

Devotionals for Christians in the Workplace



SPECIAL EDITION

**INCLUDES
AUDIOBOOK
LINKS**

Volume I

Arise SHINE

Be Encouraged

Living in Days of
Light and Glory

GARY L. SELMAN

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*“Arise, shine; for your light has come, And the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.
For behold, darkness will cover the earth And deep darkness the peoples;
But the LORD will rise upon you And His glory will appear upon you.
Nations will come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising.”*

(Isaiah 60:1-3, NASB)



Praise for the Devotionals

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/6%20Praise.mp3>

Wow. I can't tell you how much I needed this message. I am grateful that God changed your direction. In many ways, through you, he has changed my thoughts on so many things. Thank you, Lord for Gary, and give him strength to lead and protect his flock as a spiritual shepherd.
Chad, Business Owner, USA

This message is very powerful. There are many of us out here who get caught up in fear and guilt and fail to recognize who we are in Christ. After lying in bed all night tossing and turning concerned over events in my life, this message brought tears to my eyes. Thank you, Gary, for allowing the Lord to speak through you. These devotionals will be life-changing for many.
Chuck, Vice President, Operations, USA

I shared your message recently in a village church in Togo West Africa. It is amazing to know that your messages are touching many souls across Africa.
Hope, Ministry Director, Ghana

God is blessing the entire world through your devotionals. We are using them at our churches and orphanages.
Geoffrey, Pastor, Uganda

I woke up early this morning in a lot of turmoil and came in to work and then your devotional shows up. It served to "restore" me and renew my faith that there is a way forward.
John, President & CEO, USA

We have benefited immensely from your devotionals which are educational and life fulfilling. We continue to cherish them for our reading and enlightenment.
Peter, Sr. Pastor, Sierra Leone

You are always blessing me through your lessons. I am changed and a new creature, full of God's word.
Patrick, Ministry Director, Kenya

I have been helped by your devotionals. I would not hesitate to recommend to anyone who is seeking to grow spiritually.
David, Sr. Pastor, Uganda

God Bless You. You have been a true blessing.

Rolando, Controller, USA

Thanks, so much for the teachings and the rebuke that we have received from you. We are sure the Lord allowed you into our lives with a purpose and that purpose was fulfilled.

Benard, Ministry President, Kenya

Very encouraging. It is a blessing to see the vision God gave you flourish.

Mark, Director Church Operations, USA

We learn many things from your powerful messages and get spiritual revival from your devotionals. We are always praying for you. Samiran, Non-Profit Director, India Thank you for your teaching and your devotion.

Bassia, Sr. Pastor, Cameroon

Last week, I read, "We Can Certainly Do It" on the plane on the way back from Beijing. With the pressure to grow the business and Satan's lies about my inability to accomplish it, I was moved to tears as I read the message. I had an intimate time with God at 30,000 feet... Over the past several days, I have watched as God moved to solve problems and change hearts of those who were stubborn in the past. Yes, we can certainly do it! Thanks Gary.

TJ, Operations Director, China

I want to thank you for all the hard work you do. There are many people who truly appreciate your messages. It makes a significant difference!

Bryan, Human Resources Director, USA

Thanks, for another excellent devotional. We always appreciate how you "share yourselves," using personal illustrations of the Lord's gracious forgiveness and leading in your lives.

Steve, Sr. Pastor & Christian Counselor, USA

Thanks for your wonderful and inspiring message. It encouraged me a lot today.

Jagan, Sr. Pastor, India

Your messages are wonderful. Since I began reading them, I have grown in my faith and my ministry has expanded. Leaders of my churches are finding them useful also.

Davis, Sr. Pastor, Kenya

Thank you so much for the wisdom in the devotionals. Indeed, God has used you to touch our hearts.

Collins, Sr. Pastor, Kenya

Thank you so much for the wisdom in the devotionals. Indeed, God has used you to touch our hearts.

Collins, Sr. Pastor, Kenya

I just wanted to thank you very much for sharing your love for God with us and all your postings. It means a lot to me and brings me joy each day.

Tammy, Sr. Recruiter, USA

Thank you for the work of the lord you are doing.

Francis, Sr. Pastor, Kenya

Awesome message. Thank you for your words of encouragement.

Marina, Sr. Manager, USA

Thank you for the devotion this morning; it was just what God needed me to hear.

Gwenda, Human Resources Manager, USA

Gary, what an encouraging message and a great reminder for all of us. You are God's messenger, reminding me of what I need to remember. Thank you for being the messenger.

Stacey, Human Resources Consultant, USA

Gary, today's message almost brought me to tears. I was involved in a difficult conversation earlier today and as I walked away, I realized that even though I have made huge strides in my career, I have much to learn and felt uneasy about my future plans. I needed this. Thanks!

Michael, Construction Manager, USA

Gary, you shot one of the big guns with today's message, "Spiritual Warfare in the Executive Suite." I don't want to be God's example of what not to do.

Terry, VP Operations, USA

Gary, it is so wonderful that God is speaking to so many of us in dire need through you. The devotionals are so powerful and comforting.... I pray every day that God will continue His work through you and that he will lead you where you are most needed. I rejoice in the new Gary. I look forward to the devotionals. They are a great way to start my day. It feels like a direct conversation with God. I forward these to my students. Don't be surprised if you hear from people, you have never heard of before. God bless you brother.

Rosafay, Christian College Professor, USA

I wanted to let you know that this devotional spoke directly to me today and that it was as if God sent me this email. Your work is so important. I want to say, "Thank You!"

Bonnie, Performance Consultant, USA

Your devotions are always spiritual food for my soul.

Pam, Donor Relations CRU, USA

Thank you for blessing me every morning with the scripture, message, and prayer. Blessings!

Cathy, Executive Assistant to the President, USA

Just wanted to tell you how much I look forward to these each morning. I appreciate you and what you do.

Don, Business Owner, USA

Thank you for sharing the message God has for me and for so many others. You blessed my spirit and several others that I have been praying with.

Jo Ann, Executive Assistant to Sr. Pastor, USA

The devotionals are AWESOME. I have read many devotional books, and this is the best one I have ever read. I am believing your book will be a best seller!

Cheryl, Ministry Leader WCC-Houston, USA

Special Invitation to the Reader.

Before we continue, I invite you to join me in a time of praise and worship. Click on the link below for an awesome time of song and praise to the Lord. May this time prepare your heart and spirit for the messages you will read and may you bask in the presence of God.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GOp889W0u9A&t=1640s>

For Karen

I dedicate this book to Karen, my sweetheart, Godsend, and wife. These devotionals are a rich testimony and evidence of God's love for me. They tell the story of answered prayer as God brought you into my life and used you as my perfect Helpmate. You love me, teach me, inspire me, challenge me, and correct me with wisdom and discernment.

Your love for the Lord that is reflected in your obedient, gentle, and loving spirit is a blessing to me and others. Yes, you are my Godsend. I love you with all of my heart. Every morning in my prayer time, I praise God and thank Him for you.

*Love always,
Your Sweetness!!*

Foreword by Os Hillman

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/13foreword.mp3>

It was in the late 90s I began writing my devotional series, *TGIF Today God Is First*, read by Christians in the workplace in over 100 nations. Like Gary, I had no idea what I began writing would turn out to be a devotional series that others found helpful. It is humbling to be used by God.

Reading Gary's devotional series, *Arise, SHINE, Be Encouraged*, reminds me so much of my journey. I see God's hand working in Gary in many of the same ways. Gary's depth of life experience and vulnerability allows God to deposit rich nuggets of His truth that benefit you and me. I love the way Gary has organized his messages by theme to facilitate using the devotionals as a Bible study, teaching, or coaching tool. There is something for everyone in these pages. He covers a broad scope of topics that will help you navigate through life's challenges.

Spending time with God in the morning is a habit I developed back in my 20s when I came to Christ. Many people struggle to make that time a priority. I want to encourage you that when you awake, get a cup of coffee, or tea, and grab this book, then spend time with it and allow the Holy Spirit to speak to you through Gary's writings. He surely will. He spoke to me through them. You will find inspiration, practical advice, and stories that will help you apply the Word of God in daily life. For most of us, that is going to be at work. But really, this book applies to all of life so you can expect to benefit from Gary's writing for every area of life.

Os Hillman

Founder & President, Marketplace Leaders, Author

Organizer & Host, Culture Shapers Summit, Washington DC, March 2019

Preface

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/15preface.mp3>

This book contains a collection of 217 daily devotionals written over a rich period of revelation and time with the Lord from October 2010 through November 2011. While I read several devotionals from other Christian authors daily, I had never thought about or planned on writing them myself. It is clear now, that the Lord had other plans. These pages are a reflection of an intimate journey as the Holy Spirit began to speak to me in ways that I had never experienced. Suddenly I found myself getting up in the early hours well before dawn and picking up my Bible. The Holy Spirit would tell me what book in the Bible to turn to, the CHAPTER and verse. At times, He would direct me to books that I had read before but passages that I was not very familiar with and other times to some of my favorite books, CHAPTERs, individuals, and stories. He would take me to CHAPTER and verse and suddenly whisper the title or storyline of the devotional. I never knew what He would have me write in advance as we operated based on His will, His purpose and plan not mine. With a verse and a title (storyline), we would begin. Usually around 45 minutes later, I would find myself staring at the screen in utter amazement looking at a completed devotional. We would repeat that process for 4–6 hours every morning six days a week for a year. The time was filled with surprise, intimate fellowship and conversation and a deep sense of awe and amazement. Generally, I would stop writing somewhere around 8:00 and look at the night's work. Sometimes, I would print off the drafts and eagerly read them to Karen, my mom, and Mama Esther.

Soon, I began to send daily emails with a devotional to a small circle of friends and coaching clients. I was encouraged by their feedback and testimonies as they shared how the Lord spoke to them through the devotionals and how they were encouraged. We began to send them out to subscribers. We were amazed by God's favor as He expanded our subscriber base across the US and 22 countries. Then in June 2017, God opened another door at www.iDisciple.org and took our work to their base of 1.3 million subscribers. I soon discovered God was just getting started. The Holy Spirit was speaking to the heart of one of our most faithful supporters – Dennis Kelly. God would use Dennis and another friend to take our work to another level – audio. (See the next page). My initial research into the devotional book market indicated products were either in written or audible format. I was not able to find examples of products that combine both methods of communication. We know individuals have unique preferences or learning styles. In my own experience, I was shocked when I discovered how much I was drawn to the Audiobooks once they were complete. Now, I seldom pick up my written copy because the audio messages speak directly to my mind (learning style), heart and spirit. This fact was reinforced in my PRAY NOW PRAY BOLDLY Weekly Prayer Calls. I noticed some prayer partners read the messages before the calls, while others listened. This SPECIAL EDITION is the gift God

gave me. I pray that you are drawn to the messages in a uniquely personal way and that this format blesses you. As a listener know this – God’s Word says, ***“faith comes by hearing.”***

***Special Note to the User/Reader:** In this Volume, the Audio starts with the Scripture passages for the CHAPTER followed by the sound of a bell then the Audio for the first message. I changed this process for Volume II. In addition, I have made numerous edits and revisions in the written manuscript since it was recorded in the studio in 2017-2018. In some cases the text and recorded message are different. I was led to retain and include the original audio link for all messages for those who prefer to listen.

A Special Tribute

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-ast.mp3>

I want to express my deepest appreciation to my Brother in Christ, and co-creator of the Arise, SHINE, Be Encouraged , Frederick Gray. I was first introduced to Frederick by another brother, Dennis Kelly, who was an early supporter of my written work. In a call one afternoon, Dennis posed the question, “Have you ever thought about turning your devotional books into audio.” I had to smile when I heard those words and responded that God had placed that desire on my heart almost nine years ago, early in the writing process. A member of my inner circle was a big fan of the devotionals, and had expressed a desire to have the messages recorded so that he could listen to them during his early morning commute to work. Now, his desire and my fervent prayer, have coming to pass.

A week after my initial call with Dennis, we had a conference call with Frederick to discuss his interest in the project. He asked for a proposal from us. We prepared one and within several days, Frederick committed to work on the project. Over the months, he worked passionately and tirelessly. He applied his gifts and talents and his 50 years of recording and broadcasting experience to the task. In January 2019, we celebrated his completion of Volume I. In the three months we worked together, I learned much about him and his wife Jane. As we talked and worked together on the recordings, he learned about me and my life as well. I remember early in the process, the Holy Spirit showed me that he would be blessed by the process and that God would use the recordings to draw him into a deeper relationship. This came to pass as he often shared that God turned this project into his life’s legacy and given him great joy. I am grateful beyond measure for you Frederick and the work you have done. I have been richly blessed to work with you on this project. As I use the audio messages in my Executive Coaching and PRAY NOW PRAY BOLDLY Prayer Calls, I am able to witness how God uses them to speak to His people. Your love for God and His Word, passion for excellence and desire for kingdom impact are evident in every message. I am thankful and praise God for you every day. They are a living testimony to the truth of Paul’s words, “So faith comes from hearing the message. And the message that is heard is the message about Christ.” (Romans 10:17, NIRV).

Frederick and Dennis, my Brothers in Christ, you have been a true gift from God. I thank God for your support and assistance in the creation of the and for helping me share God’s Word with the world. My prayer is that when we stand before the throne of grace, Dad is smiling and says to us, “Well done, good and faithful Sons.”

Acknowledgements

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-ack.mp3>

I would like to thank my Heavenly Father, Almighty God and my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for the calling that they placed on my life. God has blessed me with a set of gifts and talents that have allowed me to honor Him with my work life, pursue my passions and make a difference in the lives of others. I am richly blessed, for I truly love what I do. I also want to express my love and appreciation to Pastors Creflo and Taffi Dollar, and Assistant Pastor Ken Terry of (CDM/WCCI) who faithfully and diligently teach the Gospel of Grace (Jesus Christ) and have helped me draw closer to God, understand His Word and how to apply it to my daily life. I extend a deep and heartfelt appreciation to Pastors Archie and Melissa Collins, the Ministry Team, and all our church family at WCC-H. It was a privilege and honor to serve and worship with you.

In addition, I want to acknowledge God's anointed pastors including Pastors Kirbyjon Caldwell, Roy Weeks, Robert Johnson, Joyce Meyer, Rick Warren, and Robert J. Morgan. I am also indebted to gifted writers and teachers of God's Word including Os Hillman, Mark D. Roberts, Henry and Richard Blackaby, Ken Blanchard, Phil Hodges, Phyllis Hendry, Sarah Young, Laura Beth Jones, and Pam Lilly. God used each of you at critical moments in my life to teach, encourage me and help me grow as a Godly man.

To my inner circle including John Simmons, Dick Harris, Stanley Wells, Quincy Hodge, and Chuck Niederhofer who eagerly read my email devotionals in the early days, I thank you and praise God for your friendship, support, and encouragement. To my devotional subscribers and LinkedIn connections across the globe, I love you and want you to know that you are God's beloved. I am honored to be able to teach you and help you honor God by integrating your faith into your daily work life. I am humbled by your feedback and amazing praise reports as to how God is using the devotionals to speak revelation truth and encouragement into your lives. I'm told by several pastors that they use the devotionals to teach other pastors and ministry leaders, create sermons and Bible study lessons. I want to convey my deep appreciation to Cheryl McBride (Fellow Leader at WCC-H), and Dr. Michele Sabino at the University of St. Thomas Houston for their help with the manuscript. To my Brother in Christ, Ken Fraser, Founder of Impact Book Designs, your talents, and gifts helped me finish the book and resulted in many invaluable improvements to the manuscript. I know your efforts are pleasing to God. I am deeply grateful to our Kingdom Partners who have supported our ministry over the years, and I must extend a special recognition to Lynn McGinnis, owner at Lynn McGinnis, LLC, Author Marketing for coming alongside us to help us share one million FREE books a year for the next 7 years.

Finally, to the saints and future saints who will read these pages and listen to the audio messages, I salute you and applaud your pursuit of God and His Word.

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CHAPTER 1

God's Nature, His Word, and His Promises

“He who does not love has not become acquainted with God [does not and never did know Him], for God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest (displayed) where we are concerned: in that God sent His Son, the only begotten or unique [Son], into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation (the atoning sacrifice) for our sins.”
(1 John 4: 8-10, AMP)

“God is faithful (reliable, trustworthy, and therefore ever true to His promise, and He can be depended on); by Him you were called into companionship and participation with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”
(1 Corinthians 1:9, AMP)



For God So Loved the World

(God Is Love)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/30%20chapt%201%20dev%201.mp3>

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

(John 3:16, NIV)

In this passage we get a profound look at the nature of God. We see a kind, tender, caring, and loving God who loved man so much that He willingly sacrificed His son for us while we were still sinners and did not deserve His mercy. I have met parents over the years that have lost children. The death of a child often has a devastating impact on people. Over 50 percent of marriages fail soon after the death of a child as the parents struggle to come to grips with the pain and suffering that came with their loss.

This verse tells us that Jesus did not die by accident or circumstance. God loved mankind so much He sent Jesus as a Lamb to be sacrificed for our sins. God sacrificed a Son to gain a family. We often see acts of intense love among human beings. We read stories of men and women who willingly step into harm's way to save their children or even total strangers. We hear stories of people who make organ donations so that others may have a fresh start in life. Think about the last time you expressed love to others by making a donation to a charity, dropped money into a cup at the traffic light, stood in line to serve a hot meal to the homeless, or passed out blankets at a shelter.

The next time you tuck your child into bed, comb their hair, or read to them, consider how much you love them. Ask yourself, “Would I willingly offer my child to be brutally tortured and murdered for others, for people who have rejected me and do not care about me?” The next time you wonder if God really loves you, I encourage you to think of Jesus. Imagine Him nailed to the cross. His death on the cross is proof of how much God loves you. Open your heart and receive God's love for you. Never forget, His love healed you, restored you, redeemed you, and purchased salvation and eternal life.

*Lord, thank you for your love and for the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.
Help me to find comfort in your loving arms. Through the blood
of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Remind Me Again

(God's Love and Forgiveness)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/31%20chapt%201%20dev%202.mp3>

"I, even I, am he Who blots out and cancels your transgressions, for My own sake, and I will not remember your sins. Put me in remembrance [remind Me of your merits]; let us plead and argue together. Set forth your case, that you may be justified (proved right)."

(Isaiah 43:25-26, AMP)

We live in an age of information overload. If you don't believe it, just try remembering all your personal usernames and passwords. We are bombarded with information from phone calls, voicemail, letters, online news, emails, blogs, Twitter, Facebook, radio, and TV. Add to that list the stream of information from bosses, co-workers, subordinates, vendors, customers, spouses, children, friends, and neighbors. How do we remember and keep track of it all? We use iPhones, iPads, notepads, electronic alarms and alerts, calendars, and day-timers. In spite of all of our aides and prompts, we often hear the expression that mirrors God's words that he spoke to Isaiah, "Remind me." We struggle to remember important facts, dates, details, names, and phone numbers; so, we ask our spouses, co-workers, or employees to help us remember. When we read the verse above, we should find comfort knowing that God does the same thing. He purposely forgets our sins and encourages us to remind Him of our merits. Why does God do this? He wants us to earnestly and intently plead our case before Him. Like any loving parent, God wants our thoughts and conversation with Him to focus on the positive parts of our relationship. Since the Word tells us that God is love, He wants us to see Him in a loving, compassionate, merciful, and forgiving way. Remember Paul's description of the virtues of love. Love bears every burden, it is always ready to believe the best, its hopes never fade, it endures, and it never fails.

Child of God, I encourage you to remind God today of your love for Him. Come into His presence with thanksgiving and praise on your mind for His mercy and grace. Let your stillness serve to remind you of His love, and watch as His love transforms you and the world around you.

*Lord, thank you for choosing to forget my sins that I might enter into your holy presence. Thank you for your unconditional love that never fails or fades away. I repent of my sins and rest in your forgiveness and love for me.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Against All Hope

(God Is Faithful to Fulfill His Promises)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/32%20chapt%201%20dev%203.mp3>

“Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, ‘So shall your offspring be.’”

(Romans 4:18, NIV)

The first three words of this verse put Abraham’s actions in perspective, “against all hope.” Against all hope, Abraham fathered a son at 100 years old. Against all hope, Sarah’s womb became fertile, and she bore a child at the age of 90. Against all hope, God led Abraham away from his family and all that he knew to begin a new life. Against all hope, God gave him new lands and allowed him to thrive and prosper. Against all hope, at the last moment, God provided a sacrificial lamb when Abraham proved to God that he trusted Him so much that like God, he too, was willing to sacrifice his beloved son, Isaac. Against all hope, Abraham’s offspring prospered and multiplied to produce many nations.

There is power and promise when you find yourself in a place against all hope. What are the situations in your life where you find yourself backed into a corner against all hope? Are you facing financial strain or lack, unemployment, sickness, unforgiveness, intense conflict in your marriage, challenges at work, issues with rebellious children, addictions, generational curses, strongholds, emotional turmoil, depression, or thoughts of suicide?

Are you in a place where no matter how hard you try you can’t figure out how to make life work? Don’t give up, cave in, or quit. Seek the Lord Jesus Christ who is bigger than your circumstances and who can help you overcome the impossible. God will honor every promise He made in His Word if you will simply choose to believe and trust in Him. Against all hope, like Abraham, step out in faith and put your hope and trust in Him!

Lord, thank you for the unchanging truth of your Word. Teach me to place my faith, trust and hope in you at all times. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

A God of All, Not Some

(God Is Your Source)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/33%20chapt%201%20dev%204.mp3>

“And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”
(Philippians 4:19, NASB)

Paul says God will supply all your needs. He does not say God will supply some, but all. Karen and I struggled with believing this verse several months before we got married. I remember the day we sat down and discussed what our new budget should be once we got married. Looking back, I can see clearly that we had fear, doubt, and unbelief in our hearts. We were not trusting God and believing this verse. Within minutes of completing the “Fear Budget,” God convicted us and directed us to list everything that we desired, and so we did. We created our first “Faith Budget.” It was a big contrast from the original. The Faith Budget was almost double the first one. We found Scriptures and spoke them over the new budget. We prayed and thanked God for His goodness.

Over the years, we have looked back on that experience and given God praise and thanksgiving for teaching us the truth and power of His Word. Sharing our testimony with others, we have come to realize many Christians struggle with believing the promise of this passage. As a Christian, are you trusting God and believing this verse? Are you walking in faith, confidence, and hopeful expectation, or fear, doubt, and unbelief? Are you preparing a “Fear Budget” based on self-effort and the lies of Satan or a “Faith Budget” built on the truth and power of God’s Word? What is your greatest area of need right now? Are you struggling to pay your bills and meet your monthly obligations? Do you need reliable transportation? Do you need a job that affirms your God-given talents and gifts? Do you need peace, harmony, and restoration in your marriage or a close relationship? Do you need healing from sickness and disease? Do you need victory and deliverance from an addiction, stronghold, or generational curse?

Child of God, I encourage you to choose today to stand on the truth of God’s Word. Have faith, trust, and believe in a God of all, not some.

Lord, thank you for the truth and power of your Word. I am comforted knowing that I have protection and provision in you and your Word. Help me to believe and walk in faith at all times knowing you will honor every promise in your Word. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Built to Last

(God's Word Is Eternal)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/34%20chapt%201%20dev%205.mp3>

*"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away."
(Luke 21:33, NASB)*

We often hear ad campaigns proclaiming the durability of a product and the phrase, "built to last." If, as Christians, we are drawn to this notion and it sounds vaguely familiar, it's because Jesus said it first. In the verse above, Jesus declares that heaven and earth will pass away but "My words will not pass away." Simply put, God's Word is built to last. In contrast, we live in a world where products are designed and built with an expiration date or "Best if used by date." They are made to quickly become useless and disposed. To deal with this reality, Americans spend millions of dollars every year on extended warranty programs in an effort to stretch a product's lifespan from "one-year design life" to a "three-year user life." Then at the end of three years, we discard the product. In the world of electronic gadgets, the lifespan of cell phones and software is often months, not years.

It is comforting to know that the Word of God does not change. It does not disintegrate, go stale, or have an expiration date. The Bible is often referred to as "The Living Word." It is alive and filled with the Spirit of God. Every time I read my Bible, I see something new, something that I missed in my previous reading and study time. The Holy Spirit will often speak to me and say, "Now that you are ready, let me reveal a deeper level of truth to you today." I praise God that His Word is alive and new each time I read it. The Bible is more than words written on a page about people and places that faded away long ago. It is filled with the very presence, character, will, truth, power, and life of the Most High God. Reading my Bible is not a passive event. It is real-time intimate contact with a living God. Best of all, it is "built to last."

Lord, thank you for your living, Word that never fails me. Thank you that it sustains and strengthens me and is life to my mind, heart, and spirit. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Build Your Life on Solid Rock

(God's Word Is True)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/35%20chapt%201%20dev%206.mp3>

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock."

(Matthew 7:24–25, NIV)

I've always enjoyed using my hands to build and make things, especially now, since much of my time is spent in the world of words and ideas. Early in life I worked as a journeyman electrician and a carpenter. I had the opportunity to work on many interesting projects: office buildings, schools, a dam at a large lake, and custom homes. My father and I built a home on the family farm where he lived until his death. One project stands out – a custom home built on a hill with a 15-mile view of the surrounding forests. Everything was designed and built to suit life in a wheelchair for a friend.

Before Karen and I were married, I owned a 113-year-old Victorian style home. After evaluating our needs as a couple, we decided to move into Karen's home and turn my former home into a rental property. Every time I think of it or look back at pictures, I have a deep appreciation for its beauty, master craftsmanship, and its ability to withstand the winds and storms of time. Living in Houston close to the Gulf of Mexico, we have lived through several hurricanes and fierce tropical storms that produce torrential rains and flash floods. We have seen bayous and rivers swell beyond their banks and flood many homes and businesses. We have witnessed 100-mile per hour winds as they demolished buildings, uplifted roofs, and toppled huge trees that stood tall for over a century.

Child of God how is your foundation? Have you built your life on solid rock (God's Word) or shifting sand? What challenges are you facing at work or home right now? Will your life withstand the tests of time or collapse in ruin when fierce winds rage around you? I encourage you to decide today to build your life on God's Word so you may stand tall in the face of every storm that comes your way.

*Lord, thank you for your Word. You are my Rock, Shelter, and Refuge from every storm.
Teach me to trust and rely on you at all times. Through the blood
of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Add to Your “Must Read” List

(Where Do You Get Your Truth?)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/36%20chapt%201%20dev%207.mp3>

“This Book of the Law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may observe and do according to all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall deal wisely and have good success.”

(Joshua 1:8, AMP)

As an Executive Coach, one of my first questions with a new client is, “What do you read?” The answers I get almost always leave me speechless. Not for what they say but for what they don’t say. Clients rattle off the normal fare – *Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Financial Times of London, Forbes, Fortune, Fast Company, Chief Executive, Harvard Business Review*, and the latest best seller. Several years ago, over coffee I asked a senior executive, “Do you start your day with coffee and the newspaper?” He smiled and quickly answered, “Yes, every day.” Next, I asked him how often he reads the Bible and he looked at me in stunned silence. This kind of behavior speaks loudly as to who we trust and go to for critical information about life. An owner of a financial services company once told me that he reads several financial magazines and newspapers every morning, but seldom read his Bible. He attempted to defend his behavior by expressing his need to “stay informed on current events in his industry and the world at large.” I agreed that these were all admirable goals, but went on to explain that as Christians, we must pursue a life of faith and renew our minds daily with God’s Word.

We must learn what God has to say about the world of business, human behavior, and living life, because He created this world. Why is it that we all seem to have Bibles scattered across the house, but appear to use them as ornamental decorations? Why do we lack the desire to feast on God’s Word or seek spiritual growth? Do we not understand that our Bible is our “Operations Manual” for life? As Christian leaders this must stop.

When was the last time you studied and searched for an answer in your Bible? Commit today to start your morning with God’s Word. Put it at the top of your “Must Read List.” God’s Word will never fail you!

*Lord, thank you for your Word. Give me a hunger and thirst for your Word and your righteousness. Ignite the desire to start my day in your Word and in prayer.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

To Him Who Is Able

(I Am a Child of God)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/37%20chapt%201%20dev%208.mp3>

“Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him –”
(Romans 16:25-26, NIV)

Closing CHAPTER 16, Paul acknowledges our Lord Jesus Christ with these words, “Now to him who is able. . .” I confess these words cause me to pause. The fearful, weak, and mortal man that Satan whispers that I am suggests otherwise. It’s only when I acknowledge who I am in God’s eyes, a son of God, made in His image and likeness, with full authority, power, and dominion over all the earth that I can accept and understand their meaning.

As a Child of God anointed with His grace, mercy, and favor; washed in the blood of Jesus, reconciled, redeemed, restored, healed, and delivered, I understand. As a Child of Light who walks in the strength and power of the Lord and tramples on Satan and every demonic spirit, I understand. As a Chosen One with a mouth to use as a divine instrument and call things that are not as though they were, I understand. As a Mighty Man of God clothed with Holy Spirit power, dressed in the full armor of God, appointed to be a warrior in God’s kingdom army, I understand. As a Servant Leader covered in the blood of Jesus, walking in His love and compassion, and serving others, I understand. As the Priest of my family, submitted to God, I understand. As a Steward of God’s gifts when I walk in obedience to the Word of God, I understand. When I experience sickness in my life and declare that by His stripes I am healed, I understand. As a spiritual son of Abraham, heir, and co-heir with Christ Jesus to every promise in the Abrahamic Covenant, I understand.

As a Christian who believes that in Him all things are possible, and that in Him I am more than a conqueror, I understand. I praise God that Jesus is able and in Him, I too am able!

Lord, thank you for the gift of Jesus Christ. Jesus, on the cross, you defeated sin, death, and Satan that I might have salvation and eternal life. Jesus, you are able and in you I am able. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

But If It Dies

(God's Law of Seedtime and Harvest)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/38%20chapt%201%20dev%209.mp3>

“Jesus replied, ‘The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed.

But if it dies, it produces many seeds.’”

(John 12: 23-24, NIV)

Jesus saw everything from a kingdom perspective. He saw life on earth in terms of kingdom laws and principles. His perspective in this verse is based on the Law of Seedtime and Harvest. In the world, life is treasured and is something we fight for and hold onto tightly. In contrast, when we are kingdom-minded, we willingly surrender our worldly thoughts and life of rebellion to God. In the process, selfishness and sin die so that the seed of righteousness may live and produce eternal life.

Every farmer understands the life potential that resides in a kernel of seed. They understand that seeds left in a bag on a shelf will never produce fruit. They must be planted, watered, nurtured, and protected. In time, the seed will grow and produce a harvest. As Christians, we must ask ourselves several questions: Do I understand the Law of Seedtime and Harvest? Am I willing to die to self to become kingdom seed? What do I need to do so that I can sprout and grow into a tree that produces rich, abundant fruit? Have I planted my seed in good soil that is enriched daily with the Word of God? Have I taken the precautions to protect my tree from pests (Satan) and disease? Do I fertilize my garden regularly with “God’s Miracle Grow” (Word of God and Holy Spirit)?

Child of God, I encourage you to ask God to speak to your heart today about your garden and the seeds that you are planting. Surrender your life to Jesus, renew your mind, allow the seeds of sin to die so that seeds of righteousness may thrive. Be willing to die to self in order that you may have eternal life and produce rich, abundant fruit!

Lord, thank you for your Word on sowing and reaping. Fill the garden of my heart with the incorruptible seed of your Word. Help me imitate Jesus and die to self. Help me produce rich and abundant fruit in this world all for your glory. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Are Your Servants Waiting on You?

(Angels Sent from God)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/39%20chapt%201%20dev%2010.mp3>

“Are not the angels all ministering spirits (servants) sent out in the service [of God for the assistance] of those who are to inherit salvation?”
(Hebrews 1:14, AMP)

I confess that I stand in awe of the meaning and implications of this verse. Paul states very clearly that as a Christian and heir of salvation, I have inherited certain benefits and privileges. Specifically, I have inherited servants to wait upon, assist, and attend to my needs. In the modern world, servants are only available to a select few – nobility or the wealthy. Paul says that every Christian has angels or servants in the spiritual realm assigned to help and attend to our needs.

In my Executive Coaching and discipleship training, I am surprised by the number of Christians who are unaware of this basic and important fact of kingdom order and fail to employ or use their angels (ministering servants) on a regular basis. Once I learned about my angels, I immediately began to put them to work. I call on my angels daily to: deliver messages and assist me in my work; join me as I praise and worship God; guard or stand watch over me; build a wall of protection around me; go before me and fight for me; lift me up and elevate me above my difficulties and challenges; provide aid, comfort, and healing when I am sick. I am comforted to know that angels are busy and at work in my life in service to God on my behalf.

As a Child of God, are you willing to believe in and accept the presence of angels in your life? If the answer is “Yes,” have you put your angels to work lately? Are you allowing them to wait upon you and assist you? I encourage you to talk to your angels and put them to work. Don’t make them stand there waiting and wondering if you are going to ask them for help. After all, they are one of the benefits and privileges of salvation and they have been assigned to you by God!

