* His kindness

*Thank God For:* the world's givers

*Ask God's Forgiveness For:* being more of a taker

*Ask God To Help:* cab and bus drivers

*Ask God To Supply Our Need For:* strength to help others

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**DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:**

*Write a prayer of praise to God for the grace He offers each of us.*

*Journal for Digging Deeper:*

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# An Insight On Integrity

February 4

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"Simply let your "Yes be Yes and your No be No." -Matthew 5:37 (LB)

In the book, Developing the Leader Within You, John Maxwell wrote, "When people have integrity, their words and their deeds match up. They are whom they are no matter where they are or whom they are with. People with integrity are not divided (that is duplicity) or merely pretending (that is hypocrisy). People with integrity have nothing to hide and nothing to fear. Their lives are open books."

Integrity is indispensable for a person who wishes to lead others. Whether you lead as a father, mother, teacher, or C.E.O. – integrity is a staple that must be developed, cultivated, protected, and cherished in order to effectively lead.

### Five ways to demonstrate integrity

**1. I Will Live What I Teach** – Deciding what to be is more important than deciding what to do. "Hold on to instruction, do not let it go; guard it well, for it is your life." (Proverbs 4:13)

**2. I Will Do What I Say** – A person of integrity will do what they promised they would do. They will keep their word. "Simply let your "Yes be Yes and your No be No." (Matthew 5:37)

**3. I Will Be Honest With Others** – When a leader loses credibility, he forfeits a trust that may never be regained. In any endeavor, trust and honesty allow individuals to cooperate so that they can all prosper. "I always speak the truth and refuse to tell a lie." (Proverbs 8:7)

**4. I Will Put What is Best for Others Ahead of What is Best For Me** – A person of integrity will remember they are there to serve others rather than to be served. "Be humble and consider others more important than yourselves." (Philippians 2:3b)

**5. I Will Be Transparent and Vulnerable** – A person can be closed and uncaring, but the people with the most genuine integrity will be those whose arms and hearts are open to those they lead. "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." (Matthew 9:36)

### Be A Person of Integrity

I would be true, for there are those who trust me. I would be pure, for there are those who care. I would be strong, for there are those who suffer. I would be brave, for there is much to dare. I would be friend of all – the foe, the friendless; I would be giving, and forget the gift; I would be humble, for I know my weakness; I would look up, and laugh, and love, and lift. -Howard A. Walter

*Praise God For:* His love

*Thank God For:* daily blessings

*Ask God's Forgiveness For:* taking His blessings for granted

*Ask God To Help:* enemies forgive

*Ask God To Supply Our Need For:* His love for mankind

### DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

*Write a prayer asking God to restore His joy to every area of your life.*

*Journal for Digging Deeper:*

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## Questions For Self Examination

February 5

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"You are better off to have a friend than to be all alone, because then you will get more enjoyment out of what you earn." -Ecclesiastes 4:9 (LB)

How long has it been since you have stopped and taken time to assess your personal progress? How long has it been since you have taken time to take a good look at yourself and determine how you are doing in your personal relationships? All of us have periodic examinations - health, financial, automotive and even our teeth are examined. Why not take a few moments and examine your relationships? Take a few moments to answer these questions, and see how you are doing.

**1. How much have I learned about the people with whom I live and**

**work?** Do I know and understand them better than I did a year ago? "Just as iron sharpens iron, friends sharpen the minds of each other." (Proverbs 27:17)

**2. How many new people have I become acquainted with this year?**

"You are better off to have a friend than to be all alone, because then you will get more enjoyment out of what you earn." (Ecclesiastes 4:9)

**3. Have I alienated anyone in the last year?**

Was it avoidable? What have I done to restore the relationship? "Making up with a friend you have offended is harder than breaking through a walled city." (Proverbs 18:19)

**4. Is my personal reputation as good or better than it was a year**

**ago?** What events have most affected my reputation? "A good reputation and respect are worth much more than silver and gold." (Proverbs 22:1)

**5. Have I faced any personal challenges during this past year?**

If so, how did I handle them? What did I learn in the process? "Even if good people fall seven times, they will get back up." (Proverbs 24:16)

**6. Have I learned any new skills in the past year?**

How have my interpersonal skills, analytical skills or judgement improved? "Everyone with good sense wants to learn." (Proverbs 18:15)

**7. Has my self-discipline improved?**

Have I improved in being able to control myself? "Correction and self-control will lead you through life." (Proverbs 6:23)

*Praise God For:* His sacrifice for us

*Thank God For:* the perfect gift

*Ask God's Forgiveness For:* my selfishness

*Ask God To Help:* friends put friends above self

*Ask God To Supply Our Need For:* self-denial



## Getting Past Blame

February 6

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*"So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God" (Romans 14:12)*

I recently received the following in an e-mail. *"Did you catch the news report about the woman who sued the weatherman? A woman heard a local weatherman predict fair skies and warm weather. She took him at his word and dressed accordingly. Predictably, the forecast proved erroneous. The sky opened, the rain fell and the temperature dropped dramatically. As a result of dressing as the weatherman's prediction indicated, the woman caught the flu, missed four days of work and income. She sued the weatherman and the station for damages as well as emotional distress!"*

### PREVIEW

Fewer and fewer people accept responsibility for anything these days. It is easier and easier to blame others for troubles, mistakes, and failures. While the case of the woman and the weatherman is extreme, it illustrates a problem that needs addressing. There is comfort in blaming others because it removes the heat and the attention from you. Blaming shifts responsibility away from me toward you. Blaming someone for a problem seems to make one look better in the eyes of those who watch. However, in most cases, blaming "boomerangs". When one refuses responsibility for his life, actions, work, ethics, health and countless other areas, he demonstrates irresponsibility. Irresponsibility can be hidden only so long.

### INNERVIEW

#### **RULES FOR EMBRACING RESPONSIBILITY:**

Before accepting an assignment or agreeing to do something, arrive at a full understanding of your role, functions and accountabilities. Once you sign on, commit to follow through.

Adopt a "no excuses" policy when it comes to performance. Step up to your part of the task and take it on. Work hard. Give credit to others as you succeed. Freely and openly accept criticism and responsibility for things that may go wrong.

### REVIEW

Be honest with yourself, your peers, and your superiors. If you make a mistake, own it immediately. If you need more information, admit it quickly. Do not play games. Recognize the value of humility.

Take care of your business and leave the business of others alone. Chances are you have more than enough on your own plate!

Ask for help when you need it and freely give it to others when they ask for it. Regard yourself as a team player rather than an island.