Lord, thank you for this revelation truth in your Word. Thank you for your divine order and for the assignment of angels to assist me. Teach me to use the angels in my life for your glory and honor. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Lack Follows Separation

(God's Way Is Abundance)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/40%20chapt%201%20dev%2011.mp3>

*"After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine
in that whole country, and he began to be in need."*

(Luke 15:14, NIV)

The parable of the Prodigal Son has many lessons to teach us. As long as the son lived under his father's roof, he lacked nothing. Not long after he left home, he was broke. Suddenly a famine (economic downturn) comes, and he is in severe need.

The Kingdom Principle of Separation and Lack was born in the Garden of Eden. Before Adam and Eve disobeyed God, lack did not exist on the earth. They lived in rich abundance and had everything they needed. Like the father of the Prodigal Son, God provided for their every need. When they chose to rebel against God and disobey His commandment, sin came into the world and separated them from God. Lack, poverty, and insufficiency followed. The Principle of Lack and Separation can be broken down into a simple three-step process: Rebellion and disobedience leads to sin; sin leads to separation from God, His protection and provision; separation from God leads to lack, poverty, and insufficiency.

Poverty is not a godly creation. It comes as a result of sin. Satan's lies helped create it. Before his fall, Satan lived in God's house in abundance. But he wanted more. Because of his pride, he rebelled against God and was thrown out of heaven. His desire is that we too will rebel against God. He knows that when we do, we can expect lack (brokenness, poverty, and insufficiency). Jesus warned us of his motives, "the thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy" (John 10:10).

Are you living in a state of lack in any area of your life? If so, I encourage you to come to your senses, repent and come back to the Lord's house! Like the Prodigal Son, commit to living life with Him in abundance. After all, it was His original plan. Jesus came and died so that we can have an abundant life in a dark and impoverished world.

Lord, thank you for your love, protection, and provision. Help me examine every area of my life to determine where I may be experiencing separation and lack. Help me be obedient and faithful in all things. I accept your gift of abundant life. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

We Can Certainly Do It

(Believe in and Trust God's Promises)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/41%20chapt%201%20dev%2012.mp3>

"Then Caleb interrupted the men who were speaking to Moses. He said, 'We should go up and take the land. We can certainly do it.' But the men who had gone up with him spoke.

They said, 'We can't attack those people. They are stronger than we are.'"

(Numbers 13:30-31, NIRV)

I am drawn to the boldness and confidence of Caleb's actions in this passage. Instead of sitting back quietly in the background and timidly acquiescing to group pressure and the view that the Canaanites were too strong and powerful for the Israelites, Caleb boldly interrupted the men and said, "We can certainly do it." Notice he did not say, "I think we can. . . I feel like. . . If we are lucky. . . It is possible. . . or If everything goes well." Instead he boldly and confidently declared, "We can certainly do it." Why? Caleb believed in and trusted God. He saw the same situation, problems, and challenges that the other spies saw. With the exception of Joshua, Caleb was the only one who saw what the others failed to see. He saw the Israelites marching into the Promised Land and prospering. While others only saw giant men in great numbers, Caleb saw God. The others saw defeat and failure. Caleb saw victory and triumph. Others saw destruction and death. Caleb saw success and life. Others saw inadequacy and lack. Caleb saw sufficiency and abundance. Others walked in doubt, fear, and unbelief. Caleb walked in unwavering faith, confidence, and trust in God. Others felt hopelessness and despair. Caleb felt expectant hope and excitement.

Child of God, which side of the issue are you on? Are you focusing on the situation, problems, and difficulties in your life or on God? Do you believe His Word and every promise God made to you in His Word? Are you willing to boldly interrupt the naysayers, doubters and demonic spirits who are proclaiming, "You can't do this! This is too much for you. This will not work." I encourage you to follow Caleb's lead. Trust in God. Walk in faith and confident hope and boldly declare, "With God's help, I can certainly do it." Join Caleb and march confidently into your Promised Land.

Lord, thank you this powerful lesson on the importance of trusting you and walking in unwavering faith. Help me keep my eyes and heart fixed on you no matter what the situation looks like and to walk boldly into your promises. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

You Have Said It Yourself

(Spoken Words Lead to Our Destiny)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/42%20chapt%201%20dev%2013.mp3>

“The Son of Man is to go, just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born. And Judas, who was betraying Him, said, ‘Surely it is not I, Rabbi?’ Jesus said to him, ‘You have said it yourself.’”
(Matthew 26:24-25, NASB)

I am drawn to the way that Jesus talked with others. He often spoke the truth plainly and directly into their lives. At other times, rather than speak it directly, He allowed them to speak it. In the passage above, rather than accuse Judas or identify him as the betrayer, he allowed Judas to speak the truth of his pending betrayal. Jesus simply confirmed it and said, “You have said it yourself.” Jesus listened as Judas used his mouth as an instrument to speak his ultimate destiny. Both men had a part to play in the greatest drama of human history. They spoke their lines and played their part to the very end.

Scripture fails to mention a reaction or comments made by the other disciples regarding this exchange. Perhaps they did not hear the conversation, but there were no accusations, questions, expressions of disgust or outrage by the rest of the disciples. Jesus and Judas accepted their fate and sealed their destiny with their spoken words. In fact, Jesus continued His teachings with the disciples. Scripture tells us that, “Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body.’ And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.’”

I am comforted every time I take communion. I am overcome with peace, joy, and thanksgiving. My spirit hears, believes, and confesses as I drink the cup, “Lord Jesus, this is your blood of the New Covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins. Jesus, you have spoken in truth. I also speak, “It is well with my soul.”

*Lord, thank you for this teaching on the power of agreement and spoken words. Help me to use my words and speak in agreement with every promise of the New Covenant.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Do You Want Milk or Meat?

(The Believer's Daily Diet)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/43%20chapt%201%20dev%2014.mp3>

“For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.”

(Hebrews 5:13-14, NASB)

As parents we can all relate to the needs of an infant for milk. For a newborn, milk is the required diet. It gives them all they need and helps them grow. Soon they will want more, and we are able to expand their diet to juice, pureed vegetables, soft bread, or crackers. Once the babies have teeth, they begin to eat foods that require tearing, chewing and effort. Soon they will be ready for meat!

We develop spiritually the same way. In the beginning our diet and sense of taste is limited. As a newborn Christian, we do not have a deep hunger and thirst for God and His Word. As we spend time in the Word, we discover that we want and need more. As we grow spiritually, we will experience: a growing desire to chew on His Word and digest the Word of God; a zeal to hear God's voice; new behaviors and habits as we study, meditate and search for nuggets of hidden truth in God's Word; a longing for personal and intimate time with Christ; a new sense of peace as we rest in His presence; joy as we seek Him in prayer. Suddenly we no longer have a taste or desire for worldly things. Our taste buds have changed and evolved. Things we used to crave are now repugnant and offensive. As we submit to God's instructions and turn away from selfishness, self-effort, pride, and rebellion, we savor the taste of humility and sacrifice. As we enter spiritual maturity, we are drawn to the sweet aroma of faithfulness, willing and loving obedience, and submission to God.

Child of God, I encourage you to examine your taste buds and your spiritual diet today. Have you acquired a hunger and thirst for God's Word? If not, ask God to give you the desire and feast on the meat of His Word. Skip the milk and eat the meat.

*Lord, thank you for giving me a hunger and thirst for righteousness. May I feast at your table and savor the taste of your Word all the days of my life.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Are You Spiritually Fit?

(The Need for Spiritual Training)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/44%20chapt%201%20dev%2015.mp3>

“For physical training is of some value (useful for a little), but godliness (spiritual training) is useful and of value in everything and in every way, for it holds promise for the present life and also for the life which is to come.”

(1 Timothy 4:8, AMP)

To obtain optimal physical health and stamina, we nurture and maintain our bodies with the proper vitamins, food, water, and exercise. We must do this daily to sustain our physical health. Likewise, our spiritual health and stamina must also be properly cared for, fed, and nurtured with God’s Word and the Holy Spirit. No food, no physical energy or strength. No Word, no spiritual power or might. A reduced level of God’s Word will lead to a weakened spiritual immune system that is unable to stand firm and resist Satan’s attacks.

Building up our spiritual health and stamina requires daily effort and discipline. We must spend time alone in God’s Word, time in prayer, thanksgiving, and praise. As we do this our mind is renewed and we come to think like God. As the process of renewal in our mind begins, we can expect Satan to take notice and begin to resist our efforts. He will challenge us and try his best to get us to turn away from God and His Word. As this war of thoughts rages in our mind, we must turn to God and stand on His Word. To win this battle for our mind, we must be filled with the Word of God and allow ourselves to be led by the Holy Spirit. We must resist the urge to be ruled by our emotions or any worldly thought that contradicts the truth of God’s Word.

Does your thinking and behavior line up with the world’s way or with God’s Word and His way? Are you on the Believer’s Daily Recommended Diet and Exercise Plan consisting of Word, Presence, Prayer, Praise and Worship? Does your daily intake of “spiritual food” meet your minimum daily requirement? Did you feast at God’s table today and take in enough spiritual nourishment to fight the good fight?

Child of God, are you strong, trained, equipped, and prepared for battle? If not, I encourage you to commit today to get spiritually fit!

Lord, thank you for giving me the desire and tools to get spiritually fit and strong that I might endure the tests and fight the fight of faith. Use me as you will in your Kingdom Army. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Are You Wise or Foolish?

(Benefits of Reading God's Word)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/45%20chapt%201%20dev%2016.mp3>

"For it is written: 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the Intelligent I will frustrate.' Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?"

(1 Corinthians 1:19-20, NIV)

Research shows that reading is fundamental to normal human growth and development. Reading stimulates the brain, feeds you with new ideas, information, facts, and data. Reading gives you a deeper understanding of the world, history, culture, and human nature. Reading can plant seeds and foster dreams and visions of the future. Reading is essential. However, reading too much of the wrong material can deceive you into thinking you are wise while in fact you are dull and foolish in God's eyes.

Several years ago, the truth of this verse rang loudly in my ears. I was speaking to a Men's Group about ways to become Mighty Men of God. I posed these questions to the group, "How many of you faithfully start your day reading your Bible? How much time do you spend reading and meditating on God's Word and in prayer?" Their responses were sadly typical. Less than half the group raised their hands. One man, a business owner, admitted he seldom read his Bible. When I asked him to explain, he told me that he spent his time reading various financial publications so he could be informed and current on world events in order to properly advise his clients. He ended with, "I simply do not have the time to read my Bible." Unfortunately, this view is prevalent in the Body of Christ. We have replaced God's wisdom, truth, laws and principles, and His way of thinking with the world's intelligence and social trends.

Karen and I refuse to participate in any social or political crisis, economic recession or downturn or subscribe to the world's way of thinking. Almost ten years ago, I cancelled a 25-year subscription to the *Houston Chronicle* and replaced it with my Bible. I made a conscious choice.

What about you? Do you put more weight on the morning news than you do on God's Word? I urge you to ask God to show you any area where you are trying to be wise and acting the fool!

Lord, thank you for the eternal truth and wisdom of your Word. Thank you for the Holy Spirit who directs and guides me in all truth daily. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Are You a Good Student?

(Be Diligent as You Study God's Word)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/46%20chapt%201%20dev%2017.mp3>

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children."

(Hosea 4:6, NIV)

The life of a student is relatively simple. Success requires regular attendance in class, motivation to complete assignments on time and in excellence, thorough reading and studying of the material, effective oral presentation and writing skills, and good performance on exams. A successful academic life and record of achievement requires discipline, hard work, and a willingness to learn. Failure to learn can be attributed to many things but is often a result of lack of motivation and the discipline to develop good study habits.

Many Christians are poor students of God's Word and fall into a pattern of neglect regarding reading, studying, and meditating in their Bible, spending time alone with God in prayer, attending or serving at church, and lastly honoring God with their tithes and offering. Extended periods of neglect and self-effort are very dangerous and can have very negative consequences. It will limit your spiritual maturity, growth, and development. In addition, willful neglect, ignorance, and laziness are not pleasing to God. We must be dedicated and diligent students of God's Word. We must commit to learn His thoughts, ways and standards, vision, will and plan for our lives. We must go to His Word for answers and guidance. We must come to understand the importance of renewing our minds daily with the Word of God before we can successfully apply His Word in faith to our daily lives. No Word, no faith, little Word, little faith, much Word, much faith.

Child of God, I encourage you to commit today to become a dedicated, diligent, and disciplined student of God's Word. Strive to grow in your knowledge and understanding of His Word, His kingdom, and His way of doing things. Ask Him to help you create the necessary habits of a life of prayer, study, and meditation on His Word. He will reward your efforts.

Lord, thank you for giving us your Word. Give me a desire to read, study, and meditate on your Word. Holy Spirit teach me revelation truth, wisdom, and discernment, and help me apply your Word in my daily life. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Desires of Your Heart

(Treat Every Day like Christmas)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/47%20chapt%201%20dev%2018.mp3>

*“Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He will give you the desires
and secret petitions of your heart.”*

(Psalm 37:4, AMP)

For many children, especially in the US, Christmas is a time of long-awaited anticipation, joy and excitement and the fulfillment of deep desires. I remember I could hardly sleep on Christmas Eve. Along with my brother and sister, I would get up early and run to the living room to go see what Santa left under the tree – to see if he left my heart’s desire. As the firstborn son and oldest grandchild, I always made a big list of things I was hoping for. I counted on mom and dad, grandparents and even Santa to check my list and make sure everything I wanted was under the tree.

Oh, if life could always be like our childhood memories of Christmas. What if we really could make a list of the things we long for and wake up one day to discover our desires sitting under the tree wrapped in colorful paper and a big bow? I’ve come to learn that as Christians, we can look forward to experiencing the same anticipation, excitement, and sense of fulfillment every day. When we commit to find sheer delight (high degree of longing, pleasure, and enjoyment) sitting at God’s feet He will shower us with His love. He will look for ways to lavishly bless us.

Child of God, you must come to fully grasp that God is love and He loves to please us. He wants us to know that the secret desires of our hearts are already gift wrapped and waiting for us. Each morning, I encourage you to get up and run to God in the early dawn with anticipation and excitement. Dad is waiting to spend time with you. His love for you is far greater than you can ever imagine. He so desperately wants to fulfill your desires, dreams, hopes and passions. When you delight in Him, He will give you the desires of your heart since He is the one who put them there!

Lord, thank you for the delight and wonder of your gifts every day. Thank you for the feelings of anticipation and excitement as I see you at work in my life. Renew me with a childlike faith to remember how much you love me and that you always want only the best for me. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Do You Worship God or Money?

(Your Calendar and Checkbook)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/48%20chapt%201%20dev%2019.mp3>

“For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”
(1 Timothy 6:10, NASB)

WHAT or WHO do you love (worship)? In the west, especially the US, we seem to be so confused about what’s really important in life. We often position our choices as polar opposites: God or money; money or God. Satan has defeated many Christians with a simple yet effective lie, “Money is the root of all evil!” God’s Word never said that. In this verse Paul declares that the love of money is the root of all sorts of evil. The key word is “love.” I will ask again, “WHAT or WHO do you love?” As an Executive Coach and Ministry Leader, I’ve discovered that I do not have to know you well to answer that question. All I have to do is look at your calendar and checkbook. Where you spend your TIME and MONEY provides the answer as to WHAT and WHO you love. Do you find yourself: Spending hours playing golf with friends but refuse to go to Men’s Bible Study? Retreating to your haven (boat, beach house, or hunting lease) as an escape from family demands and worldly pressure, but seldom go to church for restoration? Buying season tickets, watching your local team on Sundays, spending freely on memorabilia but can’t quite seem to tithe? Going on 7-10-day expensive vacations but hide behind the excuse of work when your pastor announces the annual mission trip or community outreach?

Child of God, I encourage you to decide to love God and place Him, His Word and His Way before career, wealth, hobbies, and friends. Show God how much you love Him with your TIME and MONEY. Don’t edge God out. Instead include Him in all you do. Let Him lead and guide you. Ask Him to join you in your meetings. Pray first and turn decisions over to Him. Ask the Holy Spirit to tell you which applicant to hire. Ask God to be the Chairman of your Board and give Him the deciding vote in how you use your calendar and your checkbook.

Lord, thank you for loving us and calling us into relationship with you. Jesus, teach me to love you above all things and give me the desire to honor you FIRST with my time and my money. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

God's Glory Moved Across the Room

(A Cloud of Glory)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/49%20chapt%201%20dev%2020.mp3>

*"Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation,
and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle."
(Exodus 40:34, NIV)*

I still remember the day this verse came alive for me. It was the first time I ever witnessed God's Spirit (glory) move across an entire room. The room at the Jobs Ministry was full with 50 people who were unemployed. My talk focused on the Kingdom Law of Seedtime and Harvest – the importance of sowing good seeds. Three days before my talk, the Holy Spirit told me to bless the Ministry by: (1) providing copies of my presentation for everyone (2) making a substantial donation to the Ministry (3) giving money and gifts to the participants. Initially I felt some resistance. With an attitude I argued with God, "This is a Pro Bono talk. I'm not getting paid. Now you're telling me to spend money on handouts and gifts, give someone a \$50 bill, and you want me to make a large donation to the ministry." After some quiet time in prayer, I agreed to simply trust God and be obedient.

As I closed my talk, I asked, "Who in the room needs money?" Many hands went up. I reached into my pocket, took out the \$50 bill and handed it to a man on the second row. I saw the surprise on his face and then his eyes filled with tears. Looking up, I noticed the entire room was still and silent. No one spoke or moved. I went on to place my donation in the offering basket on the table and asked the audience to sow into this important ministry.

Afterwards, I went to Karen and said, "Did you see it?" She instantly knew what I meant by my question. We shared that we both witnessed this cloud as the glory of the Lord moved across the room. We found out later, the Holy Spirit's presence was felt by all. The Director shared that the crowd made the largest donation in the history of the ministry! I will never forget the day as I saw God's glory fill the room, move, and cover all!

*Lord, thank you for showing us your glory. May your glory rest upon me each day.
May your glory go before me to lead and guide me. Through the blood
of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Ask God to Trouble Your Trouble

(God is Your Help and Protection)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/50%20chapt%201%20dev%2021.mp3>

“God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you.”
(2 Thessalonians 1:6, NIV)

Often, we get so focused on our problems, our challenges that we forget who God is and what His Word says about Him. Many people buy large and aggressive dogs for protection. While I like and enjoy dogs that is not what I need or want in a pet. Others install elaborate high-tech alarm systems for their homes and cars hoping the alarm systems will protect them. I have several friends who have handgun permits and carry a loaded weapon at all times. Many people including Mama Esther, Karen’s mom, installed burglar bars on doors and windows after a band of thieves went through her neighborhood vandalizing homes.

Whenever I feel threatened, I am comforted by David’s assertion (Psalm 18) that the Lord is my Rock, Fortress, Deliverer, Refuge, Shield, and Horn of Salvation. In the Book of Exodus, Moses tells us that “God will fight for us.” This theme of defense and protection is repeated as Paul assures us that God’s sense of justice and righteousness is so strong that, “He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you.”

Are you experiencing trouble and turmoil in your life today? Have you spoken God’s Word over your situation? Have you invoked the Word of God and given the angels assigned to you something to do? Have you spoken to your mountain and commanded that it be removed? If you are being attacked, rest assured God is watching. God knows your sorrow and your torment. Like any powerful and loving parent God will not let your hardships go unnoticed.

Child of God, are you being bullied today? If so, I encourage you to ask God to step in and take over. Ask Him to show His righteousness and justice. Ask Him to get in the middle of your situation. Ask Him to make a special delivery to your tormentor. Ask God to trouble your troubles.

Lord, thank you for your grace and protection. Give me rest and perfect peace in the shadow of your almighty hand. Turn all my troubles around and send them back to their source. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Pray for a Big Belly

(Filled with Living Water)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/51%20chapt%201%20dev%2022.mp3>

*“He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said,
out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.”
(John 7:38, KJV)*

The belly refers to the front or inner part of the body, the abdomen, stomach, womb, insides, or gut. We often talk about a man’s belly and the functions it plays in his life. We hear these expressions: he has a real fire in his belly; every woman knows the key to a man’s heart is through his belly; his words knocked the wind out of me like a punch in the belly; his joke gave me a real belly laugh; his beer-belly is so big, I bet, he hasn’t seen his toes in years; his belly is so big he walks like an egg on legs; he must be cooking something in that belly; honey, I couldn’t hear a word you said my belly was growling so loud; I felt like crawling out of there like a snake on my belly; rebellions of the belly are the worst; one man’s theology is another man’s belly laugh; when a man’s belly is full, it makes no difference whether he is rich or poor; an army, like a serpent, travels on its belly; if you’re thirsty come on over here and belly up to the bar; Joe’s business went belly up.

I’m encouraged to know that Scripture puts an emphasis on our belly and the vital role it plays in our spiritual life. I have prayed that God would give me a deep and abiding hunger and thirst for righteousness because the Word tells me I will be filled and satisfied. Each day, I look forward to rising long before dawn and feasting on the Word of God. Reading this verse, I can’t help but think that every Christian should be praying for a big belly – filled to the rim and running over with the Word of God – a cool and refreshing river of living water!

*Lord, thank you for giving me a deep and abiding hunger and thirst for you and your Word.
Give me a big belly and fill me with your Spirit to overflowing. Through the blood
of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

CHAPTER 2

Marriage, Family and Relationships are God's Building Blocks

“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’... Then the LORD God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.’... The man said, ‘This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man.’ For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.”

(Genesis 1:26-28; 2:18, 23-24, NASB)

“He who finds a wife finds a good thing And obtains favor From the LORD...An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her, And he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not evil All the days of her life.”

(Proverbs 18:22; 31:10-12, NASB)



Get Up and Leave

(God, Marriage, Family, and Work)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/53%20chapt%20%20dev%201.mp3>

“When the Wise Men had left, Joseph had a dream. In the dream an angel of the Lord appeared to him. ‘Get up!’ The angel said. ‘Take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you to come back. Herod is going to search for the child. He wants to kill him.’ Joseph got up. During the night, he left for Egypt with the child and his mother Mary.”
(Matthew 2:13-14, NIRV)

Every parent knows the demands of middle-of-the night feedings and diaper changes for newborns. As I read this passage about Joseph’s actions to protect baby Jesus from Herod, I am encouraged and convicted at the same time. In this passage, we see that Joseph’s love for God and Jesus went far beyond temporary discomfort and loss of sleep. Without hesitation or debate, he gave up everything for Jesus. He left his village, friends and neighbors, business, home, and possessions. He left it all to protect Jesus.

Living in Houston, Karen and I see families every day that have made this same level of sacrifice. We live in a section of the city that is home to a large population of immigrants from several Latin countries. Driving ten minutes from our home, we enter a different world and are surrounded by the artistry, customs, products, and foods of India, China, and the Far East. As I pass these neighborhoods, I often wonder how many of these parents came to Houston with a “Joseph heart” to save their children from the ravages of war, starvation, and poverty to give them a new life. As a Christian, I am encouraged by their hunger and thirst for life and their willingness to get up and leave in the middle of the night.

Has the Lord sent His angels to talk to you lately? Is He telling you to get up and leave old and familiar neighborhoods, dysfunctional relationships, addictive behaviors and habits, meaningless jobs, dying churches and move to a new place? Does God have a fresh start waiting for you, but you have been afraid or unwilling to take the first step? I encourage you to be like Joseph. Get up in the middle of the night and leave your past behind. Trust God as He leads you into a new life and new beginnings.

*Lord, thank you for this powerful example of the importance of trusting and obeying your voice. Show me all the areas of my life that I need to leave behind. Give me the courage to get up in the middle of the night and follow you.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

A Good Wife

(The Importance of Marriage and Family)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/55%20chapt%20%20dev%202.mp3>

*“Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her:
Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all.”
(Proverbs 31:28-29, NIV)*

Every manager and supervisor know that a good family life supports a good work life. We all know from experience that when our employees are having trouble at home with marital issues, health concerns, financial challenges, issues with children (letters or phone calls from school) that these difficulties will spill over and impact their attitudes and work performance. Suddenly a loyal and dependable employee miss deadlines, shows up late or leaves early, is distracted, irritable and causing problems with coworkers.

How is your home life? Do you go to work refreshed and excited or tired and worn out from sleepless nights of worry and stress? For five years, I went down front during the altar call for relationships and marriage. After years of heartache from a painful divorce, I found myself asking God to bring me a wife. The Holy Spirit filled my mouth with these words, “Lord, bring the woman into my life that you want for me. I picked last time Lord and it did not go well. I need your help, Lord!”

I remember the day Karen and I met. Five days after our first date, I knew she was the one the Lord had picked for me. I give thanks and praise to God every morning for my wife. No, she is not perfect, but she is perfect for me. Yes, we are different, but we work hard to celebrate our differences. She is my Godsend. She is truly a remarkable woman of God. Every time I read Proverbs 31, tears run down my face, and I say, “Thank you Lord for my sweetheart, my wife. I am richly blessed.”

Are you single and looking? Are you ready for a marriage ordained by God? If so, ask yourself, “Is my picker broken? Do I always pick the wrong person for the wrong reasons?” Maybe it’s time you asked the Lord to pick for you!

*Lord, thank you for ordering my steps and for bringing my sweetheart, my wife,
into my life. Help me love her, cherish her, and praise her all the days of my life.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

A Perfect Sanctuary

(Peace in Our House)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/56%20chapt%202%20dev%203.mp3>

“One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD and to meditate in His temple.”

(Psalm 27:4, NASB)

It was common practice during biblical times to give names to places where significant events occurred. In today’s world, we create names (nicknames) for our friends, loved ones, cars and pets. Karen and I decided early on to name our home. We asked the Lord to help us create a home filled with His presence and adorned with His love and compassion. We wanted a home where our love for the Lord could be seen and felt by family and guests as they walked through the door. We desired a place of peace and rest with good food and laughter – where all are welcome.

After prayer and discussion, we were led by the Holy Spirit to call our home, “A Perfect Sanctuary!” Next, we allowed the Lord to direct us as we examined our furnishings, art, and accessories to determine what stayed and what had to go. Karen has her spot where she sits, listens to her messages on her phone and spends time in her favorite Bible. I have my own place for morning Bible study, but my special place is our prayer garden in the back yard! I go there to spend time in God’s presence in the pre-dawn hours while the world is asleep, quiet, and motionless. I marvel at the array of colors radiating from our flowers, fruit trees, and potted plants. I am filled with joy as I look up at the early morning sun as it bursts through the dark night. Often, guests will make the comment, “Your home is so beautiful and peaceful. I never want to leave whenever I come here.”

What name would you give your home? Invite the Lord to help you create an environment that is pleasing to Him and to give you the name that reflects His glory. Pray and invite God to bless your home and fill it with His love, light, joy, and peace. Dedicate your house to the Lord and like David declare, “I will dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.”

Lord, thank you for our home and for the amazing life that unfolds within these walls. Fill our home with your love, mercy, and grace. Bless our home so it may serve as a place of rest and peace to all who enter. I give you all the glory and praise for a life filled with your presence.

Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

God Is My Witness

(The Power of Testimony and Agreement)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/57%20chapt%202%20dev%204.mp3>

"In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two men is valid. I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me."

(John 8:17-18, NIV)

According to Webster's Dictionary, the word "witness" means: to see, hear, or know by personal presence and perception; to be present at an occurrence as a formal witness; to bear witness to; testify to; give or afford evidence of; to attest by one's signature. A witness is a person who gives personal testimony, declares agreement, or validates another person's account of facts, details, or situations. The world has adopted an expression for the meaning of this passage of Scripture. We say, "God is my witness." In effect, the person is declaring, "I am telling you the truth." Here Jesus tells the Pharisees that He tells the truth, and that God is His witness.

I have noticed that many Christians are reluctant when it comes to sharing their personal testimony. They are self-conscious, anxious, or embarrassed about opening up about areas of brokenness, and putting the intimate and often messy details of their life on public display. In contrast, I openly confess all of the broken parts of my life. I share my journey and tell people all the time that I spent four decades as the "Prodigal Son" living a life of pride and rebellion, selfishness and self-effort, sinful disobedience, and separation from God.

My time in the world led to extreme periods of dizzy success, heartache and loss, brokenness, and pain. By God's mercy and grace, I am in a different place now, but it is not because of my efforts. Like Jesus, I have a testimony to share about God's love and the impact of His amazing and life-changing grace. There was a time when my life was filled with intense loss, depression, and despair. Now I have an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, an awesome loving Spirit-led wife that I cherish, a revitalized and Christ-centered professional life, a calling on my life to encourage others and more joy and peace than I have ever known. Yes, all I have said is true and God is my witness!

Lord, thank you for the opportunity to be a daily witness for you. Help me be a source of truth and beacon of light in a dark world. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Adam's First Sin Was a Failure to Lead

(Crisis of Leadership)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/58%20chapt%20%20dev%205.mp3>

"He said, 'I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself.' And He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?' The man said, 'The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate.'"

(Genesis 3:10-12, NASB)

Every leader I've ever worked with can recount the times they witnessed scenes similar to the one in the garden. They walked into the executive suite, conference room, production area, or break room, and immediately knew that in their absence, something had changed. Can you imagine the scene in the Garden of Eden? Something profound happened. Adam and Eve's sinful behavior produced a fundamental shift in the relationship between God and man. Disobedience and sin came into the world. In shame, guilt, and fear Adam attempted to hide from God. As I read this CHAPTER, I'm struck by Adam's overwhelming crisis of leadership and immense failure. I wonder: Where was he when Eve was talking to the serpent? Did he know what was going on and simply failed to act? If he knew and ignored it, what was he doing that could have been more important than Eve talking to Satan and falling for his lies? How could he be unaware of her dissatisfaction with their life and her questions about God's love for them? Where was he when she picked the apple and began to eat? Did he fail to relay God's specific instructions about life in the Garden? Was he standing by watching passively and wondering where all this might lead? Why did he choose to ignore God's instructions and join Eve's rebellion, willfully and blatantly defying God? Why was he so afraid to face a loving God and give Him the bad news? Why did he blame Eve and subsequently God, instead of accepting responsibility and owning the problem? As a leader and husband, Adam failed multiple times in the Garden with catastrophic consequences for mankind.

As sons of God, leaders, and husbands, we must not replicate Adam's failures. I encourage you to ask God to show you where you need to grow and develop as a godly leader and husband. There's more at stake than you can ever imagine.

*Lord, thank you for opportunities to lead others according to your Word.
Teach me to willingly obey you and lead like Jesus. Through the blood
of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

God Made Wives to be Coaches and Mentors

(A Perfect Helper)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/59%20chapt%202%20dev%206.mp3>

“Now the Lord God said, It is not good (sufficient, satisfactory) that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper meet (suitable, adapted, complementary) for him.”
(Genesis 2:18, AMP)

For a time in the world of work every young Apprentice was assigned to work under a Master Craftsman. Apprenticeship lasted years and only ended when the Master decided the Apprentice was ready and no longer needed such close supervision or instruction and was ready to stand on his own two feet. Times have changed. Now new hires start one day, are thrown into the deep end of the pool and expected to learn how to swim on their own – under the “Sink or Swim” principle. Truth remains that we all need instruction and guidance, help and assistance from others who are more experienced, skilled, and knowledgeable. We hear, “Behind every good man is a good woman.” As our creator, God knew our limitations and created a helper, advisor, and coach for us. Arts or business did not invent coaching and mentoring, God did! God established the first coaching program. He created wives especially for this role. They are our perfect helpmate. They see things we do not. In fact, they see what we see differently, and they behave differently. Women express love and compassion are nurturing and supportive. In contrast, men often express fear, aggression and hostility and are commanding and controlling. Men, we must rely on our wives to advise us and teach us how to interact and communicate, especially when we would prefer to withdraw and retreat into our cave!

Daily, I thank God for my wife. She is an amazing Woman of God. God has blessed her with great wisdom and discernment. She has gifts, talents, and abilities that I do not. She compliments me. As a team, couple, a family, we’re stronger. I seldom make a decision without her counsel. I’m a better man, husband, friend, Executive Coach and Ministry Leader because of her!

Child of God, turn to your wife and invite her to speak to you. When she does, listen. Like me, you may not always like what you hear, but trust God. You need to hear it!

*Lord, thank you for my wife, your precious gift designed and created especially for me.
Teach me to listen to her counsel. Give me an understanding mind and a hearing heart.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

CHAPTER 3

Jesus' Grace and Truth Saves, Rescues, and Protects

*"IN THE beginning [before all-time] was the Word (Christ), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God Himself. He was present originally with God. All things were made and came into existence through Him; and without Him was not even one thing made that has come into being. In Him was Life, and the Life was the Light of men."
(John 1:1-4, AMP)*

*"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, "This is he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'") Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."
(John 1:14-17, TNIV)*



God with Us

(Jesus Is Alive)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/62%20chapt%203%20dev%201.mp3>

“Behold, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a Son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel--which, when translated, means, God with us.”
(Matthew 1:23, AMP)

The birth of Jesus, the Messiah, had been foretold centuries earlier by Isaiah. The word used here for Jesus (Emmanuel) is translated, “God with us.” Truth is, there are times when we all have felt alone. This feeling is very unsettling because we were not made to be alone. Throughout history, many cultures have practiced rites of passage to signify the transition from child to adult. In these ceremonies, you are left alone to face trials, turn inward and discover your inner self, and learn to survive on your own.

The reality for every Christian is that we are not alone, God is with us. When Jesus was taken up to heaven, He left us the Holy Spirit as our Comforter, Counselor, Helper, Intercessor, Advocate, Strengthener, and Standby (John 14:26). He gave us the Holy Spirit to remind us and reassure us that we are never alone. Whether we’re at work, home, school, the doctor’s office awaiting test results, stranded on a dark street late at night with a flat tire, going on our first sales call, making our first presentation, confused, and lost in a foreign country, we must remember we are never alone. We must change our thinking and our speech. We must replace “I” with “We.” We have Emmanuel, “God with us” at all times.

Child of God, ask God to show you any area of your life where you have believed the lie and felt the fear on your neck. Cry out to Jesus and talk with Him in these dark and fearful moments. Trust the Holy Spirit to be an active participant and helper instead of a quiet observer! Start including Him all the time in everything you do. Get His advice and counsel. Turn every “I” moment into a “We” moment, and never edge God out. After all, God really is with us!

Lord, thank you for the power and truth of your Word. Thank you for being with me all the time no matter where I go. Help me surrender all of me to you and replace every “I” with “We.” Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Forget Facebook!

(Say Yes, Like, and Connect with Jesus)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/63%20chapt%203%20dev%202.mp3>

“For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction.

You know how we lived among you for your sake.”

(1 Thessalonians 1:4-5, NIV)

Reports show that Facebook reported over 1.65 billion monthly users in the first quarter of 2016. We have an intense need to connect with others. Facebook and social media have changed the way we live, connect, and share our lives with others on a daily basis. Facebook uses software, words, and images to accomplish this task. Paul’s message here is very clear. The Gospel of Jesus Christ invites and draws us to connect with Jesus, nothing more, nothing less. The Gospel also uses more than words. It comes with power, the Holy Spirit and strong conviction and belief.

Looking back on my spiritual journey, I have vivid memories of times the Holy Spirit came in power and: held me and lavished God’s love and compassion on me; soothed and restored my broken heart and spirit; spoke revelation truth and lifted me up out of a dark pit; whispered with a small voice that would not stop until I took action; demonstrated His presence as God’s glory moved across the room and performed miracles; warned me of impending peril and destruction; pierced my heart to the core with a familiar verse; crushed generational curses and strongholds; encouraged me to take a leap of faith that led to victory; turned on the bright light of God’s Word that overcame the darkness of this world; exposed lies and deception carefully hidden by others; blessed me with the anointed touch that brought healing to my aching body.

Are you struggling to connect with others? If so, I encourage you to open your heart to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Invite Jesus into your life today. In a world striving to belong and to connect, forget Facebook. Say “Yes,” like and connect with Jesus Christ. Jesus is the only Friend you will ever need. He is willing to chat and hang out anytime, anywhere.

*Lord, thank you for the life-changing power of your Gospel. Today, I say,
“Yes” to you Jesus. Fill me with your loving presence and change my life.*

Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Earnestly Desired

(Jesus' Desire to Hang Out and Share a Meal)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/64%20chapt%203%20dev%203.mp3>

"And He said to them, 'I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.'"

(Luke 22:15-16, NASB)

I'm always impressed by the purposeful and intentional nature of Jesus' character. He always focused on accomplishing His Father's business. Here, the word "earnestly" is a clear expression of Jesus' nature. Webster's Dictionary defines "earnest" as: serious in intention, purpose, or effort; resolute and determined; sincerely zealous; showing depth and sincerity of feeling. Knowing the Last Supper would be one of the last times He would see the disciples before He was taken and crucified, Jesus had an earnest desire to hang out and share a meal before moving on to accomplish God's will and purpose for His life on earth. In His interaction with the disciples there are no expressions of regret, sadness, depression, or withdrawal. He relaxed, broke bread and ate, drank wine, washed some dirty feet, talked and used this time of fellowship to: foretell His imminent death on the cross and resurrection; teach the life-changing lessons of Holy Communion; acknowledge His betrayer (Judas); model a new way to connect with and lead others (servant leadership) by washing dirty feet; encourage Simon Peter to walk out his divine destiny; remind them of His provision and protection; prepare them for their mission and calling; set in motion the events that fulfilled His divine destiny as foretold in Scripture. Yesterday as I took communion, I reflected on the purpose of the Last Supper. In earnest, I thanked God for Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. In earnest, I celebrated the New Covenant He ratified through His blood. In earnest, I expressed joy and thanksgiving to God for salvation. In earnest, I gave Him praise for the peace in my life. In earnest, I gave Him praise that it is well with my soul.

Child of God, how about you? What are you earnest about? I encourage you to have an earnest hunger, thirst, and desire for Jesus. Seek Him with all your heart, mind, and strength. Rest assured that Jesus will do His part.

Lord, thank you for the unconditional love and mercy that you have for me as I look at Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. Jesus, teach me to earnestly desire and to seek you with all my heart, mind, soul, and strength each day. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Blood Rights

(Understanding Your Inheritance)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/65%20chapt%203%20dev%204.mp3>

*“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter
the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus.”
(Hebrews 10:19, NIV)*

Rights and privileges come through various channels – as part of family inheritance or birthright, reward or free gift, response to a simple request, or the result of hard work and disciplined effort. The Bible talks about “Blood rights.” We have all heard the expression, “Blood is thicker than water.” Yes, blood carries special privileges, rights, and guarantees even responsibilities. As Christians, the Bible tells us we have rights and privileges that were established on the cross, because Jesus shed His blood to atone for our sins. His blood is unique, one-of-a-kind, and the most precious substance known to heaven and earth. As He died on the cross, He spoke to heaven and earth and proclaimed, “It is finished.” He ensured that we would have certain rights and privileges. His blood paid the ultimate price for us before God. The charge for all of our past, present, and future sins was stamped “Paid in full.” His blood: gave us everlasting life; purchased mercy and forgiveness; provided reconciliation and redemption, healing and deliverance; produced a thorough cleansing from sin; served as a model of obedience and faithfulness; guaranteed God’s provision, favor and protection; enabled the blessing and anointing of God to come upon us; provided a way out or escape from every messy and painful situation; defeated Satan and the forces of darkness; broke open the gates of hell; conquered death and destruction; ensured that every Christian could have access before the throne of God. These are your rights and privileges as a Son or Daughter of the Most High God. They are your rights and your inheritance guaranteed by the blood of Jesus on the cross.

Child of God, proclaim and confess these blood rights over your life today. Jesus paid the ultimate price for them. They are yours. Don’t let the promises of God, paid for by the blood of Jesus Christ go to waste!

*Lord, thank you for your love, mercy, and grace. Jesus, I stand in awe and am humbled
by your sacrifice. Your blood paid the price for reconciliation, redemption, restoration,
healing, deliverance, abundance, and wholeness. Your blood has spoken.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Do You Need a Trailblazer?

(Let Jesus Lead the Way)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/66%20chapt%203%20dev%205.mp3>

“He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: ‘A voice of one calling in the desert, Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth.’”

(Luke 3:3-5, NIV)

The angel Gabriel spoke about John the Baptist before he was born. John was to be a prophet. He was ordained to come out of the desert, preach a gospel of repentance, baptize with water, and prepare a path for the Lord. John was destined to be a trailblazer and pathfinder, blazing a trail that led to Jesus. Trailblazers and pathfinders stand out from the crowd. They know who they are and are comfortable in their own skin. They are passionate visionaries, confident, bold, and courageous, adventurers who are mission focused. They're persistent and relentless, not easily intimidated or discouraged, redirected, or stopped. They're resourceful and adapt quickly to their environment. They find a way to stay the course and overcome obstacles. They have a vision of the future and see things that others don't. They share their vision with others. They blaze a trail and create a path for others to follow. Our world desperately needs Christians who have accepted God's call on their life to be trailblazers and pathfinders. Years of rebellion and disobedience to God's Word coupled with self-effort have left the world, our nation, families, and many Christians lost in the wilderness. We no longer have a clear sense of direction. Spiritually empty, we wander around a landscape filled with countless distractions and noise; 12-step programs and endless self-effort; and unending opportunities to blindly follow social trends all in the pursuit of self-satisfaction, power, wealth, and materialism. We go down roads leading to dead ends and wonder how we lost our way.

Do you need a new path? If so, I encourage you to ask Jesus to come into your life and show you, His Way. Allow Him to speak to you through God's Word and the Holy Spirit. Allow Him to blaze a new path for you. His Way is straight and smooth. Best of all, if you get tired of walking, He will pick you up and carry you!

*Lord, thank you for showing me the Way and for being a light in the darkness of this lost world.
Jesus, I trust you. Hold my hand and walk with me every step of the way. Through the blood
of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

You Have a Personal Agent

(A Divine Mediator)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/67%20chapt%203%20dev%206.mp3>

“But as it now is, He [Christ] has acquired a [priestly] ministry which is as much superior and more excellent [than the old] as the covenant (the agreement) of which he is the Mediator (the Arbiter, Agent) is superior and more excellent, [because] it is enacted and rests upon more important (sublimier, higher, and nobler) promises.”
(Hebrews 8:6, AMP)

In the world of professional sports and entertainment, it is common practice to have an Agent. Your Agent can have a huge impact on your visibility (marketability), income and level of success. Agents typically meet with team owners, industry executives, the media, sponsors, and promoters. Agents present your stats and track record; negotiate contracts, royalty payments, perks and benefits, travel arrangements, endorsements, and public appearances. Your Agent must be someone you trust to represent you and act in your best interest. In exchange for their services, Agents collect large fees and royalties. Incidents of Agents mismanaging, or misusing client funds is sadly a familiar story.

As Christians, we never have to worry about this problem. We have El Shaddai (God Almighty). We never have to doubt or question His credentials, motives, or level of sincerity. Jesus, Our Divine Mediator or Agent, gave His life for us. With Jesus, there are no contracts to sign or checks to write. He is totally trustworthy, faithful, and dependable, and He is on call 24/7. Understand Jesus doesn't represent just anyone. He works by invitation only and has some restrictions. You must: invite Him into your heart and surrender your life to Him completely; be prepared to leave your old life behind and live a new life in Him; believe in Him and Him alone; be ready to come out of the darkness and into the light; leave selfishness, fear, doubt, and unbelief behind; understand that love, compassion, righteousness, obedience, and faithfulness are required and always rewarded.

Are you dealing with difficult issues and feeling overwhelmed? If so, call Jesus and ask Him to be your Agent. Trust Him to give you what you need according to God's Word. As your Agent, He's always at work on your behalf. His help and assistance last for an eternity. Do you know Him? If not, call Him today. He eagerly awaits your call!

*Lord, thank you for your New Covenant that guarantees life and eternal salvation.
Jesus, help me to trust you more each day and to turn every area of my life over to you.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Jesus Calls Me Friend

(He Really Likes Me!)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/68%20chapt%203%20dev%207.mp3>

"I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you."
(John 15:15, NIV)

In life, we develop many relationships. Some of them last for a season, others a lifetime. At any point in time, we can usually look back and count our close, dependable, and trustworthy friends on one hand. You know – the kind of friends who are always there for you through thick and thin, good, or bad, happy, or sad, no matter what. I find it amazing and very comforting to know that Jesus calls me friend. Yes, He is my friend, the best friend I will ever have. He talks to me, reveals, and explains secrets about the mysteries of life. Sometimes we just hang out together and I simply embrace who He is. I trust Jesus and look forward to sharing the most private details of my life: my hopes, dreams, disappointments, hurts, sadness, anger, and frustration. I am at ease, and I know that I can tell Him everything about any situation in my life. I am comforted and reassured to know that Jesus never forgets or breaks a promise. Even on the days when I struggle and miss the mark or fail the “love test,” He remains my friend. He is always patient, forgiving, and accepting of my shortcomings. I know that I can trust Him to give me the grace to face every situation. I can count on Him to back me up in any fight. I feel secure knowing that He will never abandon me or betray me. I can always count on Him to be supportive and understanding. He encourages me when I feel tired and weak and am on the verge of giving up. Yes, Jesus is my friend.

Do you know Him? Does He call you friend? If not, I encourage you to invite Him into your life today. If you are hesitant, you can call me anytime. I'll be glad to share Him with you.

*Lord, thank you for loving me and for sending Jesus to be my friend.
Jesus, I cannot imagine life without you. My life will never be the same
because I have you. Through the blood of Jesus
and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

All Are One

(Can You See Him in Me?)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/69%20chapt%203%20dev%208.mp3>

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”
(Galatians 3:28, NASB)

While I am a Caucasian man married to an African American woman, I can honestly say that I do not see color or race. I see people who possess different shapes, sizes, customs, traditions, habits, and languages. I see men and women, young and old with a common human experience. When you peel away our outer skin and look inside, we are all the same. We talk, laugh, cry, love, work, struggle, and hope for a better life. Paul reminds us that as Christians we are all one in Christ. Through faith we are all the same – cherished Sons and Daughters of God. We must learn to see fellow Christians as family members in the body of Christ. It’s time to understand we are all on the same journey.

Why do we compare, evaluate, and judge? Why do we criticize and condemn? Why do we act as if we are better than our neighbor? At times, we have all: been prideful, rebellious, and disobedient; chosen to go our own way; pretended we did not hear God calling or argued with God; acted like spoiled two-year old children; been selfish and self-centered; failed to remember when God made a way when we were in a ditch; felt fear, doubt, and unbelief; cried out to God, grown tired of waiting and resorted to self-effort.

Child of God, I praise God every day that Jesus died on the cross so we can have a new life filled with God’s love, mercy, and grace. The blood of Jesus reconciled all of us to Him. His blood washed all of us clean from the filth and stench of sin. By faith in Jesus, we have all received gifts of mercy and grace. I am filled with joy that I can look at others, my brothers, and sisters in Christ, and say, “We are all one in Him.”

Lord, thank you for your life-changing mercy and grace. Jesus, I give you praise that I am one with you and with every other believer. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Do You Carry His Initials?

(You are Custom Made by Jesus)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/70%20chapt%203%20dev%209.mp3>

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”

(Ephesians 2:10, NASB)

During college, I worked as a carpenter on crews building custom homes. I fell in love with skilled craftsmanship, especially things made from exotic woods. Over the years, I've enjoyed going to flea markets, craft fairs and festivals, looking for hand-made items, especially things made from wood. I've often imagined walking into an antique shop and finding a table with the initials J.C. (Jesus Christ) neatly carved on the underside. Can you imagine the excitement such a discovery would generate, especially among Christians?

As Christians, every morning as we look in the mirror, we should look for God's initials, His personal stamp. As Paul tells us, we are all God's workmanship and have been recreated in the image of Christ. God's mercy allowed us to be chosen from the scrap pile, selected, and tested to ensure that we are suitable for His purpose. Just like any skilled craftsman, God put His mind, heart, and soul in us. His loving and compassionate hands sketched, positioned, chiseled, cut, trimmed, sanded, and fit every single piece in place according to His perfect design for our lives. His wisdom guided every step of the tedious process. His sweat (faithfulness) dripped on us as He labored over us and finished the task. His love is the glue that binds every joint and holds us firmly in place. His grace and anointing provide the varnish and protection we need to endure tests and neglect. His thoughts and plans were designed and built into us from the beginning, so that at the appointed time we might be useful in His hands and accomplish His perfect will for our lives.

Child of God, give thanks to God for His labor of love. Remember, God designed and made you. Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the skilled Carpenter finished you. You are a custom-made piece. You are His workmanship. Carry His initials for all to see.

Lord, I rejoice that I have been chosen from the scrap pile, shaped, and molded by your hands and that I am a work of love. Jesus, complete the work in me. Stamp your initials on my mind, heart, and spirit for all to see. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Remain, Remain, Remain

(Listen and Stay Close)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/71%20chapt%203%20dev%2010.mp3>

“Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

(John 15:4-5, NIV)

As a writer, I know I can draw the reader’s attention or emphasize a special meaning by repeating a word or phrase multiple times. Knowing this, I am drawn to the repeated use of the word “remain” in this passage. Notice, Jesus used the word “remain” multiple times. We can see that Jesus was very insistent on this point. Webster’s Dictionary defines “remain” as: to stay behind or continue in the same state or place; to go on or continue as before even after a departure or loss. We communicate this idea by saying, “Don’t take another step,” “Don’t move a muscle,” “Freeze,” “Hold it right there,” or “Don’t even blink.” We use these expressions when we feel threatened or afraid. In these moments, we must remember to be perfectly still and remain in Jesus.

As a Christian, I confess that this is hard for me to do at times. It seems that like a young child, I get distracted and wander off. I have learned that I’m on the move and getting off track whenever I start using the word “I” multiple times in a sentence. Whenever I do this, I force myself to stop mid-sentence. I ask the Holy Spirit to teach me, help me and lead me. I immediately change my thoughts and speech to “We” and allow my spirit to remain in Jesus. I pray that the Holy Spirit will close every door in my path that would take me away from the will of God for my life. I remind myself that my life can only bear rich and abundant fruit as long as I remain in Jesus.

Child of God, I encourage you to ask God to show you any area of your life where you have wandered off or strayed away. Ask Him where you edged Him out and said, “I got this.” Ask Him to help you to continue, to go on, to stay right there and remain in Him!

Lord, thank you for your presence in my life. Jesus, be the vine of life and do not depart from me. Help me resist the urge to wander off that I might bear rich fruit in my life all for your glory. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Calling All Sick Sinners

(Jesus Makes House Calls)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/72%20chapt%203%20dev%2011.mp3>

“When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: ‘Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?’

On hearing this, Jesus said to them, ‘It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.’”

(Mark 2:16-17, NIV)

As I read this passage, I’m drawn to the last two sentences. Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.” Jesus equates sickness with sin. The similarities between sickness and sin are obvious once you stop to think about it. Like a deadly microorganism that invades a healthy body and causes sickness, “Sin Germs” invade your life, destroy healthy spiritual tissue, reduce your spiritual immune system, and cause spiritual disease and death. The sin germ leads to “Sin Sickness” which is highly contagious and spreads from person to person. Sin Sickness comes in many forms and levels of severity. It can start with a small scratch or cut that soon infects the entire body, mind, and spirit. Symptoms include persistent high levels of fear, doubt, and unbelief; mental, emotional, and spiritual agitation; delusions and distorted thought processes; elevated levels of pride, rebellion, and resistance to treatment (God’s Word); withdrawal and separation from God, His Word, and other Christians; erratic and uncontrolled bouts of selfishness and disregard for others; spiritual blindness, and disorientation, confusion and poor decision making. In extreme cases, it can also lead to deep depression and chronic hopelessness, irritability, hostility, sleeplessness, and chronic fatigue. Left untreated, Sin Sickness leads to a painful death.

Are you walking around suffering from Sin Sickness? Do you need the love of Jesus and the miracle of salvation to cure what ails you? If you do, I encourage you to invite Jesus into your life as your Lord and Savior. He is the Master Physician and Healer and has never lost a patient. His mercy and grace have an unfailing cure rate. Once, we were all sick sinners and needed a savior. Give God praise our Sin Sickness is why He came!

Lord, thank you for your love, mercy, and grace. Jesus, you are the only one I need to cure the sickness of sin in my life. Your love, forgiveness, and blood on the cross did it all.

Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Even Demons Know Jesus

(Jesus Is Real)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/73%20chapt%203%20dev%2012.mp3>

“Whenever the unclean spirits saw Him, they would fall down before Him and shout, “You are the Son of God!” And He earnestly warned them not to tell who He was.”
(Mark 3:11-12, NASB)

This verse tells us that whenever Jesus appeared, demonic spirits fell down before Him and proclaimed Jesus, “Son of God.” While Satan’s children knew who Jesus was and fell down before Him, stubborn and rebellious men did not. Instead they chose to reject Jesus and crucify Him. Why do some refuse to acknowledge and accept Jesus as Son of God? The Word tells us their hearts have been hardened and they do not have ears to hear or eyes to see.

In a 2013 *TIME* magazine article, *Who’s Biggest? The 100 Most Significant Figures in History*, Jesus ranked No. 1. Can the 2.2 billion Christians alive today be wrong about Jesus? Last year at a Gathering event here in Houston, I heard Lee Strobel, author of best-selling *Case for Christ*. Lee shared his powerful testimony of his transition from atheist to zealous believer in Jesus Christ. He recounted his extensive and arduous journey as an investigative reporter, the research and the interviews which led him to the conclusion, “Jesus lived, He died, and He is the Christ.” Lee built his case on irrefutable facts, historical documents filled with eyewitness accounts and testimonies of encounters with Christ as He worked miracles and changed people’s lives. In the process, Lee’s heart and mind were changed. Now God uses him as a messenger to deliver the Good News of Christ to others in his best-selling books and speaking engagements.

Jesus is real. He lived, preached the Gospel, healed the sick, performed great miracles, died on the cross and was resurrected. He taught us the Word of God and left us the Holy Spirit. If you do not know Jesus, right now this moment, invite Him into your life. Accept Him as the Son of God, Lord of Lords, and Savior. Believe in Him, trust Him and worship Him. Even demons know Jesus and fall down before Him. What are you waiting for?

Lord, thank you for sending your Son into the world. I stand in awe and wonder of you. Jesus, help me to see you everywhere I look and to fall to the ground joyfully in praise as I call you, “Lord and Savior.” Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

The Gift of Peace

(Life with Jesus)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/74%20chapt%203%20dev%2013.mp3>

"Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me... Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful."

(John 14:1, 27, NASB)

In this passage, Jesus tells us how to live our life – by believing in, trusting in, and relying on Him. I am drawn to His words, "My [own] peace I now give and bequeath to you." Webster's Dictionary defines "bequeath" as: means to hand down, pass on, or to dispose of properly through a last will. Every Christian receives a priceless gift and inheritance from Jesus – the gift of peace. Not just any peace, but His peace. Jesus knew that within hours He would be seized, and after the mockery of a trial before the Priests, He would be turned over to Pilate, scourged to the point of death, and crucified on the cross. In the hours leading up to His crucifixion, we see Jesus' ability to walk in peace regardless of the circumstances. Facing His accusers, Jesus remained silent, refused to be angry, resentful, or bitter. He kept His peace. On the cross, He forgave His tormentors and asked God to forgive them as well.

As I strive to become a Mighty Man of God, I've decided to receive Jesus' gift of peace that He gave to me. I receive the "gift of peace" He handed down as an act of His love for me. It is mine. I own it. I've decided that Satan will not take it from me. Circumstances will not cause me to lay it down. As I rest in His peace, I will not be troubled, agitated, disturbed, fearful, intimidated, or unsettled no matter what. Yes, this is impossible for me to accomplish on my own, but with Christ in me, I can walk in peace at all times.

Child of God, have you accepted Jesus' gift of peace? I encourage you to accept His gift and rest in His peace regardless of the turmoil, trials, or attacks going on around you. Decide today that you will not be agitated, disturbed, or fearful, and walk in His peace no matter what.

Lord, thank you for your Word and for this powerful lesson on peace. Jesus, I receive your gift of peace and choose to walk in it. I will not be agitated, disturbed, fearful, or unsettled no matter what. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Just Believe

(The Power of Believing)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/75%20chapt%203%20dev%2014.mp3>

“While Jesus was still speaking, some men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. ‘Your daughter is dead,’ they said. ‘Why bother the teacher anymore?’ Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, ‘Don’t be afraid; just believe.’”

(Mark 5:35-36, NIV)

We meet Jairus at a critical moment. He must consider the facts and decide WHAT to believe and WHO to believe. Some in the temple said, “Your daughter is dead,” yet Jesus said, “Don’t be afraid, just believe.” He faces every parent’s worst nightmare; his child is dead. Now he faces a life-or-death decision: WHO will he listen to and WHAT will he believe. Hearing of Jesus’ ability to heal, Jairus goes to find Jesus, and begs Him to return with him and lay hands on his sick daughter that she might be healed. Now it seems as if it is too late. Men come from his house to report that while he was away, his child has died. We read in verses 25-34 that his faith was reinforced as he witnessed Jesus perform a miraculous healing on the way to his house. He watched as a woman, sick for 12 years, simply came up behind Jesus, touched His robe and was healed. He likely overheard her testimony as she fell before Jesus and confessed her faith. He probably heard Jesus declare her healed by faith, and watched her walk away free from sickness, suffering and sin. Now it is his turn. His daughter’s fate rests in his faith in Jesus. In that moment, I am sure he wondered, “Do I give in to doubt and fear and accept the reports that she is dead, or simply believe that Jesus will raise her from the dead?”

I must ask myself, “Do I give in to fear and believe the world’s reports or refuse to fear, have faith, and believe in Jesus?” Jairus’ choice is the choice each of us faces every day. Each moment of the day we must decide WHAT and WHO to believe. There is much at stake – faith or fear, health or sickness, life, or death. I encourage you to just believe. Choose Jesus and choose life. Either way, the choice is yours!

Lord, thank you for your healing, life-changing, and life-saving grace, and mercy. Help me to close my mind and heart to fear and to just believe. Today I choose to believe in you Jesus regardless of what the world says. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Heirs of God

(Co-Heirs with Christ to All of God's Promises)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/76%20chapt%203%20dev%2015.mp3>

"The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory."

(Romans 8:16-17, NIV)

I have to process the full meaning of these words for my life. Paul clearly states that as a Child of God, I am an heir and co-heir with Christ and entitled to share in the glory and inheritance of God's promises. When my dad died and it came time to read his Last Will and Testament, I read it several times to digest it. I tried to imagine his thoughts and feelings at the time he wrote it. I had very mixed feelings about it. As the firstborn son, I was very hurt and disappointed that he did not leave anything to me. In fact, he failed to mention us (me, my brother and sister) by name or leave anything to us. Instead, he left everything to his wife and two children from a second marriage. In a way, I understood it as they were much younger, from a different season in my dad's life and represented his desires to put the past behind him and start over. I was most upset by the fact that he left them sole rights to his home and land, property that has been in our family for five generations.

Since his death and the sudden death of my stepmother a few years later, the five of us decided to put the past behind us. We too decided to create a new life built on hope for the future. Looking back, I see my dad's will was a catalyst that brought healing to our broken family. For Christians, God's Word spells out His will and testament to His children. It details His promises for life on earth and in heaven. I confess that I'm eager to have all that God said I can have as a Son and co-heir with Christ.

Do you know God's promises? Spend time in His Word so you too can come to understand your inheritance as His child and co-heir with Christ! Your full inheritance is waiting for you.

Lord, thank you for your Word. Thank you for all that you have given me: love, mercy, grace, forgiveness, peace, and joy, hope and eternal salvation. Jesus, I receive all of your promises. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

We Are More than Conquerors

(Victory in Every Situation)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/77%20chapt%203%20dev%2016.mp3>

“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

(Romans 8:37-39, NIV)

Paul declares we are more than conquerors. Yes, Child of God, you are a conqueror, one who has victory and defeats the adversary. We win over death and life, angels and demons, present troubles and future troubles, all powers, heights and depths, and all creation. We win every time every day. As conquerors, we receive a hero's welcome and ride in the victory parade. Our names are inscribed in the Book of Life. We join Jesus, the angels, and the saints in heaven.

When asked, what it was like in the Great War, how did you make it? I respond, “Through the blood of Christ Jesus. His love and grace poured over me and sustained me. He trained me for battle. He dressed me in His armor and: fastened the belt of truth around my waist; strapped the breastplate of integrity on my chest to protect my heart; covered my feet with sandals that I might not slip and fall; gave me a shield of faith that deflected every arrow from Satan; strapped on my helmet of salvation to protect my head and mind; handed me His mighty sword (Word of God) that I used to attack and defeat the enemy.” When I was outnumbered, His grace expanded and equipped me. When I felt tired and weak, His grace showed up and made me strong. When I was in despair, His love and sacrifice was all I could think of and His blood on the cross was all I could see. His hands lifted me out of every muddy pit. His grace overcame the impossible. His love taught me to rest and cast my cares on Him. His grace changed everything. No matter what I faced, His love and grace was more!

Child of God, are you facing some tough battles today? If so, I encourage you to call on Jesus. With His love and grace, you win! Put on the full armor of God and fight. Remember, you are more than a conqueror!

Lord, thank you for your love and grace given to me freely through the blood of Christ on the cross. Thank you for a love that conquers all things. Thank you for teaching me that with you I win every battle every time no matter what. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

A Public Spectacle

(The Cross Changed Everything)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/78%20chapt%203%20div%2017.mp3>

“And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.”
(Colossians 2:15, NIV)

Paul talks about the public spectacle that Christ made as He conquered Satan and the powers of darkness on the cross. In 2008, I was blessed to be a part of a public spectacle as Christ ruled the day. I joined 4,000 Christian brothers for a “Men at the Cross” event. As the session started, Joe White entered the dark arena with a spotlight focused on him. He carried a large wooden beam and talked to us as he made his way to the stage. His message was from the eyes of the Roman soldier whose job was to make the cross. On stage, he picked up an ax, large hammer and 8-inch spikes and built a cross. When he was finished, assistants raised the cross and set it center stage for all to see.

In riveting simplicity, Joe explained what happened on the cross. He emphasized the blood of Jesus and what it meant for every Christian. Next, he asked us to take forms from our packets and write down anything that held us in bondage – guilt, shame, condemnation, hurt, anger, resentment, unforgiveness, addiction, stronghold, or generational curse. In silence we made our lists. Tears streamed down my face. Looking up, I saw others wiping away tears, shaking and trembling. Many were embraced and consoled by their friends.

Joe asked us to get up and make our way to the cross. Slowly we stood up and marched to the cross (now in the middle of the auditorium). We handed our lists to the staff, and they nailed them to the cross. Standing there with arms lifted in surrender and worship was a defining moment I’ll never forget. We stood there in realization that the blood of Jesus set us free. We came to the cross broken, hurting, and defeated men. We left delivered, strong, confident, and victorious as Christ once again defeated Satan. I’ll always remember the smiles of joy and peace as we left that day. Now that was a public spectacle!

*Lord, thank you for sending your Son Jesus to die as a sacrifice for my sins.
Jesus, I am in awe of your obedience and faithfulness. On the cross, you
not only defeated Satan but assured that I have victory in you.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Bubbling Over

(Filled with Hope)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/79%20chapt%203%20div%2018.mp3>

“May the God of your hope so fill you with all joy and peace in believing [through the experience of your faith] that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound and be overflowing (bubbling over) with hope.”

(Romans 15:13, AMP)

I’m drawn to the phrase, “bubbling over with hope.” Have you ever wondered why champagne is served at weddings, graduations, and anniversary parties as friends and family come together to celebrate and express their joy, excitement, and hope for the future? When you open a bottle of champagne the pressure inside causes it to bubble over. It does the same thing if you pour it too quickly into the glass. My mind always thinks in terms of images, and I imagine God presiding over the wedding, opening, and pouring the first glass of champagne for the new bride and groom and smiling as it bubbles over. I’ve come to realize that God does that often – He pours into our lives until we bubble over. He pours His love and compassion until we bubble over. He pours His mercy and grace until we bubble over. He pours His forgiveness until we bubble over. He pours His perfect will and plans for our life until we bubble over. He pours peace (prosperity and abundance) until we bubble over. He pours favor until we bubble over. He pours His faithfulness until we bubble over. On the cross, Jesus poured the blood of reconciliation, redemption, restoration, healing, and deliverance to cover us until we bubble over.

Child of God, ask yourself, “When was the last time I invited God to be the Guest of Honor in my life? When was the last time I cast all of my cares on Him and placed my hope and trust in Him? When was the last time I asked God to wash away my sorrows and fill my heart with His perfect love?” I encourage you to invite Jesus into your life today. Celebrate your new life in Him with excitement and hope for the future. Surrender your life to Him and watch as He fills you with peace, joy, and hope until you are bubbling over!

Lord, thank you for pouring your perfect love into my life. Jesus, your love, and grace fills me to the point that I bubble over. I invite you to fill me with joy, happiness, and your perfect peace today and always. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Forget the Personal Bodyguard

(Jesus Is Your Protection)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/80%20chapt%203%20dev%2019.mp3>

*“Open the gates, that the righteous nation may enter, The one that remains faithful.
The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace Because he trusts in You.”*
(Isaiah 26:2-3, AMP)

When was the last time that you felt threatened by someone? Watching news clips of celebrities, politicians, and the super-rich with their entourage of friends, hangers-on, and bodyguards, I am reminded of the 1992 hit movie, *The Bodyguard*. Kevin Costner starred as Frank Farmer and Whitney Houston as Rachel Marron. Frank, a former Secret Service agent experienced at protecting US Presidents, is hired as a personal bodyguard to protect Rachel, a beautiful rock star. In the end, Frank lays his life on the line for Rachel and takes a bullet from a hired assassin to save her life.

As a Christian, I am comforted to know that unlike celebrities, politicians and the super-rich, I do not have to hire a bodyguard to protect me. As a Child of God, I have everything I need in El Shaddai (All-sufficient One). I can call on Jehovah Nissi (The Lord My Banner of Victory), or Jehovah Shalom (My Peace and Wholeness) anytime of the day and night that I feel threatened. I have confidence knowing that the Lord will fight for me (Exo 14:14).

Do you need protection? Are you intimidated by an overbearing and hostile boss or co-worker? Do you routinely face irate customers who vent their frustrations and anger on you? Are you fearful that a co-worker might snap under the pressure and without warning explode in an act of workplace violence? If the answer is yes, I urge you to call on the Lord today. The Word says that He will never leave you or forsake you. God watches over you constantly. Remember, the ending has already been written.