# Daily Sunshine In The Son

*"So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God" (Romans 14:12)*

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**Praise God For:** His patience

**Thank God For:** wise teachers

**Ask God's Forgiveness For:** not acknowledging to self my weaknesses

**Ask God To Help:** patch differences between friends

**Ask God To Supply Our Need For:** courage to confess faults

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**DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:**

*Is there anything in your life that seems too difficult for you? What action would allow you to take a leap of faith and let God show you that He can give you victory in this area?*

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*Lord, today I thank You for:*

*Journal for Digging Deeper:*

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*Thank You for these answers to prayer:*

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*Today, Lord, I need*

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*I pray for the needs of others, especially*

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## What Motivates People

February 7

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*"I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. -Psalms 139:14*

If your work involves any contact with people, whether as a salesman, a manager, a leader, or in providing a service, you *must* understand something about motivation to be effective. Why do people act the way they do? Throughout history great minds have suggested different answers to this question.

### PREVIEW

Sigmund Freud believed that all behavior is motivated by the *desire to avoid pain and experience pleasure*. In his view, pleasure seeking is the reason anything gets done. We work because it will provide us with *things* that we think will provide pleasure. While it is obvious that the desire for pleasure is a real and powerful force behind much of what we do, it does not explain *all* behavior. Millions of people willingly forfeit physical pleasure and endure pain every day for a variety of reasons.

Alfred Adler believed that the *desire for power and prestige* is what motivates us. He wrote that we all need to feel good about ourselves so we seek to control the people and events around us in attempt to acquire these feelings. We look for things to do that will give us a sense of power and status. Again, this is partly true, but it doesn't explain why so many powerful and famous achievers still feel unsatisfied.

### INNERVIEW

Victor Frankl believed that it is the *desire for purpose and permanence* that explains why we do what we do. As a survivor of the Nazi death camps, Frankl learned firsthand that man's search for *meaning* is the root of human motivation. People can live with minimal food and comforts but they cannot live without hope.

The truth is, **each of these views are partly right**. Human beings have a *physical, psychological* and a *spiritual* dimension. Life involves *HAVING, DOING, and BEING*. Our physical side desires a safe workplace and a secure income. Our psychological side wants to be valued, rather than devalued, for our work. And our spiritual side requires that there be a meaning and purpose to what we do.

### REVIEW

Wise managers and leaders create organizations that help people experience pleasure instead of pain at the physical level, self-worth at the psychological level, and meaning and purpose at the spiritual level. When you integrate these values into your workplace, extraordinary achievements are possible through ordinary people!

Psalms 139:13-17 (NIV) "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. 14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. 15 My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place.

# Daily Sunshine In The Son

When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, 16 your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. 17 How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!"

*What holds first place in your life? In what ways have you tried to succeed and failed? What would it mean to you to give the Lord first place?*

*Journal for Digging Deeper:*

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***Praise God For:*** salvation

***Thank God For:*** losing His life for me

***Ask God's Forgiveness For:*** embracing the wrong things

***Ask God To Help:*** the fearful let go

***Ask God To Supply Our Need For:*** surrendered lives

*Lord, today I thank You for:*

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***DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:***

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*I pray for the needs of others, especially*

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*Thank You for these answers to prayer:*

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*Today, Lord, I need*

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# Stretching Your Mind

February 8

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*"Any enterprise is built by wise planning, becomes strong through common sense, and profits wonderfully by keeping abreast of the facts." Proverbs 24:3 (LB)*

Ken Blanchard is a genius at expressing insights in simple ways. One of his key concepts in "Putting the One Minute Manager to Work" is this:

## **DON'T JUST DO SOMETHING - SIT THERE!**

Too often, many of our problems arise from acting before thinking. In the frantic pace of today's marketplace it is easy to get caught up in the *activity trap*. We confuse *activity* with *productivity*. We think "I'm so busy, I must be accomplishing something!" In reality, we may just be spinning our wheels. Like sitting in a rocking chair, you can expend a lot of energy and create a lot of motion... but still not make any progress.

## **PREVIEW**

Progress and productivity always require thought! The Bible says this:

*"A wise man thinks ahead; a fool doesn't and even brags about it!" Proverbs 13:16 (LB)*

*"A good man thinks before he speaks..." Proverbs .15:28 (LB)*

*"The wise man looks ahead. The fool attempts to fool himself and won't face facts." Proverbs 14:8 (LB)*

*"A wise man is cautious and avoids danger; a fool plunges ahead with great confidence." Pr.14:16 (LB)*

## **INNERVIEW**

Unfortunately many parts of your work seem to conspire to keep you from thinking! Pressures... deadlines... appointments... and interruptions fill your day so you have no time to think. You stay so busy swatting mosquitoes that you have no time to drain the swamp.

Nothing is as important to your job as *thinking*, yet nothing is harder to find time for. The solution is to SCHEDULE "THINK" TIME. Make a daily appointment with yourself to simply think about your work. Think about *what* you do, *how* you do it, and the *results* you are attaining. *"Any enterprise is built by wise planning, becomes strong through common sense, and profits wonderfully by keeping abreast of the facts."* Proverbs 24:3 (LB)

## **REVIEW**

Your mind is like a muscle. It develops with use. The more you develop it, the more productive you will be. And productive people will always be in demand as we move into the 21st century. Your brain is *God's gift* to you. What you do with your brain is *your gift* to God. Think about it!

**Praise God For:** His little messages

**Thank God For:** Changed attitudes

**Ask God's Forgiveness For:** petty irritations

**Ask God To Help:** siblings love each other

**Ask God To Supply Our Need For:** correction





# Daily Sunshine In The Son

Lord, today I thank You for:

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

Today, Lord, I need

I pray for the needs of others, especially

# Being Humble

February 10

*“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.- Phil. 3:12*

The first two (2) steps are found in the first part of the passage.

***“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect...”***

Steps 1 and 2 are “Be humble” and “Be teachable.”

We see no pride or arrogance in Paul. He was not a know-it-all. He had a humility that is remarkable, when you consider what he actually had attained in his life.

## PREVIEW

Look at some of the accomplishments that Paul could have listed on his resume.

\* He had a prestigious education (studied under Gamaliel Acts 22:3, who was the most famous Jewish teacher of his time. It was the equivalent of saying, “I have my law degree from Harvard...”)

\* He was born a citizen of Rome (Acts 22:25-29. There were only 3 ways to obtain a Roman citizenship: 1) do some outstanding service for Rome; 2) buy it at a considerable price; 3) be born into a family of Roman citizens. Paul was born a Roman citizen.)

\* He was an up-and-coming leader at a young age.

\* He was highly successful in his career. He was a great pioneer of the Christian church and established the church outside of the shores of the eastern Mediterranean.

\* He was a noted author, penning 13 books of the New Testament.

\* He had a rich relationship with God, and enjoyed noted friendships over the entire Roman Empire.

## INNERVIEW

There was not another greater than Paul in living the Christian life and yet this great trophy of grace and model saint said, “I have not yet arrived.”

by birth he was a Benjamite.  
by racial identity he was a Jew.  
by citizenship he was a Roman.  
by training he was a Pharisee.  
by trade he was a tent maker.  
by conversion he was a Christian.  
by adoption he was a child of the King.  
by assignment he was an ambassador of Jesus Christ.  
by the grace of God he was what he was

He said “I ain't perfect yet. I'm not going to act like I've already gotten there. I am not yet fully mature but I do have a sincere dissatisfaction with where I am.”

## REVIEW

Paul exhibits humility. He says this in one of his letters: “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant....” [Philippians 2:3-7]

*Praise God For:* being Truth

*Thank God For:* truth that sets us free

*Ask God's Forgiveness For:* lack of honesty

*Ask God To Help:* Alzheimer's victims

*Ask God To Supply Our Need For:* courage to live the truth



# Being Teachable

February 11

*“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.- Phil. 3:12*

The second step toward higher altitudes is “Be teachable.” We see this in the same part of the passage.

***“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect...”***

If we are humble, we are willing to learn from others. And if we are willing to learn from others, we can grow, and move to new altitudes in our lives.

You will never be successful in any area of Your life, spiritual or secular, until you have a Sincere dissatisfaction with where you are going in Grace.

## PREVIEW

You win the race not by out running someone else but by outrunning **self**. That is what makes the Christian journey so intriguing. We do not have to worry about racing against each other.

Every time I am on the racetrack, I am trying to out run Lane. I am better today than yesterday and if the Lord lets me live until to- morrow I have to be better tomorrow than today. God does not expect you to be the best, he only expects you to be your best.

## INNERVIEW

TOO MANY OF US SACRIFICE THE BET- TER ON THE ALTAR OF THE GOOD. You do not get any better until you become dissatisfied with the good you are doing. Some of us think that because we are good that is all right. You do not become satisfied until your good becomes better and the better becomes best. Until you become

filled with a sincere dissatisfaction you are going to continue growing downward.

Many of us are not successful in our homes, jobs, school and aspirations because we are satisfied with where we are. A satisfied man is not a growing man. People who are not teachable and eager to learn are people who do not grow. They remain in a rut, “stuck on being stuck”. Those who have eagerness and a willingness to learn are the ones who keep growing, developing and advancing.

## REVIEW

It is that way in every area of our lives. If we want to grow in our walk with the Lord, we need to listen to the Scripture, the words of our minister and the thoughts of people more spiritual than ourselves. We need to be teachable. If we want to grow in our relationships, we need to allow people who are stronger than us, in this area, speak into our lives.

If our financial area needs improvement, we should admit our need for the wisdom of those more astute financially than ourselves. A teachable spirit is an essential step toward higher altitudes in any area of our lives.

- Praise God For:* being Truth
- Thank God For:* Gospel Ministers
- Ask God’s Forgiveness For:* hiding the truth
- Ask God To Help:* truth be shared and received
- Ask God To Supply Our Need For:* boldness to speak truth

**DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:**  
*What do you hope for today? Journal your thoughts as a prayer to your Father.*

*Journal for Digging Deeper:*



# Taking Action

February 12

*“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.- Phil. 3:12*

You cannot wait for God and others to initiate change in your life-- **YOU** must take action.

We may have a realization that we need to change, grow, develop or obtain higher altitudes, but we must muster the courage to take action.

We must do as Paul, “press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of him”.

Some people recognize the need to grow spiritually, but others take action and see spiritual growth in their lives. Some people recognize the need to change bad habits in their lives, but others take action and see spiritual growth in their lives.

Some men recognize their need to be better husbands and fathers, and now millions of men across the country are taking action to grow and become more of the men of God that they want to be.

## PREVIEW

Mark McCormack, in his book *The 100% Solution*, said: “What I have come to understand is that there are **two kinds of mistakes**: mistakes that come from trying too hard and mistakes that come from not trying hard enough. **Mistakes that come from trying too hard are mistakes you recover from.** You even benefit from them because they teach you to wield your muscle with greater discretion. They are windows of discovery.”

Do not wait for a better time. Start now, and use what God has given you. There are only ten (10) numerical digits, but notice what Einstein did with them. There are only three (3) primary colors, but observe Michealangelo’s creative mastery of them. There are only seven (7) notes, yet Beethoven, Bach and Mozart created musical wonders with them.

## REVIEW

When working with God, our lives change and we rise to new altitudes.

Look at Paul’s words in Philippians 2:12-- *“...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.”*

- Praise God For:* helping me be honest
- Thank God For:* young people who want to what is right
- Ask God’s Forgiveness For:* mishandling the truth
- Ask God To Help:* young people to learn honesty
- Ask God To Supply Our Need For:* commitment to truth

## INNERVIEW

**DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:**  
*Describe how God’s hope is touching each area of your life: spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical.*



# Putting The Past In Perspective

February 13

*“Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on...” –Phil. 3:12,13*

The fourth step toward reaching higher altitudes in our lives is “Putting the past in perspective.” Have you noticed that the past has a persistent way of tripping you up?

## WHAT ABOUT OUR PAST CAN LIMIT OUR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE PRESENT?

### PREVIEW

Paul had much in his past that could have tripped him up. First, he had sinned, in big ways! In Acts 8:1, we learn that Paul gave approval to the killing of a leading Christian named Stephen. In fact, Paul oversaw a major effort on the part of the Jewish religious leaders to imprison and kill Christians. Murder is no small sin. And murdering God’s people is a blot that easily could have haunted him for a lifetime.

### INNERVIEW

Second, Paul had significant failures in his lifetime. Besides the failure of being on the wrong side of the fence earlier in his life, which resulted in the imprisonment and killing of Christians, Paul experienced failure in a number of ways. He rejected John Mark as a companion, but later admitted his wrong and brought John Mark back onto his leadership team. Paul experienced little success in the city of Athens. Later in his life, many of the people he had won to Christ, in what is now modern Turkey, had distanced themselves from Paul and his leadership. Paul had some real disappointments that could have tripped him up.

### REVIEW

Finally, the greatest thing that could have hindered Paul from further growth and development in his life was his tremendous successes. He had accomplished and experienced so much, it would have been easy to become comfortable, satisfied and virtually “retire” from growth, development and progress in his life.