Like Frank, Jesus put His life on the line and shed His blood for you! Forget the personal bodyguard. Jesus is your protection. He is all you need. Keep your eyes on Him and He will keep you safe in perfect peace.

Lord, thank you for the protection of the blood of Jesus Christ. I find rest and perfect peace knowing that you are my God, My Banner of Victory and that you will never leave me or forsake me. I will trust in you at all times. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Driving Up Jesus Christ Parkway

(Following Jesus)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/81%20chapt%203%20dev%2020.mp3>

“Thomas said to Him, ‘Lord, we do not know where You are going, so how can we know the way?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I am the Way and the Truth and the Life; no one comes to the Father except by (through) Me.’”
(John 14:5-6, AMP)

Ever wonder what a map of heaven looks like? Imagine downloading and looking at heaven’s version of Google Maps and what it might look like. I am confident you would not find Pacific Coast Highway (101), Route 66, Interstate 10, 20, 35, the New Jersey Turnpike, Lakeshore Drive or Martin Luther King Boulevard on the map. I think you might be surprised to see only one road leading into heaven – Jesus Christ Parkway. I imagine this well-built and maintained highway was built to last for centuries and accommodate many tired and weary travelers. Unlike worldly highways, there are no rest stops, emergency exits or gas stations. I’m quite sure you will not see a McDonald’s along the way. Instead, I am convinced that the road is lined with angels that greet you as you pass by. The highway is bright with illumination. There are no turns or exit signs. There is no clutter or debris along the way. No signs of travelers who broke down and didn’t make it. The farther along you drive the brighter it gets, and the sky radiates with an indescribable light. Suddenly, the air is filled with the sound of trumpets, praise, and joyful singing. Yes, this road originates on planet earth, but it leads straight to the Kingdom of Heaven and the throne of the Lord.

Are you feeling lost, in need of directions and a strong desire to find heaven, but don’t know how to get there? Don’t worry. It’s easier than you think. Simply: pick up your roadmap (Bible); read it (directions are all spelled out and simple to follow); get on Jesus Christ Parkway by accepting Him as Lord and Savior; once you’re on the Parkway, do not turn off, turnaround or look back; keep your eyes on Jesus and follow the Parkway all the way to heaven. Trust Jesus and stay connected to Him. With Him, you can’t miss it.

Lord, thank you for showing me the one and only way to heaven. Teach me to stay on your path no matter what. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

A Bond Servant of Jesus Christ

(Damascus Road Experience)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/82%20chapt%203%20dev%2021.mp3>

*“Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle,
set apart for the gospel of God,”*
(Romans 1:1, NIV)

Paul describes himself as a bond servant of Jesus Christ. A bond servant is a person whose very life is not his own. Webster’s Dictionary tells us a bond servant is: the property of his master and must work without wages; often takes on the name of his master; lives at the discretion of his master and must perform the prescribed tasks or orders of his master; is not free to make his own choices or decisions. Paul, formerly Saul, was not always a bond servant. He was born a free man. His parents were Jewish, strict Pharisees and Roman citizens. They sent Paul, age 14, to Jerusalem to train to become a Rabbi. Paul became a zealous persecutor of the early church and was present at the stoning of Stephen. How did a free man, Roman citizen, fierce enemy, and persecutor of Christians become a bond servant of Jesus Christ? An encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus changed his life and he would never be the same again. Saul became Paul. The man who rejected Jesus as the Messiah and the Gospel as heresy became an Apostle and preached the Gospel to the Gentiles. The staunch supporter of the stoning and death of Stephen became the victim of harassment, severe beatings, and martyrdom. The one who told soldiers to throw Christians in jail, became a prisoner for Christ, preached and saved lost souls behind bars. The man who grew up with privilege, wealth, and social status became accustomed to lack, hunger, and hardship.

Like Saul, I had my own Damascus Road experience and encounter with God that changed my life. Like Saul, I was blind but now I see through the eyes of Christ. Like Saul, I rejected Jesus and His ways. Like Paul, I am a bond servant of Jesus Christ, and my life is no longer my own. Like Paul, I’ve been called to share the Gospel with all who will hear.

Ask God to reveal His plans and perfect will for your life. Are you Saul waiting to become Paul?

*Lord, thank you for the life-changing power of your Word. Jesus,
help me to be a faithful servant in all I do. Through the blood
of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

A Peace Only His Blood Can Purchase

(A Gift Like No Other)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/83%20chapt%203%20dev%2022.mp3>

“For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.”

(Colossians 1:19-20, NIV)

There is valuable, expensive, and then there is priceless. As Christians, we’ve all received a gift of peace purchased with something priceless – the blood of Jesus. The blood of Jesus accomplished many things on the cross. Our ability to win, to overcome obstacles and defeat Satan rests in the blood of Jesus. We have developed in spiritual maturity in the area of faith, healing, deliverance, and redemption. But have we grown in our understanding of the power of the blood of Jesus? We must come to realize that the blood of Jesus is: the only sacrifice needed to cleanse us of our sins, redeem us and restore us into right standing with God; our covering and protection from sin, sickness and disease, curses and strongholds, poverty and lack; the key to an abundant life; our source of dominion, power and authority as children of God; recognized and honored by God and means everything before His throne; recognized by Satan because the blood of Jesus delivered his defeat at the cross for all eternity; eternal and cannot be contained, canceled, annulled, or defeated; our guarantee and acceptance as Sons and Daughters of the Most High God and a rightful place in the family of God; powerful, because when we honor Jesus and plead His blood, God in turn, honors Jesus by honoring His blood; the only means we have available to come into the presence of God and receive God’s blessings; the source of our connection to the blessings of God that enable us to fulfill the will of God for our lives.

Child of God, I encourage you to give God praise today for the blood of Jesus. His blood was shed for you on the cross while you were still in sin. It is your guarantee and entitlement to peace and treasures that wealth cannot buy. His blood is priceless, don’t waste it.

Lord, thank you the victory of the cross. Thank you for allowing Jesus to die on the cross and shed His blood for me. I receive all that His blood has purchased for me, and I plead His blood over my life. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

A Way Out

(Christ Is Our Escape)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/84%20chapt%203%20dev%2023.mp3>

“No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”

(1 Corinthians 10:13, NIV)

For my Bachelor’s Degree, I completed a triple major in Literature, Philosophy and Psychology. I was accepted into an Honors Program for Liberal Arts students. Classes were small with 8-10 students. We studied world literature, philosophy, and theology. One class stands out: “Modern Day Theology and Existentialism.” We read many famous twentieth century authors including Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Søren Kierkegaard, Martin Buber, and Paul Tillich. Reading this verse, I’m reminded of *No Exit*, a 1944 play by French existentialist, Jean-Paul Sartre. The original title *Huis Clos* or *In Camera* is a reference to a private discussion behind closed doors. English performances carried the title *No Way Out* or *Dead End*. The play depicts the afterlife in which three individuals are brought to a room in hell and locked in this room for eternity. In one scene, a character proclaims, “L’enfer, c’est les autres” which means “Hell is other people.” Clearly Sartre wrote about life as he saw it in the world.

As a Christian, I’m comforted by Paul’s words in the verse above. He tells us Christians always have a way out. God always gives us an exit. God is faithful and He never abandons us. He is always reaching out with a key to our cell and all we have to do is take it. He will always give us strength, determination, and anointing to escape every trial and test. But first, we must call on Him.

Child of God, no temptation is beyond your ability. With Christ, you can endure and pass every test. Yes, Satan wants you to think “There is no exit; no way out of this situation.” But he is a liar. Sartre’s characters believed Satan’s lies. They lived a life of sin that led to eternal torment in hell. Forget Sartre’s claims. Hell is not other people; it is eternal damnation and separation from God. I encourage you to trust God and discover that through Jesus Christ there is always a way out!

Lord, thank you for your love and faithfulness. Jesus, I will trust in you and in your Word knowing you will always provide a way out. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Are You a Name Dropper?

(You Can Call on the Name of Jesus)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/85%20chapt%203%20dev%2024.mp3>

“So that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”
(Philippians 2:10-11, NASB)

We've all done it at one time or another. We needed something from someone, and we attempted to influence their decision or response, so we resorted to a common practice. Hoping this would work in our favor, we “dropped a name.” We said, “I am a friend of . . .” Sometimes this works and sometimes it doesn't. As Christians we have a name that we can use at all times – the name of Jesus. One of the most frequently quoted sermons on Jesus can be found online. You can find the complete text. I used thegospelcoalition.org. The sermon, delivered in 1976 by Dr. S.M. Lockridge is entitled, *THAT'S MY KING*. I've presented part of the original text below: “The Bible says my King is a seven-way king. He's the King of the Jews; ...King of Israel; ...King of Righteousness; ...King of the Ages; King of Heaven; ...King of Glory; ...King of kings, and He's the Lord of lords. That's my King. David said, 'The Heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shows His handiwork.' My King is a sovereign King. He's enduringly strong; entirely sincere; eternally steadfast; immortally graceful; imperially powerful; and impartially merciful. He's God's Son; a sinner's Saviour; the centerpiece of civilization...He's august, unique, unparalleled, and unprecedented...the loftiest idea in literature; highest personality in philosophy; cardinal necessity for spiritual religion; miracle of the age. He supplies strength for the weak... sympathizes and He saves; strengthens and sustains; guards and guides; heals the sick; forgives sinners; discharges debtors; delivers captives; defends the feeble; serves the unfortunate; rewards the diligent;His office is manifold; promise is sure; light is matchless; goodness is limitless; mercy is everlasting; love never changes; word is enough; grace is sufficient; reign is righteous; yoke is easy, and his burden is light... He's indescribable, incomprehensible, invincible, and irresistible. Death couldn't handle Him, and the grave couldn't hold Him. Yea, that's my King.”

Do you know Jesus? If not, I urge you to call on My King today.

Lord, thank you the gift of your Son Jesus Christ. I confess you Jesus as Lord of Lords and King of Kings. Jesus, I bend my knee and bow before your mighty name. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Are You Feeling Weary or Faint?

(Give Jesus the Extra Weight)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/86%20chapt%203%20dev%2025.mp3>

*“Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself,
so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.”*

(Hebrews 12:3, ESV)

Professional athletes often wear body weights when they exercise to help them build muscle strength, stamina, and endurance. They wear the extra weights during training, but discard them before the game or race. They know the extra weight will wear them down and reduce their speed and agility.

I’ve come to realize many Christians wear extra weights as they run the “Race of Faith.” Why? Based on discussions with clients, it appears that Satan plays the butler every morning. He is happy to supply the weights as you dress for your day. The weights come in different sizes and categories that range from light, moderate, heavy, severe, and unbearable. They even have names that include pride, arrogance, envy, jealousy, anger, hurt, embarrassment, resentment, unforgiveness, despair, depression, hopelessness, guilt, shame, and condemnation. I wonder, “Why do we accept these weights and wear them throughout our day? Don’t we realize that these weights will inevitably wear us down, cause us to become tired and weary?” In fact, until we remove them, they will eventually cause us to cave in, give up and quit. Paul reminds us in this verse, the humiliation, torture, and brutal crucifixion that Christ endured on the cross settled this issue of weight once and for all. The weight of our sins, guilt and shame came to rest on Jesus. He voluntarily accepted the weight for us that we might have freedom.

Child of God, the “Race of Faith” lasts a lifetime – it never ends. We must run in all sorts of weather and conditions. It’s a race of endurance that will test and push even the strongest Christian to the breaking point. We can only run this race in His strength. Jesus wants you to know the race will be hard, but you can do it. He will help you. Remember, tell Satan “No” when he offers you the weights. Tell him Jesus carries them for you and keep on running!

Lord, thank you for the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Jesus, I am thankful that you took all of the weight and burdens of my sin. Help me to run the Race of Faith in your strength.

I know that your grace will enable me to cross the finish line and win every race.

Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Being Fully Persuaded

(Refuse to Stagger in Unbelief)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/87%20chapt%203%20dev%2026.mp3>

“Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.”

(Romans 4:20-21, NIV)

Paul tells us that Abraham refused to stagger, sway, or become unsteady in his belief in God’s promise for a son. In reality, Paul chose to overlook, Abram and Sarai’s self-effort, their attempts to help God (Hagar and Ishmael) and the years between his birth and the birth of the child of promise (Isaac). Many of us do what Abram and Sarai did at first – stagger with unbelief and get tired of waiting on God and eventually the weight of our problems is more than we can bear. We sway in fear when confronted by Goliath-sized challenges or meet Satan, the roaring lion, face-to-face. Most of us have had moments when we vacillated between belief and unbelief, when our situation seemed impossible. Like Abram and Sarai, we must realize that we stagger when we attempt to walk in our own strength. Why? Because we’re holding onto our disappointment and frustration about God’s timing. We’ve refused to fully trust God and surrender our situation to Him. Staggering in unbelief, we become confused and walk in circles away from our destiny. We may even find ourselves with an Ishmael. When we lose our balance, it’s easier to stumble and fall. If we fall, we are an easy target for Satan. We hang a sign around our necks that says, “I am weak and vulnerable.” Like the lions on the plains of Africa, Satan is looking for the weak. When we refuse to be moved by fear, then Satan will move on looking for easier prey.

Child of God, are you like Abram during his years of self-effort or like Abraham waiting and fully persuaded that God’s Word is true? Have you come to the place where you are convinced that God is faithful – that He will honor every promise He made in His Word? I encourage you to trust God, believe His Word, and be strengthened in your faith. Become fully persuaded and watch as Satan staggers and trembles!

Lord, thank you for the unchanging power and truth of your Word. Help me trust and rely on you in all I do and to be fully persuaded. Help me to walk in unwavering faith that I may not stagger or waver. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Forget American Express

(God's Grace Is All You Need)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/88%20chapt%203%20dev%2027.mp3>

"To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me."

(2 Corinthians 12:7-9, NIV)

In the business world the American Express Centurion Card says that you have arrived. With it you can travel the world and be assured that you can get what you need and that you are covered and protected. In this passage, Paul tells us we are covered and protected by God's grace. His message on God's grace is one of the most powerful in the New Testament and has served as the theme of thousands of sermons, books, articles, and hymns, including the classic, *Amazing Grace*. God's grace (freely given, unmerited favor, mercy, and love of God) is all we ever need. I am convinced that our carnal mind cannot understand or comprehend God's grace which was poured into us by the Holy Spirit when we accepted Jesus as our Lord and Savior. As we mature spiritually, we begin to see with our spiritual eyes. We feel God's presence and love with our spiritual heart. We hear His voice with our spiritual ears. We come to know the very nature, beauty and wonder of God's grace.

Picture His grace as a suit of clothes. God's "Suit of Grace" is: made from God's perfect love, the strongest most reliable substance known to heaven and man; designed to last and never wears out, tears or rips; reliable, never tarnishes and is suitable for every situation; expandable and fits even more securely as we grow in Christ; radiant and emits a bright light that illuminates our path; life-changing as it enables us to do the impossible; transformational and takes our natural and turns it into God's supernatural; our source of power as we walk in His strength and anointing; our guarantee of victory and allows us to win all the time no matter what.

The next time you're facing a difficult situation, forget American Express. Reach for and call on Jesus who freely gives us His grace. Remember you're wearing a special gift from God. Your "Suit of Grace" is all you need!

Lord, thank you for your unmerited grace. Continue to show me and teach me that your grace is all I ever need. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

The Door to Abundant Life

(Jesus' Promise to Every Believer)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/89%20chapt%203%20dev%2028.mp3>

"I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."

(John 10: 9-10, NASB)

In this verse Jesus tells us one of the main reasons why He came to mankind. He came to serve as the gateway or door through which we can have abundant life here on earth now and in the kingdom of God after our death. In contrast, Satan, the thief, comes into our life with a 3-fold purpose: steal our faith, health, confidence, hope, courage, power, authority, anointing, joy, peace, prosperity, life, and destiny; kill us through worldly attacks and assaults, sickness and disease, conflict and spiritual warfare with others, strongholds, and generational curses; and destroy our belief in God's Word and our trust in God's perfect will and plans for our life; to demolish and eradicate our confidence in the love of God and His promises; and undermine our faithfulness to God's calling for our life, thereby preventing our divine destiny.

Reading these verses, I am drawn to the words, "if anyone enters through Me.. . he will have life and have it abundantly." I am comforted to know that through Jesus, I: am saved from death and destruction; have eternal life; am healed from every disease; have abundance in every area of my life; find rest and restoration in my mind and spirit; have a way out of every difficult situation; am righteous and holy; have protection from both worldly adversaries and spiritual forces ; can overcome doubt, worry, fear and unbelief; find comfort, peace, contentment and joy; have supernatural provision that satisfies me; am anointed with power and authority; have more than I need and am blessed to bless others: have goodness and kindness in my life; live in the Lord's house now and always.

Child of God, all you will ever need you have in and through Jesus. I encourage you to draw close to Him. Allow His love and grace to fill your heart, and walk with Him through the door into abundant life!

Lord, thank you for sending your Son, the Good Shepherd, into my life. Lead me through your door into abundant life. Help me follow you at all times. Jesus, because of you Satan has no claim on me. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

A Prayer of Protection

(Divine Favor and Intervention)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/90%20chapt%203%20dev%2029.mp3>

"I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.

They are not of the world, even as I am not of it."

(John 17:14-16, NIV)

The more I grow in my faith walk the deeper the meaning this verse has for me. I am comforted to know that Jesus prayed to God on my behalf. Jesus said, "I have given them your word. . . My prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one." The Word tells us that the thief (Satan) comes to steal, kill, and destroy – to take us out. Jesus prayed that God would not only allow us to remain in the world, but that God Himself would protect us from Satan and all evil. I must confess there are times when trials and tests and the spiritual battle wear me down. There are days when I am tired, weary, and barely have the strength to lift my sword of faith. In these moments, I stand on God's Word that came alive through His Son Jesus. I am comforted by the Holy Spirit. In God's Word, I find new confidence and hope knowing that I live under God's hand of grace, favor, and protection and that the Word of God will not return void, but will accomplish His purpose. Jesus' request for protection is in force 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. I have angels assigned to cover me and to respond to the Word of God as it comes out of my mouth (Psalm 103:20). Simply reading this verse out loud brings peace to my spirit.

Are you in the middle of a raging storm in your life? Is the thief standing at your door trying to steal your joy, peace, and divine destiny? Is he lurking in the darkness waiting to ambush you and take your life?

Be at peace Child of God, Jesus prayed for you. You live under the divine protection of the Most High God. I encourage you to be still before God and confess, "It is well with my soul!"

Lord, thank you for divine favor and protection. I am at peace and rest in your fortress knowing that you will fight for me. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Bathing Under God's Faucet of Grace

(Grace Every Morning)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/91%20chapt%203%20dev%2030.mp3>

"For out of His fullness (abundance) we have all received [all had a share and we were all supplied with] one grace after another and spiritual blessing upon spiritual blessing and even favor upon favor and gift [heaped] upon gift."

(John 1:16, AMP)

As the words of this verse settle in, I confess that I am amazed and overwhelmed by their meaning. The fullness or abundance of Jesus rains and pours over me, more and more every day. It is difficult to comprehend the measure of God's grace for us. As human beings, our minds think small, with limits and constraints. We must renew our minds and our thinking to reflect God's nature and His ways. His fullness (abundance), His "Faucet of Grace" is fresh and new every day. Once it is turned on, it delivers an endless shower of blessings on top of blessings, favor upon favor, and gifts that never run out. All the grace, spiritual blessings, and gifts I received yesterday have been replaced with today's endless supply. I do not need to store them up, save them or use them sparingly in an effort to make them last. Today, my supply of grace is running over with all I need. In fact, I have more than enough.

God's Word tells me that His "Faucet of Grace" only stops flowing or turns off whenever we turn it off. We can turn the faucet off by resorting to self-effort, walking in pride and disobedience, and turning away from God. Yes, pride can turn off the faucet, but humility and obedience will allow it to start again and flow freely.

Child of God, I encourage you to examine your life today. I encourage you to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any area of your life where you are walking in pride and selfishness. Quickly repent and humble yourself before God. Get ready for a refreshing shower and bathe under God's "Faucet of Grace." Commit to start every day in the cleansing and refreshing power of His grace.

Lord, thank you for your love and grace. Help me renew my mind and to realize your grace is all I need for every situation and your grace never runs out. Help me to walk in love with you and others at all times. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Wise and Full of the Spirit

(The Grace to Serve)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/92%20chapt%203%20dev%2031.mp3>

“So the Twelve gathered all the disciples...and said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them...They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit... Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people.”

(Acts 6:2-3, 5, 8, NIV)

Stephen's life as a disciple started out with humble and simple beginnings. He was chosen to wait tables and distribute food to the needy widows. Notice in this passage the selection criteria for the job reads: “Must be known as wise and full of the Spirit and wisdom.” We are told Stephen had all the requirements and character for the job. He was filled with faith, the Holy Spirit, grace, and power. In addition, he must have walked in humility to have readily agreed to this lowly, but important task.

I am drawn to the important teaching lessons in this passage: learn humility if you aspire to be a servant of the Lord and do kingdom work; be filled with the Holy Spirit which only comes from spending time in God's Word, praying, and surrendering your life to God; walk in faith with a kingdom mindset and trust God's grace to provide you with all you need to do what He has called you to do; operate in God's power and strength, not your own; and understand that it is not important how you start, but how you finish. Stephen graduated from waiting tables to preach the Gospel and perform great miracles and wonders. History remembers him most for his character – the love and forgiveness he showed as he lay dying a martyr's death for Christ. His dying moments have served as an example for Christians for over 2,000 years.

Child of God, I encourage you to ask God to speak to you about His selection criteria for kingdom assignments. Do you have a reputation for being wise and full of the Holy Spirit? Do you walk in His grace and power? If the selection were made today, would you be chosen? I encourage you to copy the actions of Stephen. Be willing to start with a humble assignment, walk in His grace, and leave the rest to God.

Lord, thank you for showing me the importance of humility. Fill me with your Spirit. Teach me to be humble and kingdom-minded, to walk in faith, power, and grace, as I perform your perfect will for my life. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Jesus Talked to God on Your Behalf

(Jesus Prayed for You and Me)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/93%20chapt%203%20dev%2032.mp3>

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you.

May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”

(John 17:20-21, NIV)

We hear the expression all the time, “It’s not what you know that matters most, but who you know that counts.” As a Consultant and Executive Coach, I have spent years building mutually beneficial relationships—a network of dependable and reliable contacts I can turn to whenever I need help. I have taught the “art of networking” to thousands of clients in workshops and one-on-one sessions. I stressed the importance of likeability and connection.

Reading these verses, I was knocked off my feet. Talk about being connected! Every Christian should be amazed by the fact that Jesus prayed to His Father for us. Literally hours before He was seized, tortured, and crucified on the cross, Jesus put aside all thoughts of what He was about to endure and showed His love for us – the disciples and all the future saints, “for those who will believe in me.” The depth of Jesus love for me is staggering and hard to comprehend. He took the time to pray for my soul 2,000 years before I was born! Every time I read these verses; I have peace in my heart knowing that God’s Word tells us that He hears the prayers of His Son.

As Christians, through Jesus, we are one with God. Jesus prayed and God has answered the prayers of His Son. The next time you find yourself struggling to believe in the power of prayer, this verse should comfort you and encourage you. Thank Jesus today for His prayers. Thank Him for the fruitfulness of His prayers. Thank Him for the gifts of salvation and grace.

Child of God, ask the Holy Spirit to tell you who you should be praying for at work or at home. Trust God to listen to your prayers. Afterwards, be at peace with the faith that your selfless prayers will be answered!

Lord, I give thanks that your Son Jesus showed His love for me by praying for me. Jesus your fervent prayer has been answered. Teach me to pray for others. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

CHAPTER 4

Rule and Reign in Divine Authority

“And You have made them a kingdom (royal race) and priests to our God, and they shall reign [as kings] over the earth!”

(Revelation 5:10, AMP)

“But seek (aim at and strive after) first of all His kingdom and His righteousness (His way of doing and being right), and then All these things taken together will be given you besides.”

(Matthew 6:33, AMP)

“Behold! I have given you authority and power to trample upon serpents and scorpions, and [physical and mental strength and ability] over all the power that the enemy [possesses]; and nothing shall in any way harm you.”

(Luke 10:19, AMP)



Faith Comes

(Origin of Faith)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/94%20chapt%204%20dev%201.mp3>

“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.”
(Romans 10:17, NASB)

In today’s world faith comes in many new and amazing ways. The Internet, orbiting communication satellites, special apps and mobile devices are being used by God. One organization Karen and I have been blessed to support is Faith Comes by Hearing (www.faithcomesbyhearing.com). Their mission is to record and freely share God's Word in every translated language of the world. More than half of the world's population cannot read, and two-thirds live in oral cultures, so audio is the only way to reach them. They currently offer the audio New Testament and scripture recordings in 989 languages reaching more than 6 billion people in 190 countries.

We also support Global Media Outreach (www.globalmediaoutreach.com). GMO spreads the gospel of Jesus Christ online 24/7. They use global communication technologies to share the Gospel. Partnering with churches they have enrolled 6,000 online missionaries who are sharing Jesus Christ with the lost. As of 2016, they report: 1.5 billion visitors to their website; 167 million decisions for Christ; and 115 million requests for discipleship or counseling. Both organizations use technology to take God’s Word to the lost and hurting. In great numbers, on cell phones and mobile devices, the unsaved are hearing and responding to the Word of God in countries where carrying a Bible or talking about Jesus can result in harassment or death. Luke 15:10 tells us, “In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” Imagine the celebration that is going on in heaven every day!

Child of God, I encourage you to share your personal testimony with others. Look for opportunities to share God’s Word and witness to others for Christ. Remember, faith comes by hearing.

*Lord, thank you for the ability to spread your Word through technology.
When your Word comes, souls are saved. Through the blood
of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Get Your Mind Right

(Set the Thermostat of Your Mind)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/97%20chapt%204%20dev%202.mp3>

“We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete.”

(2 Corinthians 10:5-6, NIV)

Every day we hear that success depends on focus, attitude, and determination (perseverance). Here, Paul speaks to the Christians in Corinth about these very issues. He says we must have an unwavering resolve or set our minds that we will trust and rely on God and His way of doing things regardless of the pressures and expectations of the world. Persevere. Stay the course. Do not give up, cave in or quit. How? As Christians, we must: reject any thought, feeling, or action that might separate us from God; stay focused on the unchanging, eternal truth of His Word; make a commitment to the Lord that the Bible is our final authority on every issue in our lives; be determined to be faithful and obedient to God’s Word and the Holy Spirit; repent whenever we stumble or fall; accept correction with a humble heart and willingness to allow God’s Word to change our thinking and behavior; choose to face challenges and obstacles with an attitude of joy and resist the urge to complain; come to see trials and tribulations as opportunities for spiritual growth, development and promotion; ask God to give us a zealous hunger for Christ; be willing to be Christ’ ambassador and show others that His sacrifice and death on the cross was not in vain.

In these troubled times and last days, we must let the world see our confidence that we win in every situation, all the time, no matter what. We must set the thermostat of our mind on “Jesus Christ” with a resolve not to stagger or waver in doubt or unbelief.

Child of God, I encourage you to get your mind right by setting it on God, leaving it there and believing the truth of His Word.

Lord, thank you for helping me to set my mind on you and the eternal truth of your Word. Help me remember that, in Christ, I win all the time. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Are You Willing to Learn?

(Prerequisites for Change)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/98%20chapt%204%20dev%203.mp3>

“But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

(John 14:26, NIV)

As a Consultant and Executive Coach for many years, I know change can be very difficult and generate intense fear and anxiety. I have coined the phrase, “You have to drag most people kicking and screaming to change as they don’t usually volunteer for it.” Before you can change, you must be WILLING and OPEN. I always look for these criteria in a client before I take the engagement.

My client, I’ll call him George, wavered on his commitment to change. Over time, I saw a recurring pattern in his behavior. Sooner or later, he always sabotaged relationships because of a deep-seated insecurity and stronghold. He viewed everything that happened around him from the perspective “What about me?” One day over breakfast, I shared my observations about this behavior and the impact it was having on his career. As we talked, a couple appeared at our table, and said, “Hello Gary!” It took me a moment to recognize them, but I quickly stood to my feet. We embraced and chatted for only a minute when suddenly, George stood up. I was speechless as he blurted out, “What about me, don’t I get a hug?” I was stunned. The Holy Spirit whispered that he had orchestrated this moment to show George, in my presence, how prevalent this stronghold of self-centered behavior was in his life. While I attempted to use the moment to explain his destructive behavior and how it was impacting his career, George refused to accept my observations and feedback. His adamant refusal to acknowledge the behavior and his stubborn resistance to change soon ended our relationship.

I encourage you to examine your life and ask yourself, “Am I willing to face my fears and embrace change? Am I open to hear and obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit? Am I willing to change so that I can become more Christ-like?” Remember, it’s not about you. It’s all about Him!

*Lord, thank you for speaking truth into my life through the Holy Spirit.
Help me to be open and willing to the life-changing power of your Word
and help me to be a light in a dark world. Through the blood
of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Heaven's Seesaw

(God Uses Play to Teach Us about Life)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/99%20chapt%204%20dev%204.mp3>

“For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”
(Luke 14:11, NIV)

As a child, I loved playing on the seesaw at the park. I remember the fun of going up and down and moving around to find the right balance point so I could sit suspended in the air. I am convinced that God invented the seesaw to teach us valuable lessons about life and being in relationship with others. I can see how He used the seesaw to teach me about: having the right heart, motivation, and attitude; developing trust through positioning on the seesaw; surrendering, and seeking balance through compromise, give and take; resting in Him and being still; experiencing freedom and floating in the air; finding joy, wonder and excitement as I gazed down at the world below my feet. As I think back, some kids, filled with a spirit of pride, arrogance, and desire to control, always wanted to sit far back on the seat and keep you stranded high in the air. Others, filled with a spirit of humility, submission, and self-sacrifice, worked hard to find balance. I admit, riding up and down was fun but the real attraction for me was finding balance and resting in the air. How simple, yet profound these lessons are as they teach us about life, ourselves, and others.

On the playground, God uses the seesaw to test and examine our hearts. Next, He checks to see if we will trust and obey Him. Then He asks us to surrender and be still. In a state of balance, He grants us freedom from the demands and cares of the world. As we float in the air, He shows us excitement, joy, and peace. On God's seesaw, there is no room for pride and arrogance which can cause God to remove His hand of perfect balance (rest). In contrast, a humble, clean, and pure heart is rewarded with God's favor, freedom, joy, and peace.

Child of God, I encourage you to ask God to give you a humble heart. In the meantime, find a seesaw, invite God to be your partner, and experience the ride of your life!

*Lord, thank you for teaching me valuable lessons on the playground.
Continue to teach me to have the faith of a child, giving me a mind
and heart that trusts in you at all times. Through the blood
of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Are You Real or Counterfeit?

(Commit to Authenticity)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/100%20chapt%204%20dev%205.mp3>

*“In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous
but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.”*

(Matthew 23:28, NIV)

Is it genuine or fake, real, or counterfeit? We are surrounded by fake and counterfeit. In most major cities there are streets lined with stores that sell “knock-off” items that are made to look like high-end designer products, but sold at a fraction of the price. These stores draw customers from all walks of life. Next time you are in church check out the handbags, shoes, and watches that look and appear real from a distance, but in fact are counterfeit. Technology has even made it so easy to make counterfeit money that cashiers must use a special pen and mark bills (usually \$50, \$100, and \$1,000) to determine if they are real or counterfeit. Unfortunately, counterfeits don’t just exist in the secular world. Many people who profess to be a Christian seem to be more concerned with looking and sounding like the real thing than being real. Have we become more concerned about carrying signs (bumper stickers, T-Shirts, Bibles, crosses) that make us appear real rather than being a sign for Christ and walking in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control? As Christians, we must constantly examine our: heart and motives; public and private lives; relationships and interactions with our spouse, children, boss, and co-workers to determine if we are being real and authentic or fake and counterfeit.

Are you doing anything in the booth, in the back, in the corner, in the dark that is displeasing to God? I encourage you to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you today any area in your life where you have substituted the fake or phony for the real thing. Trust God, and walk according to His Word. Imitate Jesus and walk in love with others so that the world will know you are a real Christian from the inside out.

Don’t allow Satan to trick you into pretending. Resist the urge to be a cheap knock-off!

Lord, thank you for showing us what is real. Jesus, teach me to be real, genuine and imitate you in all I do. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Imitate and Copy at Will (Choose to be Like Jesus)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/101%20chapt%204%20dev%206.mp3>

“You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.”

(1 Thessalonians 1:6-7, NIV)

Ever notice how the kingdom of God turns the practices of the world upside down? Most of the time, God’s Word tells us to do exactly the opposite of the trends, norms, and customs in the world. Think about the music or publishing industries. In these two industries, individuals and companies go to great lengths to protect original creations from unwarranted and unlicensed copies or imitations. This is not the case in the spiritual realm. As Christians, we are encouraged to copy and imitate Jesus. Jesus Christ must be the standard that we all aspire to emulate. When we accepted Jesus as our Lord and Savior, our spirits were reborn or recreated, renewed to perfection, and we were filled with the Holy Spirit. As we renew our minds with God’s Word, we begin to think, speak, and act like Jesus. We are transformed into a copy of Jesus.