*Praise God For:* His example of boldness through Christ

*Thank God For:* bold Christians

*Ask God’s Forgiveness For:* my embarrassment of Him

*Ask God To Help:* Christians in the minority

*Ask God To Supply Our Need For:* creative ways to witness for Him

### DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

*Write a prayer asking the God of all hope to begin a new flow from His reservoir to your heart.*

*Journal for Digging Deeper:*

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## Putting The Past In Perspective (2)

February 14

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*“Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on...” –Phil. 3:12,13*

### 1. Leave your sin at the cross

In Romans 8:1-2 Paul wrote: “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.”

Look what Hebrews says [by the way, we don't know who wrote Hebrews. Some believe it was Paul, others, Apollos, and others think it was someone else].

Hebrews 10:14-- “...by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.”

Hebrews 9:14-- “How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!”

Do you have nagging sin from the past? Leave it at the cross! He has made you perfect already through his blood, so that you can get on with your life, and get on with serving God!

### 2. Learn from your failures

Failures are the opportunity to begin more intelligently.

When Edison was seeking to invest electric light, he had over 9,000 failed attempts when a reporter interviewed him about his many failures. The reporter asked if he were discouraged by his many failures, and Edison responded “No, now I know 9,000 ways not to make a light bulb.” After over 10,000 failures, Edison finally succeeded.

Your mistakes do not have to be purposeless and painful. They can be purposeful and less painful, if you learn and grow from them.

### 3. Let your successes lift you

Don't let your success hold you back from trying for more. Let your successes lift you.

Let them encourage you to rise even higher.

When a teenage boy named David, faced a veteran 9-foot warrior named Goliath on the battlefield, David drew encouragement from the successes God had brought him in the past. David said: “[I] have been keeping [my] father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. [I] have killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them... The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.” [I Samuel 17:34-37]

David knew from past experience that God would help him. And he remembered that and drew encouragement from that.

So do you. If you are facing a challenge in your finances right now, draw on past successes and miracles that the Lord has brought to encourage you that he will help you through this challenge.

If you are at a plateau at work, but have experienced success in the past, draw encouragement from that, and trust God to help renew your vision and vigor for your career now.

Allow the Lord to encourage you with past victories, and draw strength for your present needs.

*Praise God For:* His firmness

*Thank God For:* saying no when I need it



## Setting Your Sight On God's Goals

February 15

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*"Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on..." -Phil. 3:12,13*

It has been said that **the definition of failure** is to climb the ladder of success all your life, only to come to the end of your life, and discover that the ladder was leaning against the wrong building.

A sure sign for a lack of peace in our lives is to try to do what we want to do, all the time having that nagging inside that says there is more, there is a God, and we have higher responsibilities with our lives.

### PREVIEW

The key to peace of mind is to rest in God's purposes, plans, and goals for our lives. Our hearts and be at ease if we know that what we are doing is pleasing God.

There was an old country song in the 70's that said: "You can't please everyone, so you gotta please yourself." The song is half right. You can't please everyone. But the answer is, so you gotta please God.

We must remember this. We were made by a Manufacturer. And the Manufacturer understands, knows, and loves us. We can't improve on his plans and purposes for our lives.

### INNERVIEW

I am amazed at the revelation of God in nature. His fingerprints are everywhere! If evolution were true, we would be able, with our intelligence, to significantly improve on what has evolved to this point. But we don't.

Mother's milk is better than formula.

We dammed rivers to create electricity, and now we find it is having an adverse effect on the earth's gravitational pull.

Mt. St. Helens erupts, and after 10 years, the portion of land and river that top zoologists and botanists work on to bring back life to the area does not even equal what nature accomplished on its own, when left to itself.

### REVIEW

The fact is that God understands us, our environment, our personal needs, better than we understand ourselves. We will do very well if we submit to his plans and purposes, and set our sights on goals for our lives that are the types of goals He desires.

And know that He cares about you, and about every area of your life. Your family, friendships, finances, health, and walk with God are all important to Him.

*Praise God For:* His forgiveness

*Thank God For:* loving confrontation

*Ask God's Forgiveness For:* taking others for granted

*Ask God To Help:* teens and parents to better communicate

*Ask God To Supply Our Need For:* open communication

*Ask God To Supply Our Need For:* minds filled with His thoughts

**DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:**

*Write down all the thoughts you entertain that are the opposite of Philippians 4:8. Ask God to replace these thoughts with the truth of this verse.*







## Daily Sunshine In The Son

# Personal Growth and Progress

February 17

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*"Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on..." -Phil. 3:12,13*

I fear that one of the tragedies of the modern church and counseling psychology is that we don't teach people to take the time to enjoy small victories. We are so caught up in the ultimate victory that we don't take notice of the daily victories God is executing in our lives.

## PREVIEW

Even God took time to evaluate his day and ultimately his week. Do you remember that as God moved in creation, he created in stages? He didn't create the world in one day. At the end of each day, the last thing he did was look back over what he had done that day and say "It was good".

On the first day he had not finished everything he had purposed to do for creation. He looked back over the day and said "For a day that's pretty good work." He praised himself and said, "It is good." We need to tell struggling people, saints with sinner problems "You've got to stop every now and then and celebrate how far you've come. You might not have done everything you set out to do. You might still have some more creative acts to do, but you need to look back from whence you've come and say, "Lord, you helped me make it this far, and that is good. I know this has to be done. I know the other is till lacking. I know I need to work on that over there. But Lord, I'm grateful for the progress of the day. I may not be what I want to be. I may not be what you want me to be. I may not be what others expect me to be. I may not even be what I appear to be. But I'm grateful that I'm not what I use to be. By grace and guidance, strength and Spirit I'm not what I used to be."

## INNERVIEW

You can't wait until you arrive to celebrate. Every time you see an accomplishment, say thank you. Every time you experience victory, you ought to say thank you. When you begin saying that was good, not only do you enjoy the savor of felling victory as you travel, but you also re-fire yourself. You help energize yourself so you can do what you have to do on the second day. Some of us are so busy trying to get where we are going that we don't stop to hank the Lord on the way.

## REVIEW

If you are going to get the release of power for day two, day three, or day four, you have to look back over the activities of this day and say "Maybe I haven't conquered all the problems of the world today, but there is some light where there use to be darkness. I'm walking in that light as he is in the light, and I have fellowship one with other; and the blood of Jesus Christ is Son cleanseth us from all sin. I thank you that I'm making progress."

*Praise God For:* His firmness

*Thank God For:* saying no when I need it

*Ask God's Forgiveness For:* my resistance to His Will

*Ask God To Help:* teens and parents to better communicate

*Ask God To Supply Our Need For:* open communication



# Personal Growth And Progress (2)

February 18

*"Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on..." -Phil. 3:12,13*

Sometimes we're such perfectionists. We miss the fact that we're progressing, because all we can see is that the goal of becoming like Christ seems to say so distant. "But I'm so far away," you lament. "Sometimes it seems I'm making no progress at all."