In my Executive Coaching and discipleship training, I tell my clients not to spend much time thinking about WWJD (What would Jesus do?) because we can never know with certainty. Instead, I urge them to commit to focus on WDJS (What did Jesus say?). Steven Scott organized over 1,900 statements Jesus made, by topic, in his book, *The Greatest Words Ever Spoken*, to help believers learn about Jesus and become more like Jesus in the way we talk.

Child of God, do you want to grow in your relationship with the Lord? Do you want to walk in your divine power and authority as you face difficult situations and problems? Are you prepared to confront Satan by speaking God’s Word when you are under attack? Spend time studying and meditating on the words of Jesus.

Choose today to pursue Jesus, copy, and imitate Him. Speak His Words over your circumstances and watch as they begin to change you and the world around you!

Lord, thank you for the power and truth of your Word. Fill my mouth with your words and teach me to copy you every day. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Going to Church or Masquerade Ball?

(Be Genuine)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/102%20chapt%204%20dev%207.mp3>

“For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.”
(2 Corinthians 11:13-15, NIV)

Masquerade balls have enticed and drawn men and women for thousands of years. They offer the opportunity to dress up in costume and wear a mask or disguise, giving the person behind the mask a chance to act out a fantasy while pretending to be someone they are not. Even today, many cultures embrace the practice with great fervor and excitement. Mardi Gras (New Orleans), Day of the Dead (Mexico), and Carnival (Brazil) come to mind.

Sadly, masquerade balls are not the only place where people wear a mask and play make-believe. Many in the body of Christ masquerade, engage in fantasy, and pretend to be someone else. Research indicates that approximately 40% of pastors struggle with internet pornography. Homosexuals and sexual predators have invaded the pulpit in some cases openly with the approval and acceptance of church leadership and the congregation.

A recent CNN news show featured pastors whose faces and voices were disguised to protect their identity as they confessed, they no longer believed the Bible and struggled to teach God’s Word. Divorce rates are higher in the church than in the world. Adultery and sexual promiscuity are rampant in the church. Statistics show that only 20% of Christians tithe. All of this from people who come in all dressed up, sit in the pew, shout “Hallelujah” and pretend to be holy. Paul warns us not to be surprised when we see this behavior at church or among our fellow Christians and reminds us that Satan himself masquerades and pretends to be an angel of light while his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness.

Child of God, it’s important that we regularly examine our thinking and behavior to ensure that it aligns with God’s Word. Make a commitment to renew your mind daily with the Word of God, and walk in His grace and truth. Keep your heart and mind on Jesus. With His grace, you’ll never need to wear a mask, resort to fantasy or pretend again.

Lord, thank you for the truth and power of your Word. Help me become a bright light in a dark world. Teach me to be a faithful, obedient, genuine, and sincere Child of Light in all I do and say. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

A New Life on Monday

(Let Go of the Old You)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/103%20chapt%204%20dev%208.mp3>

“Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”
(Romans 6:4, NIV)

Paul tells us, as Christians, we were buried with Christ so that our old life, our sinful life could die. We’ve been reborn spiritually, but we must develop a new way of thinking and behaving. We were dirty with sin on Saturday then saved through Christ and baptized on Sunday. Now, what do we do on Monday?

Several years ago, God led me to develop tools to use with my Executive Coaching clients. The tools (Kingdom of God Checklists and Prayer Cards) are encounters with God and are designed to help both new and more mature Christians examine their thinking and behavior. New believers need to understand what to do on Monday morning to embrace and walk out this new “life of righteousness.” New Christians must believe and renew their minds daily to see if they are living like a “new creature” or living like a “backsliding child.” The test is not what you do on Sunday at church in front of other Christians. The real test is what you do on Monday morning when you’re at work surrounded by friends and unbelievers. Unfortunately, for many Christians, Monday mornings often resemble Saturday nights before they were saved. They may make a few changes, but are often double minded, with one foot in the world and one foot in the kingdom.

I find the more I grow spiritually the more people ask me, “What has changed in your life since you came back to God and rededicated your life to Christ?” My answer is always, “Everything!” I recognize that my journey continues each day and that I’m still growing in Christ, but I’m thankful that I’m not the foolish, rebellious, self-centered prodigal son that ran from my Father’s house to the world. I give God praise that I too came to my right mind, returned to my Father’s house, have a new life, and that every day is Monday.

Lord, thank you for giving me new life in Jesus. Help me bury the old man each day so that the new man may live. Fill me with your perfect love that casts out fear and selfishness. Give me the grace to walk in righteousness and may I give you all the glory and all the praise. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

I Gave You Milk

(Are You Chewing on God's Word?)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/104%20chapt%204%20dev%209.mp3>

“Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly—mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men?”
(1 Corinthians 3:1-3, NIV)

Paul tells us there are stages of spiritual development and growth, from infancy to maturity. Infants require milk, whereas mature adults require a heartier, more substantial diet. He does not refer to the point in time the believers in Corinth were saved as a measure of their spiritual maturity, but looks at their behavior. Worldly thinking and behavior is a sure sign of spiritual immaturity or infancy. Thinking and behavior that aligns with the Word of God is evidence of spiritual maturity. Infants make worldly decisions. Mature Christians make godly decisions. The measure of growth is the number of decisions we make according to God's Word.

Sadly, many adult Christians, whether saved at an early or late in life, are spiritual infants. A prerequisite to spiritual maturity is a renewed mind. It's impossible to live according to God's Word if we do not know God's Word. We must spend time reading and studying God's Word. The next step to spiritual maturity is developing an intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit, hearing and obeying His voice. Finally, we must develop the habit of walking in love even loving the unlovable. It is the failure of men to walk in love with others, rather than in jealousy and quarreling, that Paul observes and chastises in the verse above. Based on your love walk, are you spiritually mature or merely an infant?

Child of God, I encourage you to commit today to read God's Word daily. Renew your mind with the thoughts of God. Once you learn and understand the Word of God, you will be spiritually positioned and prepared to hear a Word from God (the Holy Spirit). Grow in your faithfulness and obedience to His Word.

Do not quit or give up under pressure. See every challenge as an opportunity for growth. Lastly, always walk in love, even when it's challenging or seemingly impossible. Ask God to help you grow and mature spiritually. Give up milk and turn to meat.

*Lord, thank you for the desire to grow spiritually. Teach me, correct me,
and guide me according to your Word. Through the blood
of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Your Words Lead to Guilt or Innocence

(Talking Has Consequences)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/105%20chapt%204%20dev%2010.mp3>

“But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”

(Matthew 12:36-37, NIV)

Talking at the wrong time can get you in trouble. As a kid, I can remember several times when I had to go to the front of the room and write on the blackboard, “I will not talk in class” 100 times as punishment for talking in the back of the room. One of my best friends for over thirty years is a lawyer. He tells stories of lawyers who have been fined and been sent to jail by judges for their sarcastic and untimely remarks in court. Several years ago, I had a young woman as a client who was fired for an ethics violation that stemmed from a spontaneous conversation with another employee during a certification exam. I’ve had clients share stories of terminations due to personal use of company cell phones, inappropriate chat on company computers during work hours, reprimands for excessive violation of “Break” schedules. All of this because people are talking, talking, talking.

As Christians, this verse serves as a warning about the consequences of our speech. We will be held accountable and judged for our words; and found innocent and acquitted or found guilty and condemned. “I was just teasing,” “I didn’t really mean it,” or “I didn’t know my words mattered” will not be allowed as an acceptable excuse. The nursery rhyme, “Sticks and stones can break my bones, but words will never hurt me” is a cruel lie from Satan. Words encourage and lift up or they hurt, cause pain, and put down.

I encourage you to ask God to reveal the consequences of the words you speak. Decide today to choose your words carefully. There is much more at stake than a simple warning or reprimand. Your words will determine your freedom from sin and salvation or guilt and condemnation. Heaven or hell, now or later, those are the choices. Child of God, speak wisely or remain silent.

*Lord, thank you for showing me the power of my words. Teach me to speak like Jesus with love and compassion or to be silent when I am afraid, hurt or confused.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Walking in the Spirit of the Lord

(God's Power and Anointing)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/106%20chapt%204%20dev%2011.mp3>

“The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.’”
(Luke 4:17-19, NIV)

Two verses after this passage containing Isaiah’s prophesy of His birth, Jesus stood before the crowd in the synagogue in Nazareth and boldly announced to his boyhood friends, family, and neighbors that He grew up with, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” The prophetic power of Isaiah coupled with the conviction and boldness of Jesus’ declaration captures my attention. Reading on, we see that the crowd was initially amazed at His words. Yet soon their amazement passed, and they became angry. Their anger was so intense that they surrounded Him and drove Jesus out of town to the edge of a cliff with the intention of throwing Him off the cliff. Scripture tells us that Jesus walked right through the crowd and went on His way to preach in Capernaum. Jesus understood the historic, cultural, and spiritual (kingdom) significance of His presence on earth. He was very clear about His mission and purpose in life. He knew why He was here and what He was sent to do. He was God’s messenger to the lost, sick, poor, and oppressed. Jesus came for one reason: to share the good news of the Gospel and bring God’s love, mercy, grace, and salvation to His people. He understood that His mission and anointing came from God. His friends and neighbors did not.

As Christians, each of us must ask God to reveal His mission, purpose, and perfect will for our lives. To accomplish His will, we need to walk in His grace, anointing, and guidance. Like Jesus, we must be Spirit-led and allow the Holy Spirit to teach, lead and guide us. When we are Spirit-led, we too can walk with purpose, confidence, and boldness, knowing that God will make a way through any crowd of protest or rejection.

Will you join me, Child of God? Let us proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world and walk out our divine destiny.

Lord, thank you for your Son, Jesus. Reveal your perfect will for my life and give me clarity regarding my mission and purpose. Teach me to act in boldness and to trust in you at all times. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Be Encouraged

(In the Midst of Despair Turn to the Lord)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/107%20chapt%204%20dev%2012.mp3>

“David was greatly distressed, for the men spoke of stoning him because the souls of them all were bitterly grieved, each man for his sons and daughters. But David encouraged and strengthened himself in the Lord his God.”

(1 Samuel 30:6, AMP)

To fully appreciate David’s actions, you must start with verse one in CHAPTER 30. We’re told the Amalekites conducted a raid, plundered every house, stole livestock, and burned two cities to the ground. They also took every woman and child hostage. David and his men were overwhelmed with grief. In their grief his men blamed him and talked of stoning him. I’m drawn to the last sentence in this verse. David refused to be passive and wallow in his despair. He took action. He encouraged himself and strengthened himself in the Lord .

At times, I have noticed the opposite behavior in many Christians including myself. Why is it that we are often so passive in our faith walk? When we experience hurt, disappointment, rejection, or failure; we simply endure, become submissive even despair. Yes, we may cry out to God for help. It’s what comes next that is the problem as we passively wait for God to take action, to intervene, save us or make a way out. I have certainly done this. I praise God that over the last five years God has taken me to another level in my walk with Him. I now understand that the outcome is based on my initial reaction and response to the problem. Whenever I feel despondent, lethargic and heaviness in my spirit, I run for my Bible. I study and meditate on Scriptures that address the issue and confess the Word out loud. I begin intense prayer filled with thanksgiving and praise. I pray in the Holy Spirit knowing there are times that I do not know what to pray for myself. In these moments, like David, I find encouragement in the Lord.

Are you facing difficult situations at work or home that have you on the edge of giving up? If the answer is yes, I suggest you do what David did. Encourage yourself and strengthen yourself in the Lord. Fight the fight of faith. Give thanks and praise to the Lord and watch as He lifts you above your circumstances!

Lord, thank you for the power of your Word. I thank you that the Holy Spirit comforts me and teaches me to draw closer to you in times of distress. Help me to be confident and bold in my faith walk and to fight the good fight. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Faith Supports Your Spiritual Immune System

(Get Healthy)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/108%20chapt%204%20dev%2013.mp3>

“By faith Abraham, when he was put to the test [while the testing of his faith was still in progress], had already brought Isaac for an offering; he who had gladly received and welcomed [God's] promises was ready to sacrifice his only son,”
(Hebrews 11:17, AMP)

The spiritual realm and the physical realm both operate according to certain laws and principles. Fire or heat will raise the temperature of water and at 212 degrees will cause it to boil and produce steam. Stress and physical exertion will raise our heart rate, respiration rate and blood pressure. Physical injuries to the body make us more susceptible to illness. Our bodies are made up of a highly complex and sophisticated immune system that is designed to defend us against millions of bacteria, microbes, viruses, toxins, and parasites that try to invade our body and destroy our health every day. In a similar fashion, in the spiritual realm, our spirit is protected by our faith.

As Christians, we must realize that when we are tempted, face trials or difficulties, or encounter attacks by Satan, our faith activates our spiritual immune system and goes on the defensive to protect us. The key to having a high concentration of faith and strong spiritual immune system is the Word of God. Think of it this way, the Word of God produces “faith cells.” Failure to plant God’s Word in your heart and mind reduces the number of faith cells. Small amounts of the Word result in a low level of faith cells. In contrast, high doses of the Word produce high levels of faith cells. Our faith cells operate like our white blood cells in our body. They identify and eliminate demonic spirits either by attacking them directly or by engulfing them and causing them to flee. We must develop a habit of studying and meditating on God’s Word and spending regular time in prayer to ensure that we have high levels of faith cells and a healthy spiritual immune system.

Child of God, ask God to diagnose the strength of your spiritual health. Spend time with Him in prayer and in His Word to ensure that your faith is strong and that you are ready to face the enemy!

Lord, thank you for the power of your Living Word. Give me the desire to study and meditate on your Word and obey you so that my faith may be strong and able to pass every test by the enemy. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Clothed with Power

(Walking in the Spirit)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/109%20chapt%204%20dev%2014.mp3>

"I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

(Luke 24:49, NIV)

In this verse Jesus instructs His disciples to stay in the city until they have been "clothed with power from on high." What powerful imagery this is for me. I am reminded of my very first men's suit which my father purchased for me while I was in high school. We went to an up-scale men's store, and I was allowed to select the suit myself. It was a very expensive three-piece navy-blue pinstripe that caused me to gasp when I looked at the price tag. I remember thinking, "This suit cost more than I made working all summer." As I stood facing the mirror watching the tailor marking the suit for alterations, I remember feeling very grownup and special as if I were preparing to do great and important things.

Today, I can't help but wonder what the disciples thought and felt when the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they were "clothed with power from on high." As I grow in my walk with the Lord, I've come to realize that He, like my dad, makes sure our needs are met. He clothes each of us with a custom-made suit of gifts and talents along with an anointing to accomplish the tasks He has set before us. Our suits are unique and unlike any other in the world. The colors, hues, and fabric God uses in His suits are pleasing to the eye and are some of His best works in all of creation. God's designs are breath-taking and defy all human expectations. His suits fit perfectly, are appropriate for every season and never wear out.

Are you utilizing your gifts and talents that were given to you by God? Are you using them for the kingdom's sake? I encourage you to ask God to show you His perfect will and plan for your life so that the anointing He clothed you with doesn't go to waste.

Lord, thank you for your grace that covers me from my head to my toes. Clothe me in your anointing that I may be able to accomplish all that you have called me to do.

Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Lord, Help Me to be Fat and Happy!

(Thick with His Power)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/110%20chapt%204%20dev%2015.mp3>

“So it will be in that day, that his burden will be removed from your shoulders and his yoke from your neck, and the yoke will be broken because of fatness.”
(Isaiah 10:27, NASB)

Our culture exalts thin bodies. Slim and trim is “in” and no one wants to be fat! Overweight people face discrimination and ridicule. Obesity is considered a bad thing physically, socially, and professionally. In the kingdom of heaven, it’s just the opposite. In the kingdom, we want to be fat and filled with the Word of God and His ways. In the kingdom, fat (anointing and grace) rules! The anointing signifies the presence of God’s supernatural grace and power placed on top of our natural abilities.

As Christians, we should all pray and ask God to make us fat with His anointing. His anointing is our supernatural enabler. In His anointing, we: win and overcome all obstacles; are covered and protected; are able to march confidently and boldly into battle; are assured victory under His banner; destroy strongholds and escape the enemy’s chains; are healed and walk in health and wholeness; cast out demons and are set free; see the miraculous and are able to perform miracles; are washed and cleansed from sin; are transformed into caring servant leaders.

Child of God, ask God to reveal any area of your life where you are not walking in His anointing. Are your efforts leading to a harvest or blocked at every turn? Look at yourself through God’s eyes. Trust the prophetic words of Isaiah. Are you thin or fat with the anointing power of the Lord? If you are thin in your beliefs about the promises of God and His ability to help you overcome every test, renew your mind with His Word. Walk in faithfulness and obedience by applying God’s Word to your everyday life. Put on God’s glory, grace, and spiritual fatness so that every yoke of bondage will be broken. Remember, in the kingdom of heaven, fat rules!

Lord, thank you for sharing the most important story of all time – the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. I find confidence, hope, and courage in your Word. Fill me with boldness to face Satan knowing that with you I win every battle. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Your Tongue Is a Divine Instrument

(Speak Blessings Not Curses)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/111%20chapt%204%20dev%2016.mp3>

“With the fruit of a man’s mouth his stomach will be satisfied; He will be satisfied with the product of his lips. Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.”

(Proverbs 18:20-21, NASB)

I admit it. I am results-oriented. I’ll follow a process if I’m convinced it will produce the desired results. As a Christian, I expect good results and a positive outcome because I believe God’s Word and that He loves me and is on my side. I’ve accepted that God has already done His part, and now I have to do mine. It is my job to study and meditate on His Word and to know and understand His ways and promises. Next, I must obey His Word and live my life according to His blueprint. I must believe, speak, and apply the Word to my everyday life. I understand that I am created in God’s image and that I must use my mouth as a divine instrument. I must speak: Word-filled confessions over my life daily; openly to God from the heart in my prayers; blessings over my life and not curses; God’s Word to Satan when I’m under attack to overcome his assaults and obtain victory; like Jesus and copy Him by speaking truth, life and light into darkness; from my heart and ask God to show me His will and plans for my life; whenever my emotions rise up and command my body and mind to be still so I can hear God’s voice; in agreement with God’s Word as the Holy Spirit leads and guides me; words of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord at all times. I must not hold my tongue, suffer in silence and be quiet if I expect to see results. I was created in God’s image. I am His son. I have dominion and authority over all the earth. I will believe, speak, and use my mouth for His glory. Today, I will speak to the mountains in my life, believe in my heart, and expect them to move!

Child of God, I encourage you to examine your words and how you use them. Quit speaking about your mountains (your problems) and speak to them!

Lord, thank you for the truth and life-changing power of your Word. Teach me to use my mouth as a divine instrument to release supernatural power in my life and produce results that line up with your Word. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Will You Give the Extra Effort?

(Persistence Pays Off)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/112%20chapt%204%20dev%2017.mp3>

“Taking the blind man by the hand, He brought him out of the village; and after spitting on his eyes and laying His hands on him, He asked him, ‘Do you see anything?’ And he looked up and said, ‘I see men, for I see them like trees, walking around.’ Then again He laid His hands on his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored, and began to see everything clearly.”

(Mark 8:23-25, NASB)

Jesus’ techniques for healing the sick were always unusual and unexpected. Here we see Him do something He has never done before, He gave a second touch, the extra effort. Jesus, who possessed all of God’s authority, power, and ability to perform great miracles, went back and tried again. Jesus did not become frustrated or agitated after His first touch and walk away leaving the man with partial sight. Instead, Jesus laid His hands on the man a second time.

I’m drawn to the powerful meaning and teaching in this verse. My mind is flooded with questions and my spirit reels with new insights and revelations. Looking back over my life in similar situations, how many times have I: Walked away after my first attempt? Accepted failure and quit because my first effort produced incomplete or inadequate results? Allowed Satan to high jack me with disappointment, doubt, unbelief, and fear? Caved in, given up or quit, and walked away from my divine destiny? Fallen short and failed to give the extra effort required to change a life forever? I confess that this verse both convicts me and encourages me to copy Jesus’ example. The next time I face a difficult situation and encounter unexpected or undesirable results after my first attempt, I commit to trust God and try again. I will not allow any negative emotions or spiritual warfare to deter me.

Child of God, I encourage you to ask God to reveal any challenge, stronghold, or brokenness in your life where you have walked away after your first attempt to overcome seemed to fail. Don’t listen to Satan’s lies and give up so easily. Go back and give God, yourself, and others the extra effort. Be prepared to be amazed as God restores, heals, and works a miracle in your life and the lives of those around you.

Lord, thank you for Jesus’ example of persistence and the importance of extra efforts. Jesus, help me to always remember that it is not over until you say it is over! Give me the grace I need for the extra effort. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

You Are God's Flashlight

(How Bright Is Your Light?)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/113%20chapt%204%20dev%2018.mp3>

*"For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."
(2 Corinthians 4:6, NIV)*

As a kid, I loved to play with flashlights, especially my Dad's 12-volt fishing and hunting light. I was fascinated with the ability to light up the darkness with the simple flip of a switch. I spent many hours walking through the fields of our family farm at night armed with my Dad's flashlight. With the light it was easy to find frogs, armadillos, opossums, owls, and other night creatures. As long as I had my light, I felt safe.

We read in Isaiah 60:1, the foundational scripture for these devotionals, these words, "Arise, shine; for your light has come, And the glory of the LORD has risen upon you." Yes, God's light and glory are on us. We are illuminated and become a source of illumination for others. In sharp contrast to my childhood experiences, I am no longer carrying the light. I am the light. As a Child of Light, we must ask ourselves these questions: Is my light bright and able to penetrate the darkest corners of the world, or is it faint and dim? Does my light often flicker and go out? Is my battery fully charged? Forget Eveready and Duracell, God's glory is all we need. It is always reliable and faithful but not "maintenance-free." For maximum brightness and power, God tells us to connect with Him daily through the Word, prayer, and faithful obedience.

Child of God, I encourage you to ask God to give you the desire to stay connected to Him and fully charged at all times. Be assured that God's light in you will penetrate even the darkest corners of the world. Its brightness will cause every living thing to stop and behold the glory of God. It will transform and change lives. Are you willing to be used by God as a flashlight to light up a dark world? Let the light of Jesus shine through you today!

Lord, thank you for the truth and life-changing power of your Word. Help me to stay connected to you and fully charged at all times so that your light in me may be clear and bright. Jesus, use me as a flashlight in your hands. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Are You Driven or Directed?

(Self-Effort vs. Spirit-Led)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/114%20chapt%204%20dev%2019.mp3>

*“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding.
In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.”*
(Proverbs 3:5-6, NASB)

Are you driven by your own selfish desires, motives, and interests; or directed by God – leaning on Him, trusting in Him, and obeying Him? I confess that I spent four decades in a state of “emotional high-jack” being driven by one intense emotion or another. The truth is that being driven is easy. It feeds our carnal mind and comes naturally for all of us. After all, we were born in sin and separated from God, so selfishness and disobedience come naturally. On the other hand, being directed by God is more difficult. It requires that we renew our minds according to His Word. We must be still so we can hear God’s voice, and when we do, we must be obedient and faithful. When we are directed, we surrender all of our needs and desires to God and rest in His love while standing firmly on His Word. Regardless of our level of spiritual maturity and our ability to live directed lives in alignment with God’s Word, we can all slip in an instant and fall back into pride, arrogance, rebellion, self-centeredness, and self-effort.

The Word tells us that a single act of anger and disobedience cost Moses’ entry into the Promised Land. Being driven or directed is a moment-by-moment choice. I confess that I found it difficult at first. I was so accustomed to being active, busy and in charge, I had a hard time being still and surrendering my life to God. But it gets easier as you renew your mind with God’s Word and listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit. Once you’ve learned to be still and listen, you’ll realize the process is worth the effort, considering your driven self-efforts never bring you lasting peace. When you allow Jesus to direct your steps, the path is smooth, straight, and always perfect.

Child of God, I encourage you to trust Him today. You’ll be glad you did!

*Lord, thank you for directing me and for making my pathway straight. I am comforted that you have given me the Holy Spirit to tell me when to go, when to stop, and when to turn right or left. Help me to trust and lean on you and not run away from you. I surrender all to you.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Faith is Spelled CONFIDENCE

(Your Personal Guarantee)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/115%20chapt%204%20dev%2020.mp3>

“NOW FAITH is the assurance (the confirmation, the title deed) of the things [we] hope for, being the proof of things [we] do not see and the conviction of their reality [faith Perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses].”

(Hebrews 11:1, AMP)

We live in a world full of contracts, warranties, and agreements. We're comforted, free from worry and concern, knowing that our life, home, and car insurance will help us if we have an accident in our car or a storm causes a tree to fall on our roof. We even buy the extra 1-Year Extended Warranty on our new flat screen TV or PC hopeful that it will cover repairs or replacement in case our new toy breaks. As a Christian, I'm comforted by this verse. It explains that faith is our assurance or guarantee that things will be all right. Faith is our: title deed that spells out our ownership in the spiritual realm of the things we hope for, and that God has promised us; proof or evidence of the things we can't see; firm belief that we'll have what we believe and ask for in prayer; reason that we refuse to be moved by fear. In faith, we refuse to: believe the doctor's report that cancer will kill us; worry about the recession and the potential that we might lose our jobs; doubt God's protection as we walk through a rough neighborhood; question God's mercy and favor when it looks like we might not get the job we want because we don't have a degree; give up on our marriage and question God's ability to restore harmony and peace in our home; worry about our children's safety; doubt God's ability to motivate our boss to give us a raise just when our child needs braces.

Child of God, I encourage you to have faith in God and in His Word. Believe that God is who the Word says He is and that He will do all the things His Word says He will do. Place your faith (CONFIDENCE) in God and refuse to be moved no matter what!

Lord, thank you for your Word. Jesus, I will trust in you and have confidence in you. I choose to live by faith, and I refuse to walk in doubt, fear, and unbelief. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Is It Time for a Name Change?

(Faith vs. Doubt and Unbelief)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/116%20chapt%204%20dev%2021.mp3>

“Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.’”

(John 20:27, NIV)

We must assume Thomas followed Jesus’ instructions. The next verse tells us Thomas says, “My Lord and My God!” It appears his realization comes too late to alter his reputation. History knows and refers to him as “Doubting Thomas,” not “Believing Thomas.” Isn’t that just like the world? Fail once and you’re a failure for all time to many people no matter how many times you succeed.

As a Christian, I’m thankful that God is very patient and understanding and that He promises He will not remember our sins. I’m so thankful that I do not have an eternal reputation as, “Gary the: Sinner; Foolish; Man of Little Faith; Liar; Business Failure; Promiscuous Man; Man of the World; Incompetent Spiritual Leader of his Family; Double-Minded; or Fearful.” I give praise for God’s mercy and grace that I can stand on the truth of His Word and know that all my sins have been forgiven and that today I am called a Son of the Most High God. Today, I am no longer a “Prodigal Son” living in the world. I praise God that He brought me to my senses and that I came home. In my Father’s house, I was granted a name change to “Gary, Cherished and Faithful Son.” In fact, several years ago, a close brother in Christ referred to me as “Barnabas” (Son of encouragement). Others have called me that. I admit I like it and have grown comfortable with the name. When I hear it, I am reminded of my level of faith in God and His calling on my life – to teach and encourage.

I encourage you to ask God to show you any area of your life where you need to stop doubting and simply believe. Is it time for a name change and new beginning? Decide today to be known as a Mighty Man or Awesome Woman of God!

Lord, thank you for your loving kindness and patience. Jesus, help me to stop walking in fear, doubt, and unbelief. Jesus, today I choose to simply believe. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

CHAPTER 5

Your Divine Calling and Purpose

“He chose David his servant and took him from the sheep pens; from tending the sheep he brought him to be the shepherd of his people Jacob, of Israel his inheritance. And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them.”
(Psalm 78:70-72, NIV)

“Having gifts (faculties, talents, qualities) that differ according to the grace given us, let us use them: [He whose gift is] prophecy, [let him prophesy] according to the proportion of his faith; [He whose gift is] practical service, let him give himself to serving; he who teaches, to his teaching; He who exhorts (encourages), to his exhortation; he who contributes, let him do it in simplicity and liberality; he who gives aid and superintends, with zeal and singleness of mind; he who does acts of mercy, with genuine cheerfulness and joyful eagerness.”
(Romans 12: 6-8, AMP)



Calling or Career?

(Calling Trumps Career)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/117%20chapt%205%20dev%201.mp3>

*“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born
I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”
(Jeremiah 1:5, NIV)*

I’m very blessed and give God praise for calling me to the work I do. My work as a Speaker, Executive Coach, Ministry Leader, and Author engages my deepest dreams and passions, beliefs and core values, talents, and gifts. I embrace my work with passion and a desire to please God every day, to honor Him with excellence and to walk out His calling on my life. I’m often asked, “How did you come to know this was God’s plan for your life?” I explain that I did not discover it, but that over time God revealed it and confirmed it. The first time I remember being “called” I was about 10 years old. I was sure that God was calling me into ministry. In college, I realized I had talents, skills, and the desire to teach. After college, I joined my mentor in a management consulting firm and traveled the world. Later, God blessed me and enabled me to start a Career Counseling and Coaching firm. We published several books and coached thousands of individuals through the difficult time of job search and career transition.

In 2009, I realized I needed more so I cried out to God and asked Him to help me. He revealed His plans and vision for my future – teach, equip, and encourage Christians to stand on God’s Word and integrate their faith and the Word into their daily lives. Suddenly the excitement and passion returned.

Like Jeremiah, I was called and set apart for a life with God. God explained that my entire career had prepared me for this calling. Yes, I am called to share the Gospel. My platform is the world of business. My congregation is made up of men and women who are eager to take their faith to work. What has God called and appointed you to do? I encourage you to ask Him to turn your work into His calling.

*Lord, thank you for calling and appointing me as your messenger. Teach me to share
your Word with confidence and boldness. Set me apart for your perfect will.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Find Your Passion

(Pursue the Dreams God Has Given You)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/119%20chapt%205%20dev%202.mp3>

“For we are God's [own] handiwork (His workmanship), recreated in Christ Jesus,[born anew] that we may do those good works which God predestined (planned beforehand) for us [taking paths which He prepared ahead of time], that we should walk in them [living the good life which He prearranged and made ready for us to live].”
(Ephesians 2:10, AMP)

Have you discovered your God-given passion and calling? On a daily basis as a Career Coach, I faced the reality that over half the workforce goes to jobs every day that they hate! I have met many people over the years that hate their jobs and live for weekends and vacations. This is not God's way. Work is part of God's original plan for man and when we work God's way, our work becomes a form of worship and a way for us to honor and acknowledge God. As Director of a Jobs Ministry for a large church here in Houston, I found that the most popular and requested workshop was, “Find Your Passion.” In the session, I explained that God planted unique gifts, interests, talents, skills, and abilities in us while we were in our mother's womb. We must acknowledge them and let them out. When we affirm and give our God-given gifts, talents, hopes and dreams a voice or expression in our work life, then and only then can we bring true honor and glory to God. I have observed that many people will work really hard to help someone they care about achieve their dreams while they walk in fear and ignore their own. Too often, people let significant others – parents, grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles, teachers, or coaches talk them out of pursuing their dreams and passions.

Child of God, what passions (dreams) have you held onto since childhood that you need to affirm and let out! Do not believe Satan's lies or listen to the negative feedback from others close to you. Remember, Abraham had to leave his family and friends and go to a new place where he could only hear the voice of God. I encourage you to step out in faith and become the man or woman that God intended you to be.

Lord, thank you for your gifts to me. I know that I am special, unique, and wonderfully made. Help me to discover and walk out the passions and gifts that you have given me. Help me hear your voice and be who you created me to be so that I might bring you honor and glory in all I do. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Knowing God's Call on Your Life

(First Who and then How)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/120%20chapt%205%20dev%203.mp3>

"For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory."

(1 Thessalonians 2:11-12, NIV)

Self-esteem or our identity (Who I Am) shapes how we define and see ourselves in relation to others and the world. Self-worth or our innate sense of value (How I want to be treated) shapes our needs and expectations we have of others. These two concepts explain WHO we are and HOW we want others to interact with us. Understanding a person's views on self-esteem and self-worth are critical to understanding their actions and meeting their needs. Knowing this, you have a prescription for communication and interaction. Jesus always understood a person's needs even when they did not, and He responded to their most basic or intrinsic needs. Jesus was never too busy or in too much of a hurry to overlook the needs of others. His actions were motivated by love and compassion. Jesus looked beyond the surface or immediate needs to the deeper and eternal needs. As a Christian, we must ask the Holy Spirit to show us the WHO and explain the HOW. Without the help of the Holy Spirit, we are simply incapable of meeting the deepest needs of others. With the help of the Holy Spirit, by deciding to imitate Jesus, we can start each day by deciding to be intentional and purposeful in our interactions. We can walk in Christ-like love and compassion, change lives, and leave a mark that cannot be erased.

Child of God, I encourage you to decide today to honor God with His call on your life!