No one will ever be perfectly like Christ, this side of glory. But, as someone has suggested, the key question at any point in time is this: Which way are you facing -- toward Him or away from Him? Or, more specifically, which way are you moving -- toward Him or away from Him?

If you asked God for ways to measure your progress you would hear words like "becoming," "increasing," and "developing."

**Becoming** is a process word. Are you becoming a person of faith?

**Increasing** is a dynamic word. Do you have an increasing sense of hope, linked to Him and His promises?

**Developing** is a maturation word. Have you been developing a loving concern for the needs of others -- so many of them -- who are hurting and struggling too?

**Give yourself time.** Some things cannot be rushed. No instant masterpieces, here. God's workmanship (Ephesians 2:8 - the Greek word is poiema, from which we get the word poem) is you! You and I are God's creation. We might even say we are His "poetry," His way of singing a song of hope to a broken world.

**Give yourself space.** Don't let anyone force you into his mold. Your relationship with God is the main issue. What does He think of you? What does He ask of you? People may offer their own interpretations and perspectives on these questions. But the final issues are between you and Him. And He is more kind, loving, gracious, gentle, forgiving, and creative than any of us can imagine.

**Give yourself truth.** Don't play anybody's game, even your own. No pretending allowed. No hypocrisy required. You can be yourself. If you force it, it will just take longer. If you fake it now, you may never be able to tell when it's real.

*Praise God For: His Spirit*

*Thank God For: good fathers*

*Ask God's Forgiveness For: neglecting time with Him*

*Ask God To Help: children who miss their fathers*

*Ask God To Supply Our Need For: strength for each day*

**DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:** Describe the last time God came through for you, whether to help, hold, heal, hug or high five.

*Journal for Digging Deeper:*

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Daily Sunshine In The Son

Personal Growth Worksheet (2)

February 19

"Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on..." -Phil. 3:12,13

Faith is God-directed. You may not see yourself as a pillar of faith. But are you still walking -- even if sometimes you're just stumbling along? That's faith. We walk by faith and not by sight. If we walked by sight, we would have jumped off a bridge a long time ago. And haven't you discovered, because of -- not in spite of -- this journey, that trusting is the only way to any real peace of mind? We only thought our lives were in our own control. Experience has shown us that is a lie. The fact is, we never had the control in the first place.

What about hope? Hope is future directed. It is a confident expectation that God will keep His Word, that He is going somewhere, in the universe and in your life, and that He will make it turn out right in the end.

And love? Love is giving, and it is other-directed. Christ loved me enough to consider my helpless needs more important than grasping His equality with God, so He laid his rights aside, took the form of a bond-servant, becoming obedient even to the point of His atoning death on the cross. (See Philippians 2:5-11.)

Personal Report Card (remember, no one is getting A's in everything!)

The most important of the two questions is "Am I growing?" The key is not arriving, but continuing to make progress, to go to new altitudes.

Relationship with God. How am I doing? Am I growing?

Relationship with spouse. How am I doing? Am I growing?

Relationship with kids. How am I doing?

Am I growing?

Relationship with friends. How am I doing? Am I growing?

Health. How am I doing? Am I growing?

Finances. How am I doing? Am I growing?

Work. How am I doing? Am I growing?

Which area do I feel most encouraged to grow in right now?

Praise God For: His strengthening presence

Thank God For: earthly pleasures

Ask God's Forgiveness For: hanging on when I should let go

Ask God To Help: prune our dead branches

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: grace to let go

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

List some ways you could be a friend to others and tell them your experiences with God. If you are hesitant, ask Him to empower you by His Spirit.

Journal for Digging Deeper:

Journal lines for writing.



## Inside Renovations

February 20

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*"Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on..." -Phil. 3:12,13*

One of the many "fast food" establishments recently did a complete overhaul of their facilities. Leveled the old place. Started over from scratch. The new place opened advertising that the service would be much more efficient as a result of the upgraded facilities and equipment. I should have known that it was too much to ask, but I thought I would give the drive thru a try. Not only was the service no better than before, it may have been worse. Sarcastically I thought to myself as I drove away with my cup of coffee dripping on to my hand, "Doesn't the new paint look nice!" Once again proving the old point, it's what's inside that counts.

### PREVIEW

I have the same feeling of disappointment every fall when the new line up of television shows come out. For weeks we hear about the new drama that promises to be the "Television event of the century." When it finally airs it is just more of the same old stuff. Same story. Same characters. Same message. From a distance it looks new and exciting. Upon closer examination there is not much substance.

The same sort of let down has occurred a time or two when buying a new product. From automobile, to computer, to software, to shoes the result is the same. Advertised at the "best ever." Or, promoted as "the latest and most advanced" I walk away wondering, what was so special about that?

### INNERVIEW

Jesus talked quite a bit about not being fooled by outward appearances. He talked about how it's what comes out of a person, from the inside that counts, not what goes in. He talked about the need to clean the inside of the cup and not just the outside. He spoke of the pure heart that produces pure fruit.

Sometimes I feel like that new fast food place. I do a complete make over. Clean everything. Get a complete upgrade. Start from scratch. Put new paint all over everything. Start out with a lot of commotion. Before long, I'm back to the old ways. Sometimes I'm worse than before. I wonder if people ever walk away from me and sarcastically say, "Doesn't he look nice!"

### REVIEW

The older I get the more I am realizing that there is only so much physical restoration that can take place in this body. Outwardly, not much is going to change from here on out (at least not for the better). But, there is much that can be done for the inside. My spirit can be renewed. My attitude can be improved. My outlook can be more positive. My disposition can be more pleasant. My words can be more encouraging. My thoughts can be more pure and holy. My heart can be more sensitive. With that kind of reconditioning, maybe people will leave me feeling refreshed, and encouraged, and cared for, and uplifted, and joyful.

When you do your next renovation time use less paint and more purity. Spend less time primping and more time praying. Focus on the



# A Sincere Dissatisfaction

February 21

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*"Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on..." -Phil. 3:12,13*

It is impossible to give a man what he is totally convinced that he already has. He must first possess a sincere dissatisfaction with where he is. You will not go someplace else until you get dissatisfied with where you are. You will not go to the doctor until you become dissatisfied with bad health. You will not eat until you are dissatisfied with hunger. You will not drink liquids until you are dissatisfied with thirst. You will not diet until you are dissatisfied with extra pounds. You will not get an education until you are dissatisfied with your present knowledge.

## PREVIEW

You do not make changes until you are dissatisfied with where you are. You will never be successful in any area of your life, spiritual or secular, until you have a sincere dissatisfaction with your present state of grace.

Too many of us sacrifice the better on the altar of the good. For you will not get any better until you become dissatisfied with the good. Some of us think that because we are good that is enough. Your good should become better and your better should become your best. Unless you become filled with a sincere desire to grow upward, you will grow downward.

Too many of us are not as successful as we could be in our homes, jobs, school, and aspirations, because we are satisfied with where we are. A satisfied person is not a growing person.

## INNERVIEW

At any every age and stage of life ambition counts for something. Fifty years ago there was no more devastating allegation than that someone was "lazy." I remember my Grandmother scoffing that a neighbor "will never amount to nothing, he doesn't expect to!" Perhaps, in this new century, the most important of all tools will be the expectation that we can succeed, that we can contribute, that we can make a difference. Past generations expected life to be difficult, but they also expected to endure and overcome, and that expectation was tangible, it was as real as spring after the winter, and it kept them going. Aspiration is a powerful tool!

## REVIEW

The sincere dissatisfaction of being content where you are, the aspiration to move to the next level of growth and development forces us to make some changes in the now. The scriptures provide clear insight as to how to know if you need to make change. *"Add to your faith virtue"* (IIPet. 1:5). The first thing you need to do is to add to your faith. You must start with your faith. Have you obeyed the faith? Are you in the faith? Are you walking by faith? Are you growing in faith?

*Praise God For:* His Holy Spirit

*Thank God For:* carrying my burdens

*Ask God's Forgiveness For:* carrying my burdens alone



# A Check List For Spiritual Growth

February 22

*"Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on..." -Phil. 3:12,13*

If you would grow in faith, you must add to your faith, virtue. You must seek to be a good person. Virtue is the conformity to a standard of right, possessing moral excellence, and integrity. Go through this spiritual growth checklist to measure your growth.

*temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; (7) And to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity.(8) For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (9) But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins" IIPet. 1:5-9.*

**1. Do I live what I teach?** Deciding what to be is more important than deciding what to do. "Hold on to instruction, do not let it go, guard it well, for it is your life" Prov. 4:13

*Praise God For: His support  
Thank God For: The sensitivity of others  
Ask God's Forgiveness For: my disappointment in others  
Ask God To Help: the physically and emotionally needy  
Ask God To Supply Our Need For: Immanuel*

**2. Do I do what I say?** A person of integrity will do what they promise they will do. They will keep their word. "Simply let your "Yes" be "Yes" and your "No be No" Matthew 5:37

**3. Am I honest with others.** When a person loses his credibility, he forfeits a trust that may never be regained. *"I will always speak the truth and refuse to tell a lie".* Prov. 8:7

**DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:**  
*List the names of people you personally know who need God's strength today. Ask Him to strengthen them and let them know in some small way today that He is with them.*

**4. Do I put what is best for others ahead of what is best for me?** A person of integrity will remember he is here to serve others rather than here to be served. *"Be humble and consider others more important than yourselves"* Phil. 2:3

*Journal for Digging Deeper:*  
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**5. Am I striving to become more like Christ in all of the seven Christian virtues?** *"And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue knowledge; (6) And to knowledge*

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# Steps Toward Higher Altitudes

February 23

*“Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on...” –Phil. 3:12,13*

1. *Are you humble about this area of your life?*  
\_\_\_\_\_ If you haven't been, take this to the Lord right now. Ask him for an attitude of humility. Meditate on the Scriptures that says "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble [James 4:6]." Trust that God will give you the attitude of humility that you desire.

2. *Are you teachable in this area of your life?*  
\_\_\_\_\_ If you haven't been, commit this to the Lord as well. Determine that you will *listen* to the counsel of others in this area. Seek out the counsel of someone whom you maybe have not listened to before in this area, but whom you know has something good to say about it. Listen to them, and glean insight.

3. *Take action.* What one action can you take *today* that will move you in the direction of your desired growth goal. Make this action doable, but stretching. Do it today. Learn to do something *now* to move you forward. After that is done, plan and take another step forward within the next couple of days. Keep taking one step at a time in the direction of your desired growth goal.

4. *Recognize the power of your past to sabotage your efforts.* Is a past sin, failure, or success hindering you from moving forward? If so, identify it, and deal with it appropriately. If it is sin, make sure you have genuinely confessed it and repented of it before the Lord. If it is failure, ask God for a positive lesson you can learn from it, and write that here:  
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\_\_\_\_\_. Draw encouragement from the lesson. If it is a success, decide you will use that success to encourage you toward further progress.

5. *Test your goal to make sure you are setting your sights on God's goals for you.* Is this the type of goal God wants you to accomplish? Does it reflect balance? Is it something you can earnestly pray about, and ask God to accomplish it for his glory? If you need to retool your focus, do it now.

Continue with step 3--taking action, until you have achieved the goal, or state of growth that you desire.

*Praise God For:* reconciliation

*Thank God For:* peacemakers

*Ask God's Forgiveness For:* strained relationships

*Ask God To Help:* bring peace to the world

*Ask God To Supply Our Need For:* tenderness

### **DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:**

What secret fears do you harbor? Write them down, lift them to God and claim His promise that you *will* trust in Him, no matter what problems you face.

*Journal for Digging Deeper:*

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# Daily Sunshine In The Son

Lord, today I thank You for:

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

Today, Lord, I need

## Auditioning Your Ambitions - *The Urge*

February 24

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“Delight yourself also in the Lord/And He shall give you the desires of your heart.” - Psalm 37:4

Birds were designed to fly. The air under the wings of a bird is the natural habitat of the flying fowl. Water is the natural habitat of the fish. Faith is the native air to be breathed in an out by believers. The divine quality of dreaming what you want to be, where you want to go, what you'd love to do, projects you hope to achieve, goals you'd like to reach-all of which makes you uniquely gifted for growth in the walk of faith. The walk of faith is really a symphony in four movements, the *urge*, the *purge*, the *surge* and then the *splurge*.

### PREVIEW

The first movement of faith is the *urge*-deep with yourself thee is a voice that says, “There is something more. Success never happens until you make it happen. And You make good things happen when you make decisions that cause a movement to begin. Remember, Life by its very nature rejects protectionism.

Do you refuse to make decisions because problems and perils might result? Do you want to play it safe? That's one of life's rare impossibilities! When you play it safe, you can be sure you will face the dangers that inevitably come: boredom, lack of growth, stagnation, emotional death! The zest that comes from decisions will be gone. What is left is a shriveling and shrinking spirit with false promises of security.

### INNERVIEW

Strong faith is often the expression of deep desire. Likewise doubt is the lack of desire. A host of conscious or subconscious forces can keep you from wanting to believe. Fears of what God might do to your life or in your life can keep you from wanting to believe.