Lord, thank you for calling me into relationship. Help me to grow in wisdom, and discernment, love, and compassion. Jesus, guide my steps in all I do and say. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

From Tagline to Life's Mission

(Passion, Faith, and Boldness)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/121%20chapt%205%20dev%204.mp3>

“And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.”
(Acts 4:31, NASB)

In 2006, the Lord began to speak to me about my work. I was clear He wanted to take me to another level and show me how to integrate my love for Him and His Word into my speaking engagements and Executive Coaching. It started with “Find Your Passion,” a signature talk that I created for churches and job ministries. Next, God gave me tools to help Christians renew their minds. The tools are encounters with God that spark life-changing results in everyone who is willing to examine their daily walk with Christ. He called me to launch a Motivational Speaking practice and focus on ways Christians can integrate faith and work. He overhauled my presentation model. Now my talks are filled with God’s Word. I was led to revise my “tagline” to “find your passion, live by faith and act in boldness.” My client calls and meetings changed as I became more confident in my new coaching model, professional reputation, and identity as a Son of God. One day, as I referred to my “tagline,” the Holy Spirit convicted and corrected me. He told me to never think of it as just a tagline. He revealed this was not just God’s assignment, but my new way of life! While I am often surprised at the things the Lord has me do and say now, I have a deep peace and desire to please God in all I do. Many times, at the end of a coaching session, the Holy Spirit will say, “Ask them this. . .” It becomes clear this issue was the reason the Lord had me there.

Have you been a bold Man or Woman of God lately? Is it time for you to step out in faith and honor God with your work? I encourage you to ask God to reveal how He wants to use you. Remember...find your passion, live by faith and act in boldness!

Lord, thank you for anointing me with your power and might. Teach me to be pleasing in your sight and to act in boldness in all I do and say. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

A Prophet Is Not without Honor

(Their Unbelief)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/122%20chapt%205%20dev%205.mp3>

“And they took offense at Him. But Jesus said to them, ‘A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household.’ And He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief.”

(Matthew 13:57-58, NASB)

In this passage, Jesus comes to Nazareth, his hometown, to share the Gospel and perform miracles. While the crowds were amazed at His teaching, they questioned and found it all hard to believe and accept. Their reasoning, “Isn’t this the carpenter’s son? We know his mother, brothers, and sisters. Where did he come up with all this wisdom and power?” Rather than accept Jesus with praise and thanksgiving, they were offended and put off. Even worse, their unbelief set a limit on the miracles Jesus was able to perform in Nazareth. As a Career Coach, I have seen this scene play out with hundreds of individuals. They, like Jesus, heard a calling on their life. They wanted to believe and pursue their passion and purpose. Unfortunately, those closest to them – often immediate family members, relatives and childhood friends took offense and rejected their dreams, ridiculed their passions, and refused to believe in them. As a result, they went to work in jobs that did not affirm their spirit, fulfill their passions and dreams. Over time they were filled with intense feelings of despair and dissatisfaction. Often late into their 40’s and early 50’s they still longed to live out their passions and walk out God’s calling for their life, thinking, “If only I can find it in retirement.”

Leaders, managers, and supervisors play a critical role in this very human drama. You have a responsibility for the growth and development and engagement of your employees. I encourage you to listen to them, coach, and mentor them, believe in them, honor them with your honest feedback and support. Help them to be all that God has called them to be.

Lord, thank you for calling me into your divine purpose. Help me hear your voice and walk it out in faith and belief that I may honor you with my life. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Will You Give Up Sleep for Jesus?

(Get Up, This Is Important)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/123%20chapt%205%20dev%206.mp3>

“Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.”

(Mark 1:35, NIV)

As we read the Gospels and look at the life of Jesus, we see that Jesus was always willing to make the required sacrifice to be in God’s will for his life and to meet the needs of the people around Him. We read that Jesus developed the habits of spending time in the predawn hours in solitary prayer seeking God’s will. Here, we see that He willingly sacrificed additional sleep, comfort, food, and companionship to spend time alone in prayer. I’m confident that as He prayed that morning, Jesus asked God what His “To Do List” included for the day. A few verses later we read that rather than return to the house for fellowship and breakfast Jesus declared His purpose for the day – to preach the Gospel and He promptly departed. I’m always puzzled when Christians talk about their desire to grow spiritually and have John 10:10 abundant lives, but are unwilling to renew their minds, adopt kingdom thinking, make the necessary sacrifices and create the essential habits that a life of abundance requires.

As I grow in my faith walk, I’m discovering that I sleep less and less. In fact, God called me to get up at 2:00 AM this morning to write this latest volume of devotionals. I seldom look at the clock anymore when I get up to read my Bible, or spend time with God in my prayer garden. I know God will give me all the grace, strength, and power I need plus my marching orders for the day. I’ve simply decided to stand with David in agreement that an offering and life with God must cost me something starting with a small sacrifice of sleep.

How about you? Will you give up sleep for Jesus? (See 1Ch 21:22-24)

Lord, thank you for teaching me the importance of willing sacrifice and the need for the habits of faithfulness and obedience. Help me to be willing to give all that you ask of me joyfully including some sleep. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Transitions Call for Spiritual Shepherds

(A Higher Stage of Calling)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/124%20chapt%205%20dev%207.mp3>

*“And I will give you [spiritual] shepherds after My own heart [in the final time],
who will feed you with knowledge and understanding and judgment.”*

(Jeremiah 3:15, AMP)

Notice, Jeremiah talks about God’s promise of spiritual shepherds when we face change and transition. Transition is difficult. It doesn’t matter whether it happens in your professional or personal life, it’s hard. In your work life, you’ll experience many changes: multiple careers across diverse industries and companies, new technology, new jobs, new bosses, transfers, promotions, relocations, changes in compensation and benefits, downsizings, mergers, and acquisitions. All are challenging to deal with and will take a toll on you and your family.

My life has been constant change for the last 10 years. In 2006, I met Karen, we married in 2007. I moved away from my home into her home. Over the next 3 years I experienced profound spiritual growth and awakening. In 2009, God called me to start a small Men’s Ministry and lead men on the path to becoming Mighty Men of God. In 2010, God called me to get up in the early hours before dawn and write devotionals 6 days a week for a year. In early 2012, He told me to change the focus and direction of my coaching practice. I adopted a faith-based, Bible-focused practice to teach Christians in the marketplace how to integrate their faith into their work life. Suddenly I was excited and energized about my professional life again. One morning I told Karen, “Honey, God has called us to be ‘spiritual shepherds’ in the marketplace. He has given us new tools, books to write, messages to deliver, sermons to preach, and Christian clients who are hungry for His Word and searching for ways to honor God in their work.”

Child of God, I encourage you to ask God if He has a transition planned for you. Yes, transitions are difficult, but during your time in the wilderness, trust God to give you spiritual shepherds to counsel, lead, guide, and pray for you. The wilderness is a place of training and preparation.

Lord, thank you for being my Shepherd and for calling me to be a shepherd to others.

Teach me to love, to serve, and to care for the sheep you have entrusted to me.

Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Lessons on Work from a Father

(Calling and Purpose)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/125%20chapt%205%20dev%208.mp3>

“I tell the things which I have seen and learned at My Father’s side, and your actions also reflect what you have heard and learned from your father . . . This is because I have never spoken on My own authority or of My own accord or as self-appointed, but the Father Who sent Me has Himself given Me orders [concerning] what to say and what to tell. And I know that His commandment is (means) eternal life. So whatever I speak, I am saying [exactly] what My Father has told Me to say and in accordance with His instructions.”

(John 8:38, 12:49-50, AMP)

When you ask people about their first job, where and when they learned their first lessons about work, conversation usually centers on family. We often learn our basic lessons about work from our parents. As a young boy I followed my dad wherever he went. We crawled under the car to change the oil or do repairs, climbed the ladder to install a TV antenna, and squeezed under the kitchen sink to fix a leaking faucet. We cut trees and burned brush. We went to construction sites to install electrical service, lights, and power equipment. Reading these verses, I realized that like me, Jesus learned critical lessons about work from His Father (see Luke 2:41-49). On the 3rd day of their homeward journey after celebrating the Feast of the Passover, Joseph (His earthly father) and Mary discovered that Jesus was missing. They returned to Jerusalem and found 12-year-old Jesus sitting in the temple listening and asking questions. When they asked why He did this, His answer was simple and matter of fact, “Why did you look for Me? Do you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” The Gospels tell us that this behavior or mindset stayed with Jesus throughout His life in ministry. He was always doing His Father’s business, what He saw God do and what God told Him to do. Regardless of the source of your first lessons about work,

I encourage you to commit today to turn to your heavenly Father and ask Him to teach you about work. Ask Him to tell you His will, desires, and plans for your work. Ask Him what to do and how to do it. Be like Jesus and go to work on God’s business. Engage your faith at work and accomplish His will for your life.

Lord, thank you for the many lessons that you have taught me about work. Thank you for helping me to imitate Jesus and for giving me a spirit of excellence. Help me listen and obey the instructions of the Holy Spirit so that my work glorifies and honors you.

Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Are You an “At Once” Believer?

(Answering the Call)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/126%20chapt%205%20dev%209.mp3>

“As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ‘Come, follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will make you fishers of men.’ At once they left their nets and followed him.”

(Mark 1:16-18, NIV)

I’m always struck by the sense of urgency that Simon Peter and Andrew showed in these verses. Notice, the words, “At once they left their nets and followed him.” It does not say that they got together and talked about it or went home and discussed it with their families. It says, “At once.” Another translation says “immediately.” As a Consultant and Coach for many years, I’ve witnessed many people make sudden and dramatic changes in their life. We have a worldly expression for it. It’s usually referred to as “middle-aged crazy.” The expression applies to both men and women, who suddenly walk in and announce they want a divorce, are quitting their jobs, and starting a new life (usually with someone else)! Whenever this happens, we are struck by the abruptness and dramatic level of change in the person’s life. Reading this passage, I can’t help but wonder if Simon Peter and Andrew’s wives and family understood what had happened to them. They must have asked, “Why? What is the rush?” I’m sure they struggled to explain to their wives’ satisfaction why “at once” they were leaving their business (boats and nets) and following Jesus. I greatly admire Simon Peter and Andrew’s sense of obedience and sold-out faith and trust in Jesus. I must confess that often I hesitate, think about, want to pray first, and talk to Karen before I finally say, “Yes” to God. Recently, God showed me that He was calling me to a higher standard, to an “At once” kind of faith and obedience. He is giving me the grace to say, “Yes.”

Child of God, is Jesus calling you to make a radical change in your life? If so, I encourage you to say, “Yes” and follow Him “at once.”

*Lord, thank you for showing me the power of “At once” faith. Jesus, remove all doubt and fear and teach me to come to you “at once,” whenever you call.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

A New Model for Coaching

(Called to Speak the Truth in Love)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/127%20chapt%205%20dev%2010.mp3>

“Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.”

(Ephesians 4:15, NIV)

Giving difficult and often unsettling feedback is an integral part of my job. Early on I built a reputation for being “brutally honest.” I remember the first time I heard that. It really hurt as I had hoped my clients understood my level of care and concern for them. Even now, I’m grieved whenever I must deliver piercing Spirit-led truth. I explain that giving truthful feedback is essential because growth depends on it. My goal is to not only speak the truth as God instructs me, but to speak the truth in love.

In 2010, God blessed me with a new coaching model which allows the Holy Spirit to take charge of interactions with my clients. We begin by praying and inviting the Holy Spirit to lead and guide our calls and meetings for God’s purpose, glory, and honor. I ask the Holy Spirit to: establish the agenda; speak through me; reveal the issues that must be addressed; give me the words to say; steer the conversation as He desires; pray through me for my client’s breakthrough, healing, and deliverance; and teach me how to speak the truth in love. There are times I still feel lost and don’t know what to say, but I’ve learned to be still and cry out to God for help. With the heart of David, I ask Him to come quickly as I know I cannot do what He wants me to do without Him. I’m often surprised by the conversations and outcomes. I witness breakthroughs and deliverance at a pace that can only be explained by God’s grace and power. I’m quick to give God the credit for what happens and to thank Him for His mercy and grace.

Are you growing in Christ daily in your work and pursuing His divine calling? I encourage you to invite the Holy Spirit to take charge and to coach you. He will never lead you astray!

*Lord, thank you for your love and for the truth of your Word. Keep me
in the circle of love as I speak the truth to others at all times.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Man Carrying a Jar of Water

(No Small Tasks)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/128%20chapt%205%20dev%2011.mp3>

“So he sent two of his disciples, telling them, ‘Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. Say to the owner of the house he enters, ‘The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’ He will show you a large upper room, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there.’”

(Mark 14:13-15, NIV)

Most of the time, when we think of the Last Supper, we focus on the conversation between Jesus and His disciples, the washing of feet or the Holy Communion. In this passage, I’m fascinated by the intimate details of the events leading up to the Last Supper. We know Jesus enlisted at least four people to perform the preparations for this special time and defining moment in the life of Jesus and His disciples. Jesus used two disciples (Peter and John), the man carrying a jar of water, and the owner of the house. The next verse tells us that they found things exactly as Jesus described them. I’m always amazed by God’s ability to plan, schedule, coordinate, facilitate and execute elaborate situations and events down to the smallest details to accomplish His perfect will and plans in our lives.

In my own life, often, God gives me very simple instructions. Sometimes He is more detailed and specific and shares Who, What, When, Where, and How. I confess that I used to wonder about the “Why,” but I have come to simply trust God and get to work. Often months even years later, God will explain the “Why,” when He knows I am ready to learn and embrace this truth. As the revelation comes and I am able to look back and see God’s hand at work in my life and in the lives of others I stand in awe. I’ve come to cherish the times where I’m able to say to God, “Oh I see now, Lord. I get it.” In those moments I feel a deep sense of humility that I, like the man carrying a jar of water, have been used by God for His purpose, honor, and glory!

Lord, thank you for your perfect will for my life. Father, your thoughts and plans are always higher and better than my own. Holy Spirit teach me to trust you in the intimate details of life and to follow your instructions at all times. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Are You Made from Good Clay?

(Yield to the Master Potter)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/129%20chapt%205%20dev%2012.mp3>

“On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, ‘Why did you make me like this,’ will it? Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?”

(Romans 9:20-21, NASB)

Over the years, certain companies have developed a reputation for shaping and molding their employees until they had the “desired look” or image, values, and mindset. Who can forget the IBM, Xerox, Arthur Anderson, Disney, or Chase Bank image? In this passage, Paul tells us that the shaping and molding process starts out with a mass of clay. Potters will tell you that you can’t have just any clay. It must be the right clay. Good clay has 3 essential characteristics: plasticity or flexibility, degree of absorption, and strength. In light of this, we must ask ourselves: Am I good clay? Am I willing to bend to the will of God? Am I flexible and pliable? Do I allow myself to be molded in God’s hands? What is my level of absorption? Am I hard and resistant in God’s hands or soft and smooth? Do I have the necessary moisture to bend in the face of trials, challenges, and temptations? Will the sweat of battle and the tears of heartache soften my inner spirit so that I yield to the pressure of the Potter’s hands? Am I tough enough to last, to stand the test of time? Am I durable, strong, and useful or brittle, fragile, and easily cracked and broken?

Child of God, are you good clay? Are you willing to be shaped and molded to God’s specifications? Are you content to be a useful vessel or insist on being an object that sits on a shelf? Remember, in God’s eyes, all of His creations are works of art, beauty, and purpose. I encourage you to submit to the Master Potter. Be willing to start off as a lump of clay and end up a beautiful vessel that can be used as the Master Potter sees fit.

Lord, thank you for your loving hands and the patient attention you give to every part of me. I pray you will give me a soft and supple heart and a willing spirit that I may be good clay in your hands. Shape me and mold me as you please and use my life for your will and purpose. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Divine Appointments

(What Is Your Calling?)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/130%20chapt%205%20dev%2013.mp3>

“He appointed twelve—designating them apostles – that they might be with Him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons.”
(Mark 3:14-15, NIV)

Notice the first two words here, “He appointed.” Jesus gave the disciples “divine appointments to execute His will and plans for mankind. Their faithfulness in carrying out these appointments (assignments) changed the world and the fate of millions of people for all eternity. As Christians, we must come to understand that Jesus still appoints and designates. His commandments to preach the Gospel to the far corners of the earth, heal the sick, and cast out or take authority over demonic spirits are still in force. There is still much work to be done. On a daily basis, I meet people who have heard and responded to His call. They have said, “Yes” and accepted their divine appointment. They have surrendered their life to Him and embraced their assignment in faith with passion, dedication, and a commitment to excellence. I watch as He uses them and works through them to make a lasting mark on the world that cannot be erased. I watch as they stand in awe at what He accomplishes through them. I see how He transforms their lives daily and they come to think, feel, speak, and act like Jesus. I see hearts, minds, souls, and spirits as they are renewed, shaped, and molded into new creations with a new purpose.

Recently I saw a man who has fully embraced his divine appointment smiling back at me in the bathroom mirror. Ask God to speak to your heart today about His divine appointment for your life. Answer His call. Put a smile on your face and His.

*Lord, thank you for calling me into a deep intimate relationship with you. Help me hear your voice and give me an open and willing spirit for every divine appointment, large and small. Help me to trust You and submit to your perfect will.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Come and See

(Refuse to Listen to Doubters and Haters)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/131%20chapt%205%20dev%2014.mp3>

“The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, ‘Follow me.’ Philip was from the town of Bethsaida. So were Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and told him, ‘We have found the One that Moses wrote about in the Law. The prophets also wrote about him. He is Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.’ ‘Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?’ Nathanael asked. ‘Come and see,’ said Philip.”

(John 1:43-46, NIV)

There are powerful lessons to be learned here for any Christian who aspires to be a Mighty Man or Woman of God and walk in God’s power and authority. In this passage, Philip shows us foundational traits and behaviors that will be required of you. You must: be open to the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; be willing to receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior and turn away from the world; believe in Him and follow Him wherever He goes; openly confess Jesus as your Lord, and proclaim Him to friends, family, and total strangers; act quickly and step out on faith before Satan steps in and takes advantage of your hesitation, doubt and fear; be willing to risk ridicule, rejection, and even persecution from others. Nathanael had doubts, biases, and prejudices, and initially refused to believe. Notice Philip’s response to Nathanael’s doubt and questioning. He refused to be put off, debate the issue, try to convince, or explain Jesus. He boldly replied, “Come and see.”

Child of God, are you open to God’s Word and His call on your life? Are you willing to believe in Him, accept Him, and follow Him wherever He leads you? Are you willing to openly confess Him to others and risk ridicule and rejection? Are you certain and sure of who He is and who you are in Him? I encourage you to ask God to give you the faith, confidence, and boldness of Philip. Be willing to tell others that you too have found the One. Spread the Good News of Jesus Christ and be willing to say to all who doubt, “Come and see!”

Lord, thank you for this lesson on confident trust and expectant hope in your Word. I’m thankful I heard your call. Give me the willingness to confess you as my Lord to all who will listen and the conviction to respond to all who doubt with a simple, “Come and see.” Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

You Will Become a Different Person

(God Has a New You in Mind)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/132%20chapt%205%20dev%2015.mp3>

“Then Samuel took a bottle of olive oil. He poured it on Saul’s head and kissed him. He said, ‘The LORD has anointed you to be the leader of his people. . . The Spirit of the LORD will come on you with power. Then you will prophesy along with them. You will become a different person.’”

(1 Samuel 10:1; 6 Nlrv)

In 1 Samuel, CHAPTER 10, there is an accounting of the events leading up to this passage. Kish, Saul’s father, a wealthy businessman focused on commerce, his family’s livelihood, and the need to recover lost assets (donkeys). Saul focused on being a faithful and obedient son (finding the donkeys). The servant focused on helping Saul (ultimately leading him to Samuel, God’s prophet). Samuel focused on following God’s instructions (hosting a divine appointment, delivering a message from God and anointing Saul as king). God focused on answering the Israelites’ cry for a king who would lead them and save them from the Philistines. We read that Saul left home a mere boy from the tribe of Benjamin (smallest tribe of the Israelites and a family that was least important in the tribe). He returned as God’s anointed king and leader of His people. Saul, the timid boy who hid in the baggage at the coronation ceremony, came before all the people standing taller, more confident, and powerful, with the Spirit of the Lord resting on him. In the middle of our worldly affairs and mundane activities, God steps in and rearranges things for His purpose and plans. He orchestrates people, events, and circumstances to accomplish His divine will and purpose for our lives.

Child of God, I encourage you to ask God to reveal His plans and purpose for your life. Be open to an encounter with God and be prepared to receive His call on your life. When God speaks in the midst of your worldly business, be willing to follow Him in a new direction. Trust the power of the Holy Spirit inside you to anoint you with all the grace you need to accomplish His perfect will in your life. Like Saul, you too will become a different person as you walk out your divine destiny to accomplish God’s will for your life and for the kingdom.

Lord, thank you for this lesson on kingdom business and divine appointments. Help me to be ready and willing to follow your voice whenever you call me. Give me a hypersensitivity to the Holy Spirit within me and change me into a new person who is ever pleasing in your sight. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Knowing When

(God's Will and His Perfect Timing)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/133%20chapt%205%20dev%2016.mp3>

"He must increase, but I must decrease."
(John 3:30, NASB)

We often see people in positions of power and influence struggle with the issue of knowing when to step back or step down. Sadly, many fail to do so voluntarily and are forced to relinquish their power and control. This very scenario played out a few years ago on the international political scene in the Middle East as several rulers struggled to hold onto power despite widespread civil unrest, riots, and protests. We see that John the Baptist understood his role and purpose. John's destiny as Jesus' messenger had been foretold to his father before his birth. Even though he was well known and popular, John knew he was not "The Chosen One." He was the front man or opening act while Jesus was the "main attraction or headliner." Headliners often use a front man. Laurel had Hardy, Andy Griffith had Barney, Lucy had Ricky, and Johnny Carson had Ed McMahon. John the Baptist's job was to get the crowd ready, to get them thinking, to encourage them to examine their lives, to soften their hearts and prepare them for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Following His baptism by John, Jesus launched His ministry. It was now time for John to step down and move out of the limelight and into the shadows and give Jesus' center stage.

As Christians, we must all pray and ask God to reveal His will and perfect timing for our lives. Are you destined to be a front man or a headliner? Are you at a place in life where God is asking you to step back or step up? Knowing when it is "the right time" for either one, requires you to be still so you can hear God's voice clearly. I encourage you, once you hear Him, get moving!

Lord, thank you for showing me your will for my life. Teach me to follow you at all times so that I may never be out of step with you. Help me to get moving and step up or step down, decrease or increase, according to your perfect will. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

300 Men Blowing Trumpets

(Trust God Even in Foolish Things)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/134%20chapt%205%20dev%2017.mp3>

“The LORD spoke to Gideon. He said, ‘I want to hand Midian over to you. But you have too many men for me to do that. I do not want Israel to brag that their own strength has saved them. . . Gideon separated the 300 men into three companies. He put a trumpet and an empty jar into the hands of each man. And he put a torch inside each jar. . . Each man stayed in his position around the camp. But all of the Midianites ran away in fear. They were crying out as they ran. . . When the 300 trumpets were blown, the LORD caused all of the men in the enemy camp to start fighting each other. They attacked each other with their swords. The army ran away.”

(Judges 7:2, 16, 21-22, NIV)

This is one of my favorite stories in the Bible. In CHAPTER 6, the angel of the Lord came to Gideon and spoke to him about leading the Israelite army to victory. Gideon experienced fear and doubt and tested the angel twice to see if he was telling the truth. The angel passed Gideon’s tests and he decided to trust God. Imagine the scene as God directs Gideon to send over 30,000 of his men away so Israel would see His power. Then imagine as Gideon tells his remaining 300 men that they will encircle the enemy camp with trumpets and torch-filled jars, and attack the enemy by blowing the trumpets and breaking the jars! This passage of Scripture goes on to say that the enemy fled in terror and actually attacked each other as they ran. I confess that I pray to have the faith of Gideon and his men.

As Christians, we need just a few sold-out, radical, Mighty Men and Awesome Women of God who will do crazy things for God. I encourage you to ask God to reveal the situations in your life where you are struggling and fighting in your own strength. Ask Him to help you turn these situations over to Jesus. Let Him direct your path. Trust Him to lead you to victory. Be willing to pick up and blow your trumpet with the expectation of a miracle. When you do, watch as your enemies and problems run from you in fear.

*Lord, thank you for this lesson on faith and trust. Help me to grow in my faith so that I turn to you, my only Source, while abandoning all other resources. Teach me to be sold-out for Jesus and to be willing to pick up my trumpet and blow my troubles away.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Have You Washed any Feet Lately?

(We Need Servant Leaders)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/135%20chapt%205%20dev%2018.mp3>

“When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. ‘Do you understand what I have done for you?’ he asked them. ‘You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.”

(John 13:12-15, NIV)

The scene is etched in my mind. I stood in front of a room filled with Presidents, CEOs, CFOs, and industry executives at a popular Houston Professional Networking Group. My talk was entitled, “A Call to Action: Leading with a Servant Leader’s Heart.” My message touched on the following points: the excess and turmoil of the last two decades in the corporate world; the role that selfishness, greed, lust for power, control, and wealth, pride and arrogance, contempt and disdain for others played in these situations; and the critical need for a new brand of leader (servant leaders). I continued by stressing that we need true servant leaders who lead like Jesus. Leaders who: lead from the heart; make personal sacrifices for the welfare and benefit of others; and are very humble, self-effacing, generous, loving, and compassionate in their relationships and interactions with others. At a critical moment in the message, I approached the audience and said, “Jesus gave us an example of this type of leader at the Last Supper.” As I spoke these words, I knelt down on one knee and reached out to one of the attendees with open arms and asked her, “May I wash your feet?” As I stood, and looked around the room into the faces of the audience, I posed the question, “As leaders, whose feet have you washed lately?” The astonished look on their faces was easy to read and showed that they were failing in terms of serving others.

Child of God, now I ask you, “Whose feet have you washed lately?”

Lord, thank you for washing the sin away from my life. Thank you for bathing me in your love and grace. Continue to wash me on the inside and outside until I am pleasing in your sight. Teach me to lead and serve others with a clean and pure heart. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Speak Lord, Your Servant Is Listening

(Learning to Be Still)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/136%20chapt%205%20dev%2019.mp3>

*“And the Lord came and stood and called as at other times, Samuel! Samuel!
Then Samuel answered, Speak, Lord, for Your servant is listening.”
(1 Samuel 3:10, AMP)*

Our world is full of noise, endless sounds and voices fight for our time and attention and space in our minds and hearts. We're bombarded daily by a steady stream of messages from cell phones (calls, text messages, emails, and alerts), TV/radio, Internet/social media, family and friends, business associates and of course Satan, the liar and accuser. With all of these messages competing for our attention how can we hear from God?

The workplace has its own noise. Many of my clients complain of the “noise and distraction” of 150 - 200 emails per day, a jammed calendar full of conference calls, meetings, presentations, requests, and deadlines. With all of this going on around you, is it hard to be still? When you do stop to listen, WHO and WHAT are you listening to? The majority of my clients ask me to teach them how to be still. Why? Divine purpose and calling comes from God and you must learn to be still to hear His voice. We start by praying and inviting the Holy Spirit to participate in every call or meeting. I provide key verses and ask them to read, study and meditate on “Being Still before God.” I teach them how to seek and find stillness. I teach them that stillness before God is the way you access the wisdom and peace of God and discover purpose and calling. At the end of our work together, many identify this as the greatest lesson they learned.

Child of God, do you practice stillness? Can you recognize God's voice in the midst of all the noise and distraction? Do you hear God's voice on a regular basis? If not, I encourage you to ask God to speak to you today and listen carefully. God seldom shouts, but often whispers. Be still and like Samuel say, “Speak Lord, your servant is listening!”

*Lord, thank you for speaking to me and for the intimacy and tenderness of your words.
Softener my heart and give me ears that will hear even the most gentle whisper. Never
stop speaking to me, for your loving servant is listening. Through the blood
of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Before You Were Born, I Set You Apart

(Knowing What Not How)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/137%20chapt%205%20dev%2020.mp3>

*“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart;
I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”*
(Jeremiah 1:5, NIV)

I remember God speaking to me at the early age of ten. I was certain that He called me to be a preacher. In college, I had the urge to teach and change the world. After college, I joined my mentor in a management consulting firm and traveled the world conducting workshops on communications, leadership, and team building. Years later, I founded a career coaching and consulting firm, published several books, and coached thousands of individuals on career transition and job search. Next, I coached and advised senior corporate executives and their teams for over a decade.

Suddenly, I found myself in a place where I no longer had passion or excitement for my work as I had known it. I had changed. Now, my walk with God was the driving force in my life and I needed to include Him and honor Him in my work. I cried out to God and asked Him to help me. He began to show me visions of my future as an author and speaker. I saw myself writing and talking to large audiences on the subject of faith and work. He gave me tools to use with my coaching clients to help them integrate their faith into their daily business lives. I watched as the excitement I felt as a 10-year-old returned. Yes, my childhood vision has been confirmed. I was called and set apart for spiritual or kingdom impact. My platform is the world of business. My audience (congregation) is made up of businessmen and women who want to renew their minds, stand on God’s Word, and take their faith to work.

What has God called and appointed you to do? Ask Him to speak to you and reveal His vision, will and purpose for your life. He speaks. We just have to be willing to listen.

Lord, thank you for calling and appointing me for your perfect purpose. Set me apart and lead and guide me as I pursue your perfect will for my life. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

He Chose Twelve

(Have You Been Chosen?)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/138%20chapt%205%20dev%2021.mp3>

“It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God. And when day came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles:”
(Luke 6:12-13, NASB)

Over the years I've hired and terminated numerous staff and conducted training seminars for hundreds of managers and supervisors on interviewing, selection and hiring. The hiring decision is one of the most difficult and costly decisions a leader, manager, or supervisor will ever make. Unfortunately, without the Holy Spirit, we can all make bad choices. Reading this passage, I am struck by the first sentence. Jesus spent an entire night in prayer. The next verse gives us the reason for Jesus' fervent prayer. The next day He would make one of the most important decisions of His young ministry. He would select (recruit and hire) the 12 disciples. He was selecting His team that He would teach and lead for the next 3 years. Once He made His decisions, He would launch His ministry and lead His team on a divine mission. The fate of the world and millions of people would rest on their efforts. Given the magnitude of the decision and Jesus' habit of always going to His Father for instructions, I can readily understand why He spent the entire night talking this over with the Lord. What a conversation that must have been as they went down the long list of potential candidates and decided who to select. I wonder what was said when they came to the name, Judas Iscariot, and decided that yes, his name must be on the list.

Child of God, if Jesus were making the same selection and hiring decision today, would He select your name? Has He already chosen you and called you to be on His team? Has Jesus extended the job offer, yet you have been reluctant and unwilling to say, "Yes Lord?" If so, I encourage you to pray and ask God to give you the courage to say, "Yes." As is the case with every hiring decision, there is more at stake than you know.

Lord, thank you for teaching me faithfulness and obedience through your Son, Jesus. Teach me to turn to you for all of the decisions in my life. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

CHAPTER 6

Spiritual Warfare, Satan, and Demons

“THEN JESUS was led (guided) by the [Holy] Spirit into the wilderness (desert) to be tempted (tested and tried) by the devil. And He went without food for forty days and forty nights, and later He was hungry. [Exod. 34:28; I Kings 19:8.] And the tempter came and said to Him, If You are God's Son, command these stones to be made [loaves of] bread.”
(Matthew 4:1-3, AMP)

“In conclusion, be strong in the Lord [be empowered through Your union with Him]; draw your strength from Him [that strength Which His boundless might provides]. Put on God's whole armor [the armor of a heavy-armed soldier which God supplies], that you may be able successfully to stand up against [all] the strategies and the deceits of the devil. For we are not wrestling with flesh and blood [contending only with physical opponents], but against the despots, against the powers, against [the master spirits who are] the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spirit forces of wickedness in the heavenly (supernatural) sphere.”
(Ephesians 6:10-12, AMP)



Soldiers Telling War Stories

(Satan Falls from Heaven)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/140%20chapt%206%20dev%201.mp3>

“The seventy-two returned with joy and said, ‘Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.’ He replied, ‘I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.’”
(Luke 10:17-18, NIV)

Telling stories is an integral part of manhood and serves a vital role in males’ rites of passage. Men have gathered around the fire and told stories for thousands of years. These stories often deal with their struggles or battles in the major arenas of life (marriage, children, sex, money, work, hobbies, religion, and politics). They use these stories to recount detailed descriptions of their struggle, acts of sacrifice, courage, conquest, sorrows, and the agony of defeat.

In the verses above we see Jesus and the disciples telling stories of the “Great Spiritual War.” Scripture tells us the disciples were filled with joy as they told of their success in casting out demons. With 72 disciples, the storytelling must have gone on for hours. I can only imagine the sense of wonder and excitement that they felt hearing each other’s story of attack and victory as they cast out demons. Each story proved that God’s Word, faith, and righteousness will defeat sin and evil. Their stories must have served to build their courage and confidence in their mission. After listening to their stories, Jesus shared the ultimate war story and recounted the day, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.” Can you imagine the look on their faces as Jesus relates the details of God casting Satan (Lucifer, Son of the morning, see Isaiah 14:12), fallen angel, liar, accuser, and father of demons, out of heaven?

Jesus has given us power, dominion, and authority. He gave us victory on the cross and covered us with His blood. We have His armor and His Word. Are you using them to confront Satan, demonic spirits and win battles? Do you have any war stories? If not, I encourage you to get busy and join the battle. Soon, you will have your own stories to share and encourage other men.