### REVIEW

Success is no accident. Success is a commitment-not a coincidence! Each new year is an appointment to become an authentic optimist. Each new day is justification for being enthusiastic about life again. Each dawning is God's invitation to start over and build a new life, beginning with the present moment. Each week is an opportunity to make new and noble resolution! Every Monday morning you have a standing appointment to meet new opportunities! So, the first movement of faith is the movement of *urge*. Decide today where you want to be five, ten, twenty years from today.

*Praise God For:* being our Savior

*Thank God For:* salvation

*Ask God's Forgiveness For:* choosing sin

*Ask God To Help:* those who don't know Him

*Ask God To Supply Our Need For:* deliverance from sin

### DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

*What difficulties have you and God walked through together? Write them down and record your praises for the lessons He taught you during those hard times.*



## Auditioning Your Ambitions - *The Purge*

February 25

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"Delight yourself also in the Lord/And He shall give you the desires of your heart." - Psalm 37:4

The second movement of faith is known as the purge. Negative thoughts rush in to destroy your desire and torpedo your dream with negative forces. This movement is filled with discordant notes and contradictions. All the destructive thoughts must be purged. Abort all negative thoughts before they can take an embryonic fix in your mind.

Living the faith stimulates positive emotions. In the same way, doubt constantly feeds negative emotions. Doubt is an anesthetic. Skepticism drains the spirit. Unbelief makes us drowsy. Negative thinking turns us into dreary people, fearful of our fears and worried about our worry. What a despairing cycle.!

My faith stimulates positive thinking, and positive thing stimulates me to see all of the possibilities.

Learn 3 simple and natural ways to STOP negative thoughts and reduce stress, worry, tension and stomach acid buildup. You'll stop the negative thought AND step into a more powerful and pleasant place as a result.

**1. Listen to all of your thoughts for a day.**

Don't try to change anything, just observe when a negative thought comes into your mind.

**2. Select one really persistent thought to work on, eg., worry about paying bills.**

Ignore the other thoughts for awhile.

**3. Each time that thought comes into your mind, say to yourself, "STOP!"**

You may have to do this 5, 10 or 20 times before the thought goes away.

**4. Notice what's happening when you 'push your STOP button.'**

Does the thought stop or persist? Does it diminish or seem smaller?

**5. If thinking STOP doesn't work at first, try saying STOP out loud.**

That's right, shout it out. Notice what's happening when you say STOP out loud.

**6. If saying STOP out loud doesn't work at first, use hand signals for STOP.**

You know what that looks like. You command it to STOP like a traffic cop does, as if to say: "I said STOP, you numbskull!!!" And mean it just like a stern cop.

**7. Notice what you are thinking now, too.**

Are you laughing? Are you embarrassed at talking to yourself out loud and playing traffic cop? Yes? No? Whatever your reaction, try to concentrate on what you're thinking as you do these exercises.

**8. While you are doing these exercises, notice which one works best.**

Does one method work better for different types of thoughts? Does the traffic cop work best for worrisome thoughts? Does thinking STOP work best for what you call petty thoughts?

# Daily Sunshine In The Son

**9. Now, use all three methods and find the one that works best for you in any and all situations.**

Use these methods for 5 thought-interruptions and you will own a new skill.

**10. Your mind can pay attention to one thing at a time only.**

If you want to stop any disturbing thought, especially one where you feel helpless, switch to another thought, sing a song aloud or make up anything to otherwise occupy your mind. Laugh at the negative thought and enjoy your win.

*Praise God For: His Forgiveness*

*Thank God For: the Gospel*

*Ask God's Forgiveness For: not consistently sharing the Gospel with others*

*Ask God To Help: all receive Jesus*

*Ask God To Supply Our Need For: renewed strength*

**DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:**

*Write a love note to God and tell Him what He means to you today.*

*Journal for Digging Deeper:*

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*Lord, today I thank You for:*

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*Thank You for these answers to prayer:*

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*I pray for the needs of others, especially*

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*Today, Lord, I need*

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# Auditioning Your Ambitions - *The Surge*

February 26

“Delight yourself also in the Lord/And He shall give you the desires of your heart.” - Psalm 37:4

At the core of faith, there is that innermost, indivisible cell called commitment. Faith always commands some decisive action. More often than not, it represents an irreversible decision.

Faith is peeling the orange. It's cracking the egg. It's opening the can of Soda! Faith is delivering the ice. Now you either consume it, or throw it away.

Faith is serving the soufflé hot from the oven! You must eat it, or watch it deflate. What's left cannot be saved or stored. "What is Faith? It is the confident assurance that something we want is going to happen. It is the certainty that what we hope for is waiting for us, even though we cannot see it up ahead."

"Faith is the daring of the soul to go farther than it can see" where reason must stop, faith takes a daring leap into the unknown.

Faith is not a leap in the dark. Faith is a leap into the light. Faith is taking God at his word. Information has been given, accepted as true and is being acted upon.

FAITH SEES THE COMING....  
Spring in spite of the current winter  
Showers, in spite of the current  
drought  
Prospects, in spite of the current  
circumstances  
Solution, in spite of the current  
problems  
Dividends, in spite of the current

difficulties  
Fruit, in spite of the current  
barrenness

“Lord, give us the faith to make the move at the right time in the right way. Protect us from the false security that indecision foolishly promises. Today we shall move from faith and not be mesmerized by fear.

*Praise God For:* Christ our Redeemer  
*Thank God For:* wise men  
*Ask God's Forgiveness For:* half-hearted commitment  
*Ask God To Help:* all who come to Him  
*Ask God To Supply Our Need For:* recommitment to Him

**DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:**  
*Write down one problem that is causing you to experience a lack of joy. Ask God to give you back your joy and to grant you a willing spirit to sustain you in the days ahead.*

*Journal for Digging Deeper:*

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## Auditioning Your Ambitions - *The Splurge*

February 27

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"Delight yourself also in the Lord/And He shall give you the desires of your heart." - Psalm 37:4

The fourth and final movement is the splurge-you make the leap. You go all out for it. You put everything on the line. You hold back nothing.

The Bible informs us that...

1. "Without faith it is impossible to please him" (Heb. 11:6).
2. We are enjoined to "examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith..." (2Cor. 13:5).
3. The Bible informs us that "Therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith"(Rom.1:17).
4. We are exhorted to "stand fast in the faith" (1Cor. 16:13) and the believer is to "walk by faith" (2Cor. 5:7).
5. Paul affirmed that "the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God" (Gal. 2:20).
6. Jesus advised his disciples, "have faith in God" (Mk. 11:22).