Lord, thank you for sharing the most important story of all time – the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. I find confidence, hope, and courage in your Word. Give me boldness to face Satan knowing that with you I win every battle every time. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

What Business Do We Have with You?

(Satan's Enemy)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/141%20chapt%206%20dev%202.mp3>

“Just then there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying, ‘What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are--the Holy One of God!’ And Jesus rebuked him, saying, ‘Be quiet, and come out of him!’”
(Mark 1:23-25, NASB)

In this verse, we see that the demonic spirit knew of Jesus and recognized Him as the Holy One of God, as he posed the questions, “What business do we have with each other? Have you come to destroy us?” I’m intrigued that the demonic spirit: recognized Jesus instantly from a distance; knew who Jesus was – the Holy One of God; understood that holiness, truth, and light had nothing in common with darkness, sin and lies; was probably aware that Jesus had defeated Satan in the wilderness; understood Jesus’ power and authority over evil. In the next verse, we read that the spirit instantly came out of the man. He obeyed Jesus’ spoken command! As I read this passage, I can’t help but wonder, “Does Satan know who I am?” Has he talked about me and warned his children of darkness, that I am a holy man of God? Do the forces of evil see the Light of Jesus within me from a distance? Do they see me as a threat and fear me? Are they actively planning an assault to undermine and derail my kingdom efforts? Are they plotting a way to rob me of my divine destiny? As a soldier in Jesus’ Kingdom Army I pray that I walk in the level of anointing, dominion, and authority we see in Jesus in this verse.

Child of God, I encourage you to join me today. Put on the whole armor of God, live by faith, and boldly declare to Satan and his demons that you have no fear. Starting today, speak to every demon you encounter. Ask them, “What business do we have with each other?” Then boldly command them to go in the name of Jesus. Give them something to talk about!

Lord, thank you for your grace and the power of your Word. Help me to live a holy life, walk in your anointing and power, and to overcome every demonic spirit and evil that comes against me. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Back Off Satan!

(Be Clear Who Is Talking to You)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/142%20chapt%206%20dev%203.mp3>

“He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. ‘Get behind me, Satan!’ he said. ‘You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.’”

(Mark 8:31–33, NIV)

In this passage Jesus has just shared his imminent fate with the disciples and told them that soon He must die on the cross and rise again. Peter’s response to Jesus’ news was one of stern disapproval. Quickly Jesus looked past Peter as he responded to his rebuke. He instantly recognized what was going on in the spiritual realm and instead of speaking to Peter, He spoke directly to Satan. Just as Satan used Eve in the Garden of Eden to tempt Adam into sin, he was attempting to use Peter to deter Jesus from His mission. Jesus was able to look beyond Peter’s rebuke (fear and doubt) and see how Satan was trying to use him to thwart God’s plan. As Christians, we must realize Satan, the opportunist, will often attempt to use those closest to us to try and cause fear, doubt, and unbelief. He will use husbands, wives, family members, friends, coworkers, and trusted advisors. He will attempt to use the very people who know our hopes, dreams, fears, and insecurities to attack us. Remember doubt knocks at your door with a mild demeanor and starts off with a seemingly innocent question, “Do you really believe. . .?” Naively, we open the door and invite doubt in. Soon it turns into a menacing monster called fear. The next time someone tries to get you to question the Word or promises of God, carefully check to see whether their words line up with God’s Word.

Child of God, I encourage you to ask the Holy Spirit to always reveal who is really talking and what is at stake. Don’t be afraid to boldly say, “Back off Satan. Get behind me!”

Lord, thank you for your Spirit of truth and light. Grant me spiritual wisdom and discernment and the ability to recognize and boldly confront Satan’s lies and schemes.

Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Window of Opportunity

(Beware the Thief)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/143%20chapt%206%20dev%204.mp3>

“When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.”
(Luke 4:13, NIV)

Thieves look for “windows of opportunity” or the best time to enter, get what they came for, and leave undetected. They look for moments when you’re not around, tired, distracted, vulnerable, or unaware of your surroundings. They look for open windows and unlocked doors when people are asleep or at work. They look for ways to disarm your security system. In public, they approach without warning while you’re standing next to your car with your arms full of shopping bags.

Every time you defeat Satan, the original thief, it’s important you remember the truth of this verse. He will come again. He is the ultimate opportunist who will return at a more favorable time to accomplish his destructive mission. Ask yourself: What are the open and unsecured windows in my life? When and where will Satan come after me? What lie will he tell me? What temptation will he use to entice me to sin? Are my defenses down because of unresolved anger, hurt and unforgiveness? Am I emotionally and spiritually vulnerable? Have I been backsliding and turning away from God, trying to find comfort in the world?

Child of God, I encourage you to ask God to reveal any potentially open window in your life. Close it and secure it today. Be bold and put a sign up, “This house is covered and protected by the blood of Jesus. Everyone who lives here is armed with the Word of God and ready for a fight!”

Lord, thank you for the power and strength of your Word. I call you Lord and submit my life to you. I will close every window of opportunity for sin in my life. I will stand on the power of your Word and fight the thief who only comes to steal, kill, and destroy. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Satan Is Crushed Under My Feet

(Rescued by Jesus)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/144%20chapt%206%20dev%205.mp3>

*“The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.
The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.”
(Romans 16:20, NIV)*

As he closes Romans in CHAPTER 16, Paul speaks prophetically over believers in Rome and every Christian who would ever live. He says, “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.” What powerful imagery in this verse! Paul refers to God as peace (shalom, prosperity, wholeness, completeness). Another translation says, “The God who gives peace...” Our peace will come, and Satan will be crushed, pressed, squeezed, and destroyed. We stand victorious over Satan. This verse should excite and encourage every Christian. Jesus’ blood on the cross settled the battle for power between God and Satan, light, and darkness, good and evil. On the cross, Jesus’ blood anointed and empowered every Christian to defeat Satan. Satan has been, and will always be defeated. It’s time for every Christian to grasp the meaning of this truth and walk it out. We are victors, conquerors, and winners, not losers. The biggest lie Satan can tell you is that he has power over you. Satan cannot make you do anything. He can talk and roar. He can try to intimidate you with an endless string of “What if ...” lies. Remember you have the power within you to resist and defeat him. You must learn to say, “Discussion over! Case closed! Satan you lose! You lost when: God threw you out of heaven into the depths of hell; Jesus died and shed His blood for me on the cross; Jesus was resurrected and defeated death; Jesus kicked open the gates of hell; Jesus ascended to the throne. Satan, you are the ultimate loser!”

Child of God, give God praise and thanksgiving today for giving you power, dominion, and authority. Thank Him that it is written “nothing can harm you.” (Luke 10:19). Do not walk in fear anymore. Find comfort in God’s promise, “Submit yourselves to God, resist the devil and he will flee from you.” (James 4:7).

Lord, thank you for Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross. Because of your blood Jesus, I win every battle every time and Satan is crushed under my feet. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Serpents, Scorpions and Satan

(No Fear Here)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/145%20chapt%206%20dev%206.mp3>

“Behold! I have given you authority and power to trample upon serpents and scorpions, and [physical and mental strength and ability] over all the power that the enemy [possesses]; and nothing shall in any way harm you.”

(Luke 10:19, AMP)

This is one of my favorite verses in the New Testament. As a Speaker, I’m often in front of Christian men, speaking on topics of faith. A popular topic, “Acting in Boldness” comes from my personal mission statement, “find your passion, live by faith and act in boldness.” I explain that as Christian men, the Bible tells us we are Sons of the Most High God. I cite Scripture that shows that we: are spirit beings created in the very image and likeness of God; have been given authority, power, and dominion over all the earth; are anointed and blessed for success, prosperity and wholeness in every area of our lives; have a mouth that is a divine instrument and we can use it to speak blessings over our lives daily; win or lose the battle with Satan in our minds; must renew our minds daily and set our mind on God; must commit to use the Word of God as the final authority for every decision in our lives; are the spiritual leader of our families; must be vigilant and alert to spiritual warfare and attacks by Satan; have kingdom armor and weapons that we must use in our battle with Satan; must understand that fear is not from God but is a demonic spirit whose intent is to steal, kill and destroy us; can expect Satan to use doubt, unbelief and fear to tear down our defenses and gain access into our lives; live in Christ and He lives in us; are more than conquerors and the outcome of every battle was established on the cross.

Child of God, I encourage you to live by faith and trust in God’s Word and act in boldness. Trample upon serpents, scorpions, and Satan’s demons, knowing that nothing shall in any way harm you!

Lord, thank you for your Word. Teach me to walk in faith in the full authority, power, and dominion that you have given me. Help me stand firmly and boldly on your Word knowing that I can live my life free from fear and harm. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Wrestling in Prayer

(Zealous and Persistent Prayer)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/146%20chapt%206%20dev%207.mp3>

“Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.”
(Colossians 4:12, NIV)

I have always loved words. I love the sound of words, pictures that words paint and feelings they express. Literature has always captured my mind, heart, and soul. As a teenager, I explored the world through plays and poetry. In college, I read a vast array of authors, playwrights, and philosophers. Now, I spend hours reading my Bible and seldom read anything that is not faith related. Reading my Bible, I use cross references and multiple translations to fully grasp the meaning. Here, my mind is drawn to the phrase, “wrestling in prayer.” Paul says Epaphras is “always wrestling in prayer for you...” Webster’s Dictionary defines “wrestle” as: means to contend, as in a struggle for mastery; grapple with; to force into submission. As I reflect, I wonder, “Who is Epaphras wrestling with? Who is his opponent?” The Holy Spirit reminds me that every Christian is engaged in daily spiritual battle. He takes me to Paul’s words in (Eph 6:12-13, NASB), “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.” Now, it is clear that Epaphras wrestled in prayer for the young church in Colosse. He went to battle and waged spiritual warfare with Satan on their behalf. The Holy Spirit reminds me we are called to pray for fellow believers.

Child of God, are you praying regularly for others? Is this part of your regular prayer vigil? I encourage you to ask God to speak to you about the people in your life who need prayer. Be willing to fight the fight of faith on their behalf. Be prepared to engage Satan. Wrestle in prayer for them that they may be able to stand firm in the will of God for their lives.

Lord, thank you for teaching me the power of prayer. Teach me to be vigilant and courageous in my prayer life as I pray for others. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Violent Faith

(Be Bold, Get Up and Fight)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/147%20chapt%206%20dev%208.mp3>

“But no one can enter the strong man's house and plunder his property unless he first binds the strong man, and then he will plunder his house.”

(Mark 3:27, AMP)

This verse creates powerful images of brute force and violence. It's part of a passage where Jesus is responding to allegations that He is demon possessed and therefore, able to cast out demons. He begins His response this way, “How can Satan drive out Satan? And if a kingdom is divided and rebelling against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.” He goes on to tell a parable about spiritual warfare and the struggle between good and evil. He presents the image of a strong man of God engaging in violence. The man of God goes to battle with Satan and binds him to defend his property. Notice Jesus' reference to “brute force and violent faith.” I often cite this verse in talks to Christian men. I start with the fall of Adam in the Garden and recount his utter leadership failure. I talk about Abraham, Jacob, Joshua, Gideon, Elijah, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Paul, and Peter. I go on to make the point that many modern Christian men are not mighty men of valor but are spiritual wimps and sissies. I give examples that illustrate our timidity and weakness. I explain the ways that Satan so easily defeats us. I go on to challenge them to walk as Mighty Men of God with courage, confidence, and strength.

Are you a timid or courageous Child of God? I encourage you to commit today, to walk in the Lord's strength and might. Put on your full armor of God. Pick up your sword of faith and march bravely into battle. Engage Satan, the enemy, with a forceful and violent faith. Bind him and take back all that he has stolen from you!

Lord, thank you for your Word. I will no longer be afraid of Satan. I will put on my armor, pick up my sword of faith and walk bravely into spiritual battle with Satan. I will bind Satan and reclaim all that he has stolen from me. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

CHAPTER 7

Loving God with all Your Heart and Soul

“And He replied to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind (intellect). [Deut. 6:5.]. This is the great (most important, principal) and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as [you do] yourself. [Lev. 19:18.] These two commandments sum up and upon them depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

(Matthew 22: 37-40, AMP)

“You always show me the path that leads to life. You will fill Me with joy when I am with you. You will give me endless Pleasures at your right hand...I'm asking the LORD for only one thing. Here is what I want. I want to live in the house of the LORD all the days of my life. I want to look at the beauty of the LORD. I want to worship him in his temple. LORD, hear my voice when I call out to you. Show me your favor and answer me. My heart says, "Look to him!" LORD, I will look to you.”

(Psalm 16:11; 27:4, 7-8, Nlrv)



An Act of Worship

(Give Your Heart and Treasures to God)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/149%20chapt%207%20dev%201.mp3>

“Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume... ‘Leave her alone,’ Jesus replied. ‘It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.’”
(John 12: 3; 7-8, NIV)

It was Jewish custom at the time to provide guests who came into your home with water and a towel for the washing of feet. We don't know if this had already happened. We do know from the opening verses that Jesus was sharing a meal with Lazarus (whom He raised from the dead), Judas (who would betray Him), Martha and Mary (Lazarus' sisters). Martha was serving as Mary enters and pours a pint of expensive perfume on the feet of Jesus and begins to wash and wipe His feet with her hair. Judas objected and declared that this was wasteful and frivolous. “Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it.” Jesus' response, “... Let her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial. For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me.” (John 12:6-8) Many, even Christians, might agree with Judas' view that this was wasteful. Jesus saw Mary's actions as an expression of intense personal worship. She took what she had and offered it to Jesus. She humbled herself and washed Jesus' feet and wiped them with her hair. She prepared and anointed Him for what was to come. Are you focused on worldly business or kingdom business? Are you willing to give your treasure to Jesus as a sacrificial offering? Are you willing to exalt Jesus by humbling yourself, kneeling and washing other's feet? Are you willing to be bold in your faith and risk the world calling you crazy for Jesus?

Child of God, I encourage you to ask God to speak to your heart today and show you what He desires from you as an act of worship. Like Mary, give Him your love and treasure willingly!

*Lord, thank you for this powerful example of worship and sacrifice. Mold my heart so that I, like Mary, can approach you with love and humility and give you, my treasures.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Where Are the Other Nine?

(Don't Forget to Give God Praise)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/151%20chapt%207%20dev%202.mp3>

“As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, ‘Jesus, Master, have pity on us!’ When he saw them, he said, ‘Go, show yourselves to the priests.’ And as they went, they were cleansed. One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him -- and he was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, ‘Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?’ Then he said to him, ‘Rise and go; your faith has made you well.’”

(Luke 17:12-19, NIV)

We read that Jesus healed all ten lepers from their physical disease, but only one (a Samaritan who was hanging out with a group of lepers who were Jews) was healed from his spiritual sickness and death. The other nine (Jews who were God's chosen people) failed to return and give praise and thanksgiving for their physical healing. Their hardened hearts caused them to miss the precious gift of salvation and eternal life. While their bodies were healed, their souls remained sick and lost. The one who returned and fell at Jesus' feet to give Him praise received a greater gift – the gift of salvation. He was well, whole in body and spirit. As I grow spiritually, the more I am dismayed at man's hardened hearts especially in the body of Christ. Why is it that: Only 20% of Christians tithe, while 80% refuse to honor God with tithes and offerings? Many come to church every Sunday, but remain “pew-sitters” for years without ever stepping up to serve? Many volunteers only want to serve when it is convenient or insist on doing “what they want to do” instead of filling a need?

Child of God, are you, like the Samaritan, pursuing God with joy and a thankful heart? Do you serve Him faithfully with your time and your money? Ask God to speak and reveal any area of your life where your heart is hardened, and you are broken. Cry out and surrender it to Jesus. Listen for His voice as He speaks, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well.” Don't forget to return and with a loud voice give Him praise and thanksgiving.

Lord, thank you for this lesson on praise and thanksgiving. Jesus, soften my heart and help me remember each day that all I have comes from you. Jesus, you are the cure for every area of sickness and brokenness in my life. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Everything I Have Is Yours

(Repentance and a Father's Love)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/152%20chapt%207%20dev%203.mp3>

“The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’ ‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”
(Luke 15:28-32, NIV)

In this passage we see a marked contrast between the older brother and the younger brother (Prodigal Son). The older brother is angry and hurt at the forgiveness and favorable treatment his father shows his younger sibling. He expresses his indignation by refusing to celebrate his brother's safe return. Instead he turns a cold heart toward his brother and condemns his actions. In anger, He also utters resentment towards his father for perceived offenses and even questions his father's love. The younger brother originally left with an arrogant, pride-filled heart and rebelled against his father's ways. He returns, a broken man, filled with genuine repentance and willingness to humble himself before God and his father. He openly and genuinely confessed his sins and asked for his father's forgiveness. The Prodigal Son learned from his mistakes and now seeks his father's love, protection, favor, and blessings. While the older brother remained in his father's house and served him all the years his younger brother was away, Scripture shows us that he had much to learn from his younger brother about humility, repentance, and the blessing of unconditional love.

Child of God, are you failing to grasp what is most important? Are you going through the motions of faithfulness and obedience with wrong motives and a hardened heart? Are you walking in love, patience, and compassion or anger, resentment, and bitterness? Learn from the Prodigal Son, repent and humble yourself before God and live in His unconditional love.

Lord, thank you for your lessons on love and forgiveness. Continue to teach me how to live my life as a faithful and obedient son. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Do You Really Love Me?

(Saying It Is Not Enough)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/153%20chapt%207%20dev%204.mp3>

“When Jesus and the disciples had finished eating, Jesus spoke to Simon Peter. He asked, ‘Simon, son of John, do you really love me more than these others do?’ ‘Yes, Lord,’ he answered. ‘You know that I love you.’ Jesus said, ‘Feed my lambs.’ Again Jesus asked, ‘Simon, son of John, do you really love me?’ He answered, ‘Yes, Lord. You know that I love you.’ Jesus said, ‘Take care of my sheep.’ Jesus spoke to him a third time. He asked, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love me?’ Peter felt bad because Jesus asked him the third time, ‘Do you love me?’ He answered, ‘Lord, you know all things. You know that I love you.’ Jesus said, ‘Feed my sheep.’”
(John 21: 15-17, NIV)

Karen and I have been blessed to serve on the leadership team at our church, World Changers Church-Houston, a satellite church under Pastors Creflo and Taffi Dollar. It’s been a remarkable journey since we helped plant the church in December 2009. We often talk about the faithfulness of our leadership team and stewards and their willingness to do whatever it takes to serve the members, guests, and God in excellence. Reading this passage, I’m reminded that part of showing our love for Jesus means we offer faithful work, service, and sacrifice with a joyful and unselfish attitude. I’ve observed many Christians who claim and profess a love for Christ, but their actions speak otherwise. Why are so many church members unwilling to sacrifice their time to serve at church? Why is it only 20% of believers tithe regularly? Why do we wish to reap the benefits of the harvest without ever once putting our shoulders to the plow and going to the field to work?

Child of God, I encourage you to ask yourself the same question that Jesus posed to Peter, “Do you really love me?” If the answer is “Yes” then ask Him to show you how, and where He wants, you to use your gifts and talents that He has given you. Be willing to respond to His call and serve. Be willing to open doors, greet others with a warm smile and loving heart, direct traffic in the parking lot, count tithes and offerings, teach in the Children’s Ministry, or sing in the choir. Be willing to serve Him with affection, humility, and faithfulness. Many sheep need to be fed and cared for. Show you really do love Jesus by caring for others.

Lord, thank you for your Word. Jesus, teach me to put my love for you to work by caring for your sheep. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

I Am Isaac Not Ishmael

(A Child of Promise)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/154%20chapt%207%20dev%205.mp3>

“But we, brethren, are children [not by physical descent, as was Ishmael, but] like Isaac, born in virtue of promise.”
(Galatians 4:28, AMP)

Like Isaac, I am a Child of promise. I’ve only recently come to know and understand this truth. Many years I felt like Ishmael – unwanted and cut off. I still remember the day at 15, my Mom came into my room and told me I was an accident, a “mistake.” She and Dad were dating, and she became pregnant. Realizing she was pregnant, they decided to “do the right thing” and get married. For years I felt I was a child of circumstance and that I was not really wanted. Each time Dad would leave us or get drunk and abusive, my Mom’s words would echo in my mind. Years later after Dad died my brothers shared, they too felt Dad resented me, even worse, that he was jealous of the life I had and the life he missed. I was stunned by their words. I walked with anger and resentment toward my Mom and Dad for many years especially my Mom. I asked myself, “Why did she tell me that? Did she stop to think how that would make me feel and what it might mean to me?”

Thankfully I reconciled with my Dad two days before he died. We sat and talked, cried, looked beyond the hurt of the past and embraced each other with love and compassion. I also praise God that His grace allowed me to forgive my mom, love her, and care for her the last seven years of her life as she slipped away into Alzheimer’s.

Today, my past no longer matters and is irrelevant. I understand who I am and whose I am. I am a loved and cherished Son of the Most High God and Heir to the promises of God. I am Isaac, a Child of Promise. Who are you? I encourage you to spend time in God’s Word and ask God who you are to Him! His answer will change your life!

Lord, thank you for the truth and power of your Word. I am your Son, your child, and I give you praise for your loving kindness, mercy, and grace. I believe that I receive every promise in your Word because of the blood of Jesus. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Hosea and Gomer, God's Love Story

(God's Love and Faithfulness)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/155%20chapt%207%20dev%206.mp3>

"When the LORD began to speak through Hosea, the LORD said to him, 'Go, take to yourself an adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness, because the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the LORD.' So he married Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son... The LORD said to me, 'Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes.'... So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley. Then I told her, 'You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will live with you.'"

(Hosea 1:2-3; 3:2-3, NIV)

The book of Hosea (salvation) is a love story full of real-life betrayal, suffering and tragedy, faithfulness and obedience, mercy and forgiveness, reconciliation, and redemption. On the surface, it's about Hosea's marriage to an unfaithful woman (Gomer). As we read this Book, we must remember that Hosea's story is part of a much larger and more compelling story. Beyond the personal story of Hosea and Gomer is the collective story of God's infinite love for His people. It shows us just how loving and forgiving God is and how far He will go to honor His covenant (marriage vows) to man even though we are often unfaithful just like Gomer. I must confess that elements of this story have played out in my life. My wife Karen married me knowing that I had been a Prodigal Son living in the world and that I would carry my brokenness into our marriage. Like Hosea, she was faithful and obedient to God's instructions. I give God praise that He used her love, faithfulness, and obedience to Him to change me. Who I am today is a testimony to God's love and grace for me and to her love, faithfulness, and obedience to God and faithfulness to me as her husband.

Child of God, ask God to speak to you about the importance of covenant in your relationships. Are you playing the part of Hosea or Gomer? Trust God and know that He loves both the faithful and the unfaithful and has a plan and purpose for your life. Walk in faithful obedience and watch as His love, mercy and grace change you. Allow Him to use you as a character in His Book of Life and become part of His never-ending love story!

*Lord, thank you for your unconditional love, mercy, and grace. Jesus, I thank you for your faithfulness. Teach me to love you with all of my heart, mind, and spirit.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Is Your Peace Tied to Money?

(Find Perfect Peace in Jesus)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/156%20chapt%207%20dev%207.mp3>

*“The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in You.
Trust in the LORD forever, For in GOD the LORD, we have an everlasting Rock.”
(Isaiah 26:3-4, NASB)*

Many people including Christians struggle in their relationship with money. I have found that most corporate executives view salary as the initial benchmark in assessing the appropriateness of a job offer. Yet at the beginning of their search process, when asked what their most important criteria were, compensation was seldom in the “Top 3.” Human history shows that mankind has a long-standing addiction to money. Our love for it often corrupts our thinking and judgment. Research shows that most lottery winners go broke and are sometimes forced to file bankruptcy within 3 years of claiming their winnings.

For years, I found comfort and felt secure in my ability to generate significant income, have a large bank balance, savings, and lots of cash in my pocket. When we were first married, Karen joked that I became anxious whenever my money clip fell below \$300. In 2009, I discovered the power money had over me. Within 18 months, our income fell by nearly two-thirds to a level I had not known in 20 years. Fortunately, the Holy Spirit revealed in advance that this shift would occur. God used this period to help me change my thinking about money’s purpose and how I related to it. He helped me become a better steward over all that I have. Several times, I’ve had to smile when, in addition to our tithes, the Holy Spirit prompted me to place all I had in my pocket in the offering bucket. I’m thankful to God that I was able to obey joyfully. I praise God I no longer stress over client contracts, bank balances, or the money in my pocket. I have peace knowing God is my Source and everything else is just a resource.

Do you trust your paycheck, bank account, credit cards, or cash more than you trust God? If so, I encourage you to make a commitment to trust Jesus. He will give you perfect peace that defies understanding.

*Lord, thank you for green pastures, still waters, and for all the times you restored my soul.
Thank you for the comfort and peace that comes from you and only you. I choose today
to rest in the shadow of your almighty hand. Through the blood
of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Because You Belong to God

(Listen to Your Father's Voice)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/157%20chapt%207%20dev%208.mp3>

"He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God."

(John 8:47, NIV)

Research shows both animal and human newborns are able to recognize and connect to the smell, face, and voice (sound) of their mothers soon after birth. In the animal kingdom, the bond occurs often within minutes. For humans, recognition occurs within days of birth. This connection or bond is vital for survival and a critical ingredient for a healthy and normal life. In the verse above, Jesus refers to the unique bond and connection that all Christians have with God – our ability to hear God's voice. We know from Scripture that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.

As a Christian, it is comforting to know that since we hear God's voice we belong to God. We are God's Children, Chosen and Called Ones. We hear His voice because He called us into relationship and shared His Word with us. The more time you spend with God, the more you will begin to recognize His voice and understand the words that He speaks to you. Whenever I meet a Christian who says, "I just don't hear God's voice, He never speaks to me," I know I am talking to a spiritual infant. Like any newborn, their senses need to be developed. I encourage them to spend time alone with God in prayer and in His Word every day. I assure them that in time they too will be able to recognize God. As His child, they will recognize His face, smile, and voice (instruction, correction, approval, expressions of love and compassion).

Child of God, I encourage you to commit today to spend time with your Heavenly Father. Hang out and talk with Him. Give Him your undivided attention. Turn your face toward Him and set your eyes on Him. Commit to hear what He says to you – it will change your life!

Lord, thank you for calling me into relationship. My connection to you is all I need. Your Word and your voice sustain me and give me life. Teach me to be still and to focus on you so that I may hear you clearly at all times. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

A Cause for Celebration

(A Prodigal Son Comes Home)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/158%20chapt%207%20dev%209.mp3>

“But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.”
(Luke 15:22-24, NIV)

My life is the story of the Prodigal Son. After almost four decades, when I finally came to my senses and returned to my Father’s house, God showed me just how loving He is. There were no long lectures, heated accusations, or tirades filled with “I told you so.” There were no guilt trips or tests to pass to see if I could be trusted and allowed back into His grace. Instead, like the Prodigal Son, I was embraced in loving arms, kissed, showered with gifts, and invited to live as a loved, cherished, favored, and blessed son of the Most High God. Like the Prodigal Son, I was dead in the world but now have life. I spent years wandering around in circles, hurting, angry, afraid, and lost. I knew the pains of lack, and insufficiency, but now, I am filled with abundant life. Each day, I grow in my understanding of who I am and whose I am. God has assigned angels to attend to me, minister to and care for me. Every day I celebrate that my old life is over and that I now reside in the safety of my Father’s house.

Are you living a life of pain, lack, and insufficiency? Is your soul worn and ragged? When was the last time you laughed and felt joy and happiness? Are you hungry for peace, wholeness, and the abundant life that Jesus promised to those who believe in Him? If, like I once did, you have run away from God, from His presence, His love, and His ways, I encourage you to come home. He is waiting with open arms and longs to see you and talk to you. In His house, there is peace, abundance, and joy. All the saints are there, and a huge party awaits you. Best of all, you are the “guest of honor.”

Lord, thank you for keeping my room in your house and for inviting me home with open and loving arms. I commit today to never leave your house again as long as I live. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Fathers and Sons Must Walk Together

(A Model of Faith and Trust)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/159%20chapt%207%20dev%2010.mp3>

“Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, ‘My father!’ And he said, ‘Here I am, my son.’ And he said, ‘Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?’ Abraham said, ‘God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.’ So the two of them walked on together. Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.”

(Genesis 22:7-10, NASB)

Most of the sermons that are preached on this verse focus on the faith and trust Abraham placed in God. As I read this passage, the Holy Spirit revealed a deeper truth. This passage illustrates the importance of the bond between fathers and sons. Abraham had faith in and trusted God, his Heavenly Father. Notice, his response to Isaac’s question regarding the sacrificial lamb, “God will provide...” They walked on together, father and son, secure in their bond of faith and trust. Their actions are the proof of their mutual trust. Abraham built the altar and arranged the wood for the sacrifice. He bound Isaac and placed him on the altar. Isaac did not resist and allowed himself to be placed on the altar believing in his father’s love. Abraham raised the knife without hesitation to kill and sacrifice his son to God. Isaac never complained, only copied his father’s faithful obedience. Their bond of faith and trust becomes an unbreakable 3-strand cord when it is added to God’s unconditional love. Best of all, God’s love never fades, fails, or disappoints.

Child of God, ask God to show you the strength of your bond of faith and trust. Do you love God enough to obey Him no matter what? Do you trust Him to provide a way out? Are you willing to put everything and everyone on the line for God? Is your bond strong and durable or weak and easily broken? I encourage you to walk with God at all times, secure in the bond of faith and trust in Him. Remember, His love never fails and will always provide what you need just when you need it!

Lord, thank you for this lesson on the bond between fathers and sons. Help me to be obedient at all times with an unwavering faith and trust in you. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Is God a Reality in Your Work Life?

(Do You Take God to Work?)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/160%20chapt%207%20dev%2011.mp3>

“and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us,”
(Ephesians 3:19-20, NASB)

Is God a reality in your work life? Do you take Him to work every day or leave Him at home? Do you replace His Word with the Operations Manual? Do you have Bible software loaded on your laptop so you can have it wherever you go? Do you pray before meetings? Do you start your workday in His Word? Do you see a place for God in your work and do your best to honor God with your work?

Who is your God? Is He real? How big is He? What is His name? What do you call Him? Is He: God of Just Enough or More Than Enough? God of Sometimes or Always? God of Only What You Need or Desires of Your Heart? God of “No” or “Yes and Amen”? God of Too Busy or Always Available? God of The Big Picture or In-the-Details? God of Rules and Laws or Mercy and Loving Kindness? God of Strict Enforcement or Loving Correction? God of One Chance or Many Chances? God of Emergencies Only or Anywhere Anytime? God of Small Miracles or Big Miracles? God of Far Away or Near and Close? God of Confusion or Wisdom and Discernment? God of Detachment or Intimacy? God of Religion or Personal Relationship? God of Distant History or Living Moment? God of Don’t Ask or Ask Me Anything? God of Maybe He Can or More Than Able?

Child of God, I encourage you to ask God to show His presence in your daily work life. Turn to His Word, meditate on it and study it, and allow the Holy Spirit to reveal His truth for you as you face difficult situations. Ask God to show you how big and capable He is. Get ready to be surprised!

Lord, thank you for your loving presence in my life and for calling me into an intimate relationship with you. Jesus, I am awed by who you are. Teach me to include you in everything I do at work and at home. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Parting Is Such Sweet Sorrow

(Run Back into His Arms)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/161%20chapt%207%20dev%2012.mp3>

“Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter.”

(2 Corinthians 7:10-11, NIV)

In Act 2 of William Shakespeare’s famous play *Romeo and Juliet*, there is a gripping and intensely memorable balcony scene as the lovers prepare to leave each other. Juliet says to Romeo, “Good night, good night! Parting is such sweet sorrow.” I wonder if Shakespeare had been reading Paul’s letter to the Corinthians as he wrote this scene. Paul tells us godly sorrow is refreshing and good for the soul as it brings repentance that leads to salvation. Godly sorrow is the state we’re in when we discover that our sin has separated us from God. As the Holy Spirit reveals our state, we are filled with an earnest and eager desire to be cleansed from the filth of sin so we might return to God’s holy presence.

Just as Juliet realized the depth of her love for Romeo, and how much she needed and wanted him, when we experience godly sorrow, we: come to realize how much we love God and long to be with Him; experience indignation that we’ve been deceived by Satan’s lies and allowed fear and doubt to lead us away from God; are alarmed when we realize we stepped out of His glorious light and into darkness; long to run into His loving arms; repent and ask for forgiveness. Soon, we hear His voice. As our godly sorrow begins to fade, He reminds us that through the blood of Jesus, we are redeemed, restored, and reconciled to Him for all eternity.

Child of God, I encourage you to ask God to reveal any godly sorrow you have in your life. Quickly repent and run into the loving arms of God!

Lord, thank you for the power of your Word and for the voice of the Holy Spirit. Continue to use the Holy Spirit to speak truth into my life and remove any desire that I might have to ever depart from your holy presence. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

CHAPTER 8

Walk in Love and Serve Others

“And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as [you do] yourself. [Lev. 19:18.] And Jesus called them to Him and said, You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men hold them in subjection [tyrannizing over them]. Not so shall it be among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, And whoever desires to be first among you must be your slave -- Just as the Son of Man came not to be waited on but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many [the price paid to set them free].”
(Matthew 22:39; 20:25-28, AMP)

“Therefore encourage (admonish, exhort) one another and Edify (strengthen and build up) one another, just as you are doing. Now also we beseech you, brethren, get to know those who labor among you [recognize them for what they are, acknowledge and appreciate and respect them all] -- your leaders who are over you in the Lord and those who warn and kindly reprove and exhort you.”
(1Thessalonians 5:11-12, AMP)



A Simple Leadership Test

(Will You Put Others First?)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/163%20chapt%208%20dev%201.mp3>

“David longed for water and said, ‘Oh, that someone would get me a drink of water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem!’ So the three mighty men broke through the Philistine lines, drew water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem and carried it back to David. But he refused to drink it; instead, he poured it out before the LORD. ‘Far be it from me, O LORD, to do this!’ he said. ‘Is it not the blood of men who went at the risk of their lives?’ And David would not drink it.”
(2 Samuel 23:15-17, NIV)

I admire David’s leadership behavior in this passage. As a consultant to Fortune 1000 corporations for many years, I have witnessed countless situations where corporate leaders faced the choice of elevating personal and selfish desires over the needs of others. Sadly, far too many times they have failed the test. They not only drank the water, they asked for more.

In the business world, Corporate America has become a model of arrogance and greed over the last two decades. We have seen countless leaders work hard to leverage company assets, distort reality in financial statements and reports to Wall Street, merge or sell the business, lay off thousands, and take the money and run with little regard for employees and their families. It has been the rare case where a company President drastically reduces or eliminates personal compensation to share the employees’ burden in the face of falling revenues, reduced work schedules, and cuts to wages and benefits. Over the years, I have grown absolutely sick of seeing laminated posters declaring, “Employees Are Our Greatest Asset,” only to witness the blatant and unrestrained greed and selfishness in the executive suite.

I am encouraged by a new breed of leaders that is emerging across America, true servant leaders, who are willing to put the needs of others first. Child of God, I encourage you to ask the Holy Spirit to help you take your leadership to another level. Dare to lead with a loving and compassionate heart. Study the Gospels and pay attention to Jesus. Decide today to lead like Jesus!

Lord, thank you for your teachings on caring servant leadership in your Word. Jesus, teach me to put others first, to care for and serve them as you have set the example. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Give the Advantage to Others

(Live in Covenant and Put Others First)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/165%20chapt%208%20dev%202.mp3>

“Let no one then seek his own good and advantage and profit, but [rather] each one of the other [let him seek the welfare of his neighbor].”

(1 Corinthians 10:24, AMP)

In the business world, contracts and legal agreements are usually designed to take the advantage, promote, and protect self-interest. They're not designed to give the advantage to the other party. The underlying motivation is fear and selfishness and a lack of trust in other men and God. Most contracts contain severe penalties for cancelation or breach of contract. The language and concepts are all worldly.

In late 2011, God began to speak to me about my Executive Coaching practice and His desire to overhaul it and establish it according to kingdom thinking and principles. First, He gave me new tools to use to assist my clients as they renew their minds and establish an intimate relationship with God. Second, He called me to be obedient to the Holy Spirit in my client interactions and to allow the Spirit to lead my meetings and conversations. I began to see miraculous breakthroughs that surpassed anything I had ever seen before. Third, God told me to abandon my Professional Services Agreement and create a new Covenant Agreement. The Covenant Agreement gives my clients the advantage and seeks to protect their interest at the expense of my own. When issues regarding time or money come up, I suspend the billing process, give more time than is required, work for free as I am Spirit-led to do so, and do whatever it takes to “make it right” to protect the relationship. I simply trust the Holy Spirit to speak and intervene with both of us at all times. He is in charge of the client engagement. I understand that my Covenant Agreement is with God first and then my client.

Child of God, I encourage you to ask God to speak to you today about your relationships, contracts, and agreements. Are you willing to enter into covenant with others and with God? Ask God to help you give the advantage to others.

*Lord, thank you for your covenant promises. Jesus, you always served others faithfully.
Teach me to live in covenant, to be loving and compassionate and to put others first.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

The Real Thing

(Love, the Secret Ingredient)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/166%20chapt%208%20dev%203.mp3>

"[Let your] love be sincere (a real thing); hate what is evil [loathe all ungodliness, turn in horror from wickedness], but hold fast to that which is good."
(Romans 12:9, AMP)

In May 1886, Doctor John Pemberton, a pharmacist from Atlanta, Georgia created the Coca Cola formula in a brass kettle in his backyard. The soft drink was first sold to the public at the soda fountain in Jacob's Pharmacy in Atlanta on May 8, 1886. By the late 1890's, Coca Cola was one of America's most popular fountain drinks. In 1969, The Coca Cola Company and its advertising agency launched the slogan "It's the Real Thing." It proved to be one of the most popular ads ever created and today, Coca Cola products are consumed at the rate of 1.6 billion drinks per day. The "Real Thing" dominates the market so much so that the name "Coke" is often used to refer to soft drinks in general.

Other translations of this passage from Paul's letter warn us about acting with pretense or hypocrisy. In other words, Paul encourages us to love genuinely and sincerely from the heart and not give in to pretense or deception to impress others or win them over. A good litmus test to determine if your love walk is real or genuine is to see how you act around people who are unkind, rude, hostile, or aggressive towards you. Another simple test, check yourself going into and coming out of the church parking lot! As I served at church, I was always amazed at the rudeness and bad behavior that I saw in the parking lot immediately before and after service.

Child of God, I encourage you to ask God to show you any area in your life where your love walk needs development. Most of us don't have to look very far as we are often challenged in our own home with our family. Ask God to search your heart today. Are you walking in love? Are you the "Real Thing" holding fast to that which is good?

Lord, thank you for showing us what love is. Jesus, help me each day to grow in your perfect love and become more like you. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Forget the Lawyers

(Love God and Love Others)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/167%20chapt%208%20dev%204.mp3>

*“One of the lawyers *said to Him in reply, ‘Teacher, when You say this, You insult us too.’ But He said, ‘Woe to you lawyers as well! For you weigh men down with burdens hard to bear, while you yourselves will not even touch the burdens with one of your fingers. Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and it was your fathers who killed them.’”*
(Luke 11:45-47, NASB)

It seems that even in Jesus’ day lawyers had a bad reputation. In the preceding verses Jesus has accused the Pharisees of hypocrisy and religious oppression. In this verse a lawyer overhears the conversation and accuses Jesus of insulting lawyers with His remarks. Jesus responds by pointing out that the lawyers only weigh people down with the burden of excessive laws. Ultimately, Jesus broke no laws, yet the Pharisees and religious experts of His day falsely accused and crucified Him like a common criminal.

We live in a very litigious society where normal everyday occurrences can lead to frivolous lawsuits among family members, neighbors, and business associates. In many cases, due to long drawn-out legal proceedings and large fees, lawyers are the only winners. Unfortunately, I’ve had personal experience where a client who worked for a law firm asked her boss to press her allegations that I had not delivered services as promised. While her claims were totally unfounded, I was forced to hire a lawyer and settle by offering an unwarranted refund to make the problem and the disgruntled client go away. I join with supporters of Tort Reform and applaud Jesus’ commentary and say we have too many laws and too many lawyers wasting our time and money with unnecessary and frivolous lawsuits. In contrast to His audience and some “religious” leaders today, Jesus was not legalistic in His approach to faith. His instructions were to love God and love others – two laws, plain and simple. When we’re walking in love with God and man, we are compelled to turn the other cheek and forgive when others offend us or commit a sin against us.

Child of God, the next time you are offended or wronged forget the lawyers. Call on Jesus instead. He will help you and teach you how to forgive and walk in His love which settles every argument and conquers all!

Lord, thank you for your loving heart and for lessons on love and forgiveness. Jesus, teach me to walk in love at all times, knowing when I do, everything will sort itself out. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Wanted: “Real Men”

(Stand Strong and Walk in Love)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/168%20chapt%208%20dev%205.mp3>

“Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong. Do everything in love.”
(1 Corinthians 16:13-14, NIV)

Over the years, certain industries proudly protected their all male or “macho” image and fiercely resisted opening their doors to women and minorities. Fortunately, time has diminished this practice. I consulted in the oil and gas and law enforcement industries. As a group, these were tough men. Many I met would struggle with Paul’s message in this passage. They readily embrace and echo the first verse all the time. It has become a classic “male mantra” passed down from one generation to the next. It reverberates in locker rooms in sporting arenas across the world. Men tell each other, “stay awake and pay attention, don’t be afraid, be strong, tough, and act like a real man.”

“Do everything in love” is the part that gives us all the trouble. For men struggling to be and act like men, this is confusing and makes us nervous. We’ve been told love is “a woman’s thing.” Many men have difficulty saying the word “love” in front of other men, and showing love is difficult, if not impossible. Physical embrace on the field is simply “male bonding in a moment of victory and celebration,” but not what you do off the field. In a distant time, Satan surely joined a group of powerful men and changed the conversation. He took God’s Word, twisted it, and created the lie. Introducing fear and insecurity over manhood, Satan dropped Paul’s directive on love. Believing the lie, men say, “Loving is not manly. Hugging is for girls. Real men don’t cry. Showing love is a sign of weakness.” To this I boldly say, “Paul had it right and Satan is a liar.”

Men of God, ask God to show you examples of Mighty Men of God who understand that God is love and that love is their true source of power. Ask God to fill you with His love. Decide today to put Paul’s teachings into practice. Real Men do everything in love!

Lord, thank you for your love and for the truth of your Word on manhood. Jesus, teach me how to be a Mighty Man of God and to walk in love at all times. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Refresh the Hearts of Others

(Lift Others Up by Walking in Love)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/169%20chapt%208%20dev%206.mp3>

“Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the saints.”

(Philemon 1:7, NIV)

Paul is writing from prison to Philemon, and several fellow Christians who hold church meetings in their home. His main purpose for the letter is to convince Philemon to forgive his runaway slave (Onesimus) and to accept him back as a brother in Christ. He starts by acknowledging and praising their faith walk and its impact on others. Imagine as your teacher and spiritual leader says to you in front of others, “Your tender and compassionate love, affection, and support have given me great joy and encouragement because you have refreshed (revived, lifted up, encouraged) the hearts of others (family, friends, coworkers).” What a kind and moving compliment Paul gives to Philemon and the others.

Every Christian should strive to be loving, compassionate, encouraging, and supportive to others. As an Executive Coach, I often have to address conflict and issues of performance or character. I’ve asked God to help me teach and encourage. Specifically, I’ve asked the Holy Spirit to keep me in a “Circle of Love” at all times, and to show me how to refresh the hearts of others. I’ve asked Him to help me manage my emotions, so I do not allow them to lead me outside the circle of love, and to be silent when I am upset, frustrated, or angry. Daily, I ask the Holy Spirit to help me be more sensitive and empathetic towards others. I’ve come to realize that far too often as leaders, parents, or teachers we fail to refresh, revive, and lift up the spirits of others.

Child of God, ask God to speak to you about any relationship in your life where you can become a source of love and compassion. Look for ways to refresh the hearts of those around you. Commit to live and work in the “Circle of Love,” and watch as God changes you and the world around you.

Lord, I confess that I struggle at times to comprehend the depth and width of your vast love for me. Jesus, fill me with your love and compassion. Help me speak and act like you and to refresh the hearts of others. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Are You Loving and Christ-Like?

(Christ Will Draw Others to You)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/170%20chapt%208%20dev%207.mp3>

“Just as I myself strive to please [to accommodate myself to the opinions, desires, and interests of others, adapting myself to] all men in everything I do, not aiming at or considering my own profit and advantage, but that of the many in order that they may be saved.”
(1 Corinthians 10:33, NIV)

As an Executive Coach advising corporate executives on career issues, I’ve always stressed the importance of “likeability.” I would urge them to “Be Likeable.” To help my clients grasp this concept, I created tools and engaged them in focused conversations, role play, video training, and calls to recruiters and business associates where I listened in to assess their “likeability factor.” I advised my clients that corporations “Hire for Skill and Fire for Fit.” In the end, personal chemistry or “fit,” the ability to assimilate into the corporate culture, connect and get along with others, becomes the deciding factor in promotions, transfers, and terminations.

In this verse, Paul shares the importance of likeability or ability to connect from another perspective. Paul was not driven by a personal need or concern as to whether or not others liked him. His behavior was motivated by his desire to save souls. Paul was friendly, kind, accommodating, adaptable, and obliging for one reason and one reason only. His driving desire was to lead others to Christ. As Christians, we must look at our own behavior every day, at work, in the grocery store, with our family or hanging out with friends and ask ourselves, “Am I accommodating? Do I determine what others need and figure out a way to give them what they need, or is it always about me? Am I more interested in looking like a Christian than I am being Christ-like? Will others see Christ in me? Do I walk the talk, speaking and acting like Jesus? Do I draw people to me or push them away?” Paul was right, lost souls are watching and their salvation is at stake.

Child of God, I encourage you to decide today to “Be Christ-like.” Get your eyes off yourself and on Jesus. Be loving, compassionate, giving and kind. Be a bright light of truth in the darkness knowing that others will be drawn to your light.

Lord, thank you for your love and for teaching me how to love others. Help me to “Be Christ-like” at all times as salvation is on the line. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Blessed to Be a Blessing

(Giving to Others Pleases God)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/171%20chapt%208%20dev%208.mp3>

“Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.”

(1 Timothy 6:17-19, NASB)

I’m very encouraged by the emerging trend of super wealthy individuals like Bill Gates and Warren Buffet and others who are committing their vast fortunes to philanthropic efforts. I subscribe to an online newsletter entitled, “The Gathering.” It features the latest development, trends, and articles in the area of Christian giving. When I read the newsletter, I am amazed at the generosity of some individuals regarding their willingness to give their time, money, and talents to those most in need. If I allow it, my mind and spirit can easily get derailed when I stop to consider that only 20 percent of the body of Christ tithes regularly. On top of that only a small number in the church volunteer and serve in ministries or go to the mission field. For those of us who live in the U.S., the wealthiest and most materialistic nation on earth, we must ask ourselves, “How did we allow our hearts to become hardened, our necks to become stiff, our eyes to become blind, and our ears to become deaf to the plight and suffering of those around us? Why are we so obsessed with acquiring more money and more stuff?” So much so that many of us pay thousands of dollars annually in rental storage fees to warehouse our surplus stuff! We should all be motivated to give more, do more, and serve more after reading today’s verses.

Child of God, I encourage you to be generous, even extravagant in giving your time, money, and possessions. Remember, God has blessed you so that you can be a blessing to others. Ask God to show you who you can bless today.

Lord, thank you for all of your blessings and favor you give me and my house. Give me a generous spirit, sensitivity to recognize the needs of those around me and the ability to meet those needs. Bless me to be a blessing to others each day. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Servant Leaders Go to the End of the Line

(First Must Become Last)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/172%20chapt%208%20dev%209.mp3>

*“And He sat down and called the Twelve [apostles], and He said to them,
If anyone desires to be first, he must be last of all, and servant of all.”*
(Mark 9:35, AMP)

Jesus lays out a fundamental principle of servant leadership for His disciples. His teaching stands in marked contrast to worldly thinking and norms. Jesus states that if you want to be first, you must be willing to be last. He goes on to add an even greater requirement – that you must be servant of all.

I can tell you from personal experience that this message has been overlooked and blatantly disregarded by many worldly and Christian leaders, and does not describe my 35 years of experience. I have seen leaders who: possess a prideful and arrogant spirit that often holds others in disdain and contempt; are driven by intense desire for position, power and control; blatantly defend and selfishly justify radically skewed personal compensation and benefit programs at the expense of employee welfare; are motivated by deeply entrenched attitudes of entitlement and preferential treatment; show flagrant disregard for established policies and procedures, coupled with an attitude that they only apply to others; operate with an expectation to be served and catered to at all times. I praise God that within the last decade changes and new trends are happening as executives and leaders from business, academia, non-profits, and the church move toward true servant leadership. In growing numbers, they are enrolling in conferences and seminars at the Greenleaf Center www.greenleafcenter.org and Lead Like Jesus www.leadlikejesus.com and beginning to change their thinking and behavior. On a daily basis new books and articles are coming out that point us back to Jesus as the ultimate model for leadership.

Child of God, I encourage you to ask God to speak to you today about your heart and your leadership behavior. Are you a “serve-me first,” or a “serve-others first” leader? I encourage you to be willing to serve and wash some feet today? Be willing to put others first and go to the end of the line!

*Lord, thank you for not only teaching us about servant leadership, but showing us how in the life of Jesus. Jesus, your life of servant leadership challenges and inspires me. Give me your grace and teach me to copy you. Help me rush to find my spot at the end of the line.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

The Privilege of Giving

(Give Joyfully)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/173%20chapt%208%20dev%2010.mp3>

“And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.”

(2 Corinthians 8:1-4, NIV)

It's common practice in the marketplace for companies to give to charities and support various causes. Many companies write checks and encourage their employees to follow suit during Christmas or times of crisis and catastrophe. Employees take time off and put on aprons and take turns in serving lines at local food banks, or pass out turkeys on Thanksgiving. In the verses above, Paul shares the powerful testimony of the church in Macedonia in the area of giving. Paul tells us that through God's grace they rose above severe trials and extreme poverty to a place of rich generosity. They went so far as to plead for “the privilege of sharing.” Another translation says they begged insistently for the opportunity to give. In the next CHAPTER, Paul urges the church in Achaia to copy the heart of the believers in Macedonia and to be cheerful givers because God loves a cheerful giver.

As Christians we must examine our hearts about tithing and giving. Do we give reluctantly and begrudgingly or willingly with excitement and joy? Do we see tithing as a legal, compulsory act to appease an angry God or as a free, optional, and voluntary expression of honor and love for a loving Father? Is our giving an expression of our heartfelt gratitude and appreciation for all that God has already given us and continues to give us on a daily basis? Do we understand giving is a way to express our love to God? Do we understand that giving transforms our own lives and helps us rise above our individual challenges and limitations?

Child of God, if you struggle with giving to others, I encourage you to ask God for a “heart transplant” replacing your selfish and indifferent heart with a loving and compassionate heart. Take your place in line with the saints of Macedonia. Be a cheerful giver who begs for the privilege to give!

Lord, thank you for the privilege to show you my love and honor through my tithes, offerings, and gifts to others. Lord, I know that I can never out-give you. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Have I Become Your Enemy?

(Responding to the Truth)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/174%20chapt%208%20dev%2011.mp3>

“Have I then become your enemy by telling the truth to you and dealing sincerely with you?”
(Galatians 4:16, AMP)

I had been hired originally by the company President (David) to work with his team and assist one particular VP (Thomas) prepare for a potential promotion. Tension had existed between them and escalated when David informed Thomas, I was going to be his coach and that he had a choice – he could work with me and try to improve or be fired. While he was not happy about the arrangement he elected to go along. It was not long before their conflict heated up. David called to talk about a performance review he planned to address with Thomas. I explained that I saw the same behaviors and could understand why he was unhappy with Thomas’ procrastination in addressing several tough issues. David asked me to talk to him first. I said I would. I called and suddenly all the distrust and anger he felt for his boss was now directed at me. Two days later, he sent an email inviting me to meet under the pretext of apologizing and clearing the air. When I arrived, I could see all the signs of a “corporate ambush or termination.” He escorted me to the VPHR’s office, and closed the door. For an hour, I listened as he railed about all the things, he was unhappy about. It was very clear that I too had become his enemy because I dared to tell him the truth. I see now that Thomas allowed negative emotions to control him. Finally, the pressure became too much. One afternoon after a meeting with David he packed his things and walked out, sending his resignation via email. His abrupt departure left his team confused and upset as they tried to process his unprofessional behavior. Perhaps now they were his enemy as well.

How do you handle the truth when it comes? Do you view the messenger as friend or enemy because he shared the truth and dealt sincerely with you?

Lord, thank you for giving us truth and grace in Jesus. Show me every situation where I have failed to speak or receive the truth and deal sincerely with others. Lead my steps and continue to teach me about walking in truth and integrity. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Cherished Often Means Corrected

(The Need for Tough Love)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/175%20chapt%208%20dev%2012.mp3>

“For the Lord corrects and disciplines everyone whom He loves, and He punishes, even scourges, every son whom He accepts and welcomes to His heart and cherishes.”

(Hebrews 12:6, AMP)

We have all witnessed spoiled and rebellious children who are out of control. We watch as their rebellion plays out in the grocery store, doctor’s office, school, playground, church, and at the neighbor’s backyard BBQ. We stand and look on in dismay as they act out, scream, and throw tantrums; defiantly refuse to do what they’re told, and demand that the world give them what they want, when they want it. We walk away and say, “I would never let my kids act like that. They would be in for it just as soon as we were home.” The truth is, our kids have all pushed the envelope, crossed the line, defied our instructions, and disobeyed our rules. As parents, we’ve all been forced to reprimand and discipline disobedient children. The “punishment and correction” is often more painful for us than it is for them, but we do it because we love them. We love our children enough to show them “tough love,” knowing they will be distant and upset with us. We all know children who have never encountered “tough love.” Why is that?

As Christian parents, we must stand on the truth of Paul’s words. He explains that God is the “Father of Tough Love.” God is the first to correct and discipline, every son that He loves and accepts. Yes, God will correct us when we need it. Whenever we refuse to correct and discipline our children, we are showing disobedience to God’s Word. Looking the other way, and pretending bad behavior will go away or self-correct, is foolish and irresponsible. As a Christian parent, are you struggling with rebellious disobedience in your home? Are your children in need of correction and discipline? If so, I encourage you to ask God to give you the courage and confidence to follow His Word, and be willing to show them some tough love because you love them.

Lord, thank you for the truth and teaching of your Word. Holy Spirit continue to correct me whenever I am disobedient. Teach me your ways so I may imitate you with my children.

Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Blessed by the Lord and Left in Peace

(Resolving Conflict)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/171%20chapt%208%20dev%208.mp3>

“Isaac asked them, ‘Why have you come to me, since you were hostile to me and sent me away?’ They answered, ‘We saw clearly that the LORD was with you; so we said, ‘There ought to be a sworn agreement between us... just as we did not molest you but always treated you well and sent you away in peace. And now you are blessed by the LORD.’ Isaac then made a feast for them... the next morning the men swore an oath to each other.

Then Isaac sent them on their way, and they left him in peace.”

(Genesis 26:27-31, NIV)

This entire CHAPTER holds many valuable lessons about jealousy, envy, conflict, and walking in God’s love and blessings. God blessed Isaac because of the promise He made to his father (Abraham). Others see Isaac’s prosperity, wealth, and success and respond with jealousy and envy. His enemies put dirt in his wells to prevent him from watering his herds. Then tension between Isaac and Abimelech increases to the point where Abimelech confronts Isaac and asks him to leave and live elsewhere. Later we see Abimelech approach Isaac and ask for a covenant of peace. Rather than respond in anger or bitterness Isaac holds a feast. All the men eat and drink and swear an oath of peace. How was Isaac able to put all the harassment, and conflict behind him so easily? The answer is simple and even obvious to his enemies. The Lord was with him, and he was blessed by the Lord.

As Christians, we must resist the urge to walk in our own strength. We must strive to walk in the power of God’s love. When we walk in His love, we can forgive and forget. When we walk in His love, we can sit, eat, and drink with our enemies. When we walk in His love, we are willing to make an oath with our adversaries and live in peace.

Child of God, I encourage you to study and learn from Isaac. Love the Lord and obey Him. Honor Him in all you do, then trust Him to honor you (1Sa 2:30). May you be comforted knowing that when God is with you, even your enemies will see it. While they may come against you out of jealousy and envy, when you are blessed by the Lord and walk in the power of His love, you too will live in peace.

Lord, thank you for this lesson on the power of your presence. Teach me and strengthen me to walk in love and forgiveness with others at all times that I may live in peace.

Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

How Long Do I Have to Put Up with You?

(Control Your Emotions)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/177%20chapt%208%20dev%2014.mp3>

“I begged your disciples to drive it out, but they could not. ‘O unbelieving and perverse generation,’ Jesus replied, ‘how long shall I stay with you and put up with you? Bring your son here.’”

(Luke 9:40-41, NIV)

Here we get a glimpse of the personal struggle that Jesus faced as he was confronted with a lack of trust and faith in God, both in those He preached to and in His own disciples. Jesus expresses His agitation and frustration with the disciples’ repeated failure to effectively use the authority and power He has given them to drive out demons. A man comes begging Jesus to act, because the disciples tried but failed to cast the demon out of his son.

Every leader, manager, supervisor, teacher, and parent has faced a similar moment of frustration and irritation. You taught, showed them how, turned them loose and now you’re waiting to see how they did. Confronted with the disciples’ failure, rather than fly into an emotional outburst, Jesus posed the question, “Unbelieving and stubborn generation, how long do I have to stay here and put up with you?” As we look closely at the Gospels, it seems that Jesus had every reason to pose this question often. I’m sure Jesus wondered how long will I have to stay with you before you: come to believe that I am who I say I am; understand why I have come and why I must go; learn to walk in your divine authority and power; learn and master all that I have to teach you; learn to do the impossible through me; perform the same miracles I do and more; realize how much I love you and God loves you; come to understand what is at stake here (the fate of millions rests on your shoulders)?

Child of God, I encourage you to ask God to reveal how long He has been waiting on you to walk out His perfect will in your life. Stop waiting on Jesus, believe and walk in His power and authority and work miracles (John 14:12).

Lord, thank you for your loving kindness and patience. Jesus, teach me to respond quickly, to follow instructions faithfully, to learn with eagerness, and to perform in excellence with a clean and pure heart.

Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

A Holy Kiss

(Interacting with Fellow Christians)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/178%20chapt%208%20dev%2015.mp3>

“Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.”
(Romans 16:16, NASB)

Paul tells Christians how we are to greet one another – with a holy kiss. I do not see much of that going on. Yes, I see hugs and handshakes, pats on the arm, waves, and some kisses on the cheek, but they seem incomplete and lacking in holiness. Holy means sacred or consecrated, dedicated to the service of God. I see worldly behavior in church lobbies and hallways that bears little resemblance to holiness. Often, I see the “Judas’ Kiss” – a kiss of betrayal. Kisses followed by gossiping, backbiting, critical comments, and judgmental chatter. Have we grown so accustomed to going through the motions and playing church, of honoring God and Jesus with our lips while we carry evil in our hearts? Have we lost sight of our Lord’s commandment to walk in love with others, to be encouraging and forgiving? Every holy kiss is cancelled out by backbiting, gossip and rude behavior pulling out of the church parking lot.

We must hold our relationships with fellow Christians as sacred to be fiercely guarded and protected. We must realize we all come to church broken, hurting and in some kind of pain. We’re all on a journey growing in righteousness and spiritual maturity. I realize as I write these words, that I have failed many times to follow Paul’s simple instructions. I was often so busy “doing church” as a former Director of Operations, that I failed to acknowledge fellow members as I passed them in the hallways, much less give them a holy kiss. I now repent for my actions and commit to a higher standard of holy fellowship.

Child of God, I encourage you to ask God to speak to you about your behavior. Commit today to be Christ-like and walk in holiness with a loving servant leader’s heart. When you meet a fellow Christian in God’s tabernacle, greet them with a holy kiss.

Lord, thank you for your Word. Your Word is Living Word that convicts and instructs as it shines a light of truth in a dark world. Teach me to be Christ-like especially with fellow Christians. Give me a clean and pure heart that I may greet all with a holy kiss. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

A Peculiar People

(Stand Out from the Crowd)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/179%20chapt%208%20dev%2016.mp3>

“Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

(Titus 2:12-14, KJV)

In this verse Paul says that Jesus gave himself for us that we might be a “peculiar people.” Webster’s Dictionary defines peculiar: uncommon, eccentric, unusual, and distinctive in nature or character from others. Paul encourages us to stand out from the rest of the world in both our thinking and behavior. While the world says, “Yes” to ungodly behavior, we must say, “No.” That is what makes us peculiar – our ability and habit of saying, “No,” when everyone around us is saying, “Yes.” As Christians, we must learn to say, “No” to: adulterous affairs; premarital sex and sexual promiscuity; lies, even “white” ones, and cheating on our taxes or company expense accounts; watching R-rated movies filled with nudity and sex, profanity and violence; office gossip, backbiting and rebellious behavior at work (6) emotional affairs and attachments to co-workers of the opposite sex; legal action and lawsuits as a way of settling disputes and arguments with others, especially Christians (8) joining in when others take advantage of or make fun of others; addictive behaviors (drugs, alcohol, sex, food, or pornography); selfishness and fear. We must say, “Yes” to God and be devoted to walking in faith, love, and service to others.

Child of God, I encourage you to ask friends and family if you seem peculiar, uncommon, unusual, even a bit eccentric. The more I grow in Christ, the more I desire to be unusual, even peculiar for Him, zealous and on fire for Him. How about you? Are you willing to be called peculiar for Jesus? Are you willing to stand apart and say, “No” to ungodliness and worldly desires? Say, “Yes” to Jesus. Trust His grace and the Holy Spirit to help you and show you how.

Lord, thank you for the light and truth of your Word. Jesus, help me to be peculiar, uncommon, and unusual with a devotion to you. Teach me to act and speak like you at all times.

Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

How Bright Is Your Light?

(Be a Light in the Darkness)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/180%20chapt%208%20dev%2017.mp3>

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.”

(Matthew 5:14-15, NASB)

The corporate world is required to operate in the light. In the U.S., the Securities Exchange Commission (SEC) serves to ensure that corporations operate in the light of truth. Several of the many SEC guidelines for operating in the light include properly filed quarterly and annual financial statements and reports are submitted in a timely manner; bankers, accountants and auditors inspect, examine, and certify that company financials are accurate and truthful; minutes of meetings and discussions among members of Boards of Directors are recorded and kept for public review.

With the scandals of Enron, Arthur Andersen, Duke Energy, Dynegy, El Paso, Halliburton, Reliant Energy, and the Stanford Financial Group making headlines in Houston over the last 15 years, it is hard to have a high level of trust in Corporate America’s reporting efforts and its desire to bring intimate details of daily business operations and financial transactions into the light. Sadly, the SEC inquiries, allegations and reports of fraudulent activity are not unique to Houston, but have occurred across the US. The public fallout includes executive terminations, tarnished reputations, payment of huge fines and penalties, and diminished trust by shareholders, investors, and the public. The private price includes imprisonment, seizure of assets, financial ruin, unemployment, divorce, depression, and suicide. I am encouraged that a select few corporate executives have had the courage to be a bright light. Cynthia Cooper (WorldCom) and Sherron Watkins (Enron) were named *TIME Person of the Year in 2002* for their efforts in exposing corporate misconduct in the infamous WorldCom and Enron scandals. Their courageous efforts helped pave the way for the enactment of SOX corporate reform laws.

Child of God, Jesus instructed us to be a light. Are you surrounded by the darkness of dishonesty, greed, and corruption at work? If so, I encourage you to respond to Jesus’ call and be a light in this dark world and help others find their way.

Lord, thank you for sending Jesus to be a Light in the world. Jesus may your light shine brightly in me. Use me as a vessel to bring truth, hope and encouragement to a dark and lost world. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Be an Example

(Serve as a Role Model)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/181%20chapt%208%20dev%2018.mp3>

“Let no one despise or think less of you because of your youth, but be an example (pattern) for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity.”
(1 Timothy 4:12, AMP)

As I read Paul’s compelling letter to Timothy, I try to imagine what Timothy must have thought and felt reading it. In the salutation, Paul writes, “To Timothy, my true son in the faith...” It’s important to read this in context. It is quite simply, a father’s encouragement to his son. Father and son talks are powerful moments that often have lasting impact on our lives. Paul, the Apostle, teacher, and spiritual father to Timothy, encourages and instructs him. He warns Timothy not to be intimidated or put off by others because of his youth. He encourages Timothy to be an example to others.

I heard this same advice as the firstborn son of the oldest and firstborn son. The first of 18 grandchildren, I too was encouraged to be an example. I am moved and pause at the standard that Paul sets for Timothy to be an example for others in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity. What a high standard. I’m sure Timothy had to stop, pray, and ask for God’s help, strength, and guidance to live up to Paul’s expectations. The Holy Spirit reminds me as I write this devotional that this standard has been set for all of us.

As Christians, we’re all held to this standard. Jesus encouraged us to be an example; a light in darkness; pure and holy; obedient and faithful; free from sin; a person who speaks blessings not curses; Christ-like and walk in love and forgiveness; believers, who live by faith, not by sight; strong in our faith and refuse to walk in fear.

I am confident that with God’s help I can do this. With Jesus Christ in me, I can be an example. I encourage you to invite Jesus into your life. Surrender every area of your life to Him. With His grace and the Holy Spirit, you too can be an example.

*Lord, thank you for your love, mercy, and grace. Jesus, I surrender every area of my life to you. Help me to speak and act like you with love and compassion and to live as an example to others that draws them to you.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Do You Produce Good Fruit?

(The Ultimate Test of Every Leader)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/182%20chapt%208%20dev%2019.mp3>

*“A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.
Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.*

Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.”

(Matthew 7:18-20, NIV)

As an Executive Coach, I ask questions in my initial meeting with a new client about their faith walk and their life at work. I ask about their views and success in hiring, coaching, and