If you believe it, you can conceive it. If you conceive it you can perceive it. If perceive you can achieve it. If you can achieve you will received it!  
Believe it!

FAITH'S RECORD.

Faith escorts us to a den of lions

and show us an unarmed man sitting in their midst, one who would be a suitable meal to quiet the nocturnal rumbling of their hungry stomachs. Yet, we see them on their best behavior as though they were advance students of the school of etiquette.

Faith takes us on an exciting excursion to the post card picturesque beauty of the Jordan Valley. Bids us to pause a moment to take in its scenic beauty of Palms and Sycamore. Then leads us to Jericho where there are walls pronounced by architect and contractor to be impregnable. We watch in awe as the walls come tumbling down at the sound of blowing horns and marching feet.

Faith then leads us to a battlefield and shows us giants slain by midgets. It takes us to valleys to watch dry bones become standing armies. It takes us to beautiful gates as we watch the lame spring to their feet praising God.

It was through faith that the Heroes of faith subdued kingdoms wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths



# Visiting An Empty House

February 28

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*“Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.” – Galatians 6:18*

The house was empty. Except for a couple of crates for a makeshift desk, a lawn chair, a few, the vacuum cleaner, and a change of clothes. The place was empty. Not just empty as in no people around but, empty as in no people, no furniture, no pictures on the wall, no food in the refrigerator, not even a refrigerator. I mean empty. The carpets had been vacuumed. The floors have been mopped. The trash has been removed. The house was empty.

## PREVIEW

Not long ago the house was filled with people, a family. Now it is empty. Not long ago there was talking, singing, and laughter. Now it is silent. Not long ago there were children playing in back yard. Now the children are passing by on their bikes and looking at this house as the place where a friend once lived. There are no children here now. There is no television, no radio. The house is empty.

It won't be long before a new family will move in and make that house their home. There will be new furniture, new decorations, new cars in the driveway, and new faces in the neighborhood. This empty house will be full again.

I wondered, as I sat there in that empty house, about the future. Will the people who live here love each other? Will the children, if they even have children, enjoy the neighborhood? Will they invite their friends into this house? Will God be as much a part of the family of the next residents as He was the vacating residents. Will they live here a long time, or will this just

be a temporary resting place? All these questions are beyond my power to answer yet I wonder about them as I sit here in this empty house.

## INNERVIEW

An empty house is like our soul. From time to time we clean everything out. We do it once when we initially commit our life to God, but we do it on other occasions when we make important decisions about our level of commitment, or at certain milestones, or when something tragic shakes us causes us to take stock into where we are, who we are and where we are heading. And, like this house where the family has moved away what is left is has been swept clean ready for a new start.

Satan loves it when we clean the house in our soul because he has the opportunity to move in and take up residence while there is nothing to get in his way. If we are not careful to replace what we remove with things of God, Satan will fill our hearts with envy, rage, hatred, lust, and all kinds of evil. But, if we will move in the things of God like forgiveness, hope, joy, peace, grace, joy, and of course, love, there is no room for Satan's furniture and he will move on.

## REVIEW

Sitting in an empty house has reminded me of how grateful I am that this house has been only our temporary residence, but the Lord has taken up permanent residence in our heart. He helps me clean house every day. He fills my heart every morning. He turns emptiness into fullness. Because of the relationship that has

been established through the blood of Jesus Christ every day I have the opportunity to sit in an empty house. I have the opportunity to make a new start. At the close of each day I am able to sweep out the trash, bag up the garbage, set it by the curb, and let someone haul it away. That trash is the sin in my life. That someone is Jesus Christ. Then, once emptied, I do have a choice as to who will come in and take up residence in my soul.

Enjoy a new start.

*Praise God For:* darkness

*Thank God For:* creativity

*Ask God's Forgiveness For:* lack of rest

*Ask God To Help:* all who need a good night's sleep

*Ask God To Supply Our Need For:* down time

**DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:**

*Describe a time in your life when the faithfulness of God lifted you out of a spiritual desert.*

*Journal for Digging Deeper:*

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*Lord, today I thank You for:*

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*Thank You for these answers to prayer:*

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*I pray for the needs of others, especially*

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*Today, Lord, I need*

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# A New Person In The Same Old Situation

February 29

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*"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" - 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)*

"I feel like a new person!" Those may be the words often spoken after one's conversion experience. They may be the words spoken after making a major decision. They could be the words expressed after the confession of a sin. They may be heard upon completion of a major medical procedure. Parents may say it (or feel it at least) after they receive a phone call with news that their child is safe and well.

For others it is a statement that was spoken once long ago in a far away land in a frame of mind almost forgotten. Life has been rough since then. The newness of life has long since worn off and faded away. There is nothing about their life that feels new, or fresh, or at times even like life. They are tired. They are sad. They are empty. They are looking at the sunrise not as the "first day of the rest of your life," but as one more day in a miserable existence.

## PREVIEW

As you read the two previous paragraphs you probably had images of people you know who fit both descriptions. What is the difference? What causes one person to see the sunrise as bright and clear and beautiful and "new every morning," while another sees only the "chasing after the wind" that will follow the sunrise? Certainly the events of the previous day may have something to do with how we feel when the sun comes up. Our attitude and disposition obviously has a lot to do with it. How we feel physically also has an impact on our view on life.

Sometimes a change in scenery, or a change of habit, or a change in life will give us a new outlook on life. Sometimes we need it. Sometimes a major change (sorry to use that word so many times in one paragraph) may be the only thing that will bring about the wanted and needed results. Because we like to do things for ourselves, it is possible to depend on these physical changes too much and too often, when there is something beyond us that has the potential to help us see ourselves differently every day.

## INNERVIEW

Take another look at what Paul tells us, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Corinthians 5:17, NIV)

Another section of Paul's writing reminds us of who we can and should see ourselves, "So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self,

which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness." (Ephesians 4:17-24, NIV)

Lord, today I thank You for:

## REVIEW

When was the last time you said, "I feel like a new person!" and meant it? Are you wishing you could say it today? Maybe it will not require a total makeover of your physical appearance, or that your whole world be turned upside down. It could be that seeing ourselves as God sees us is the answer. Give it a try. You may be a new person waiting to happen.

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

Enjoy being a new person today.

*Praise God For:* His friendship

*Thank God For:* childhood friends

*Ask God's Forgiveness For:* avoiding responsibility

*Ask God To Help:* the discouraged

*Ask God To Supply Our Need For:* friends

I pray for the needs of others, especially

### DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

What situations are you allowing to block God's joy in your life? Ask God to take away the joy blockers from your life and give you courage to conquer them. Find at least one opportunity today to bring joy to a joyless situation.

Journal for Digging Deeper:

Today, Lord, I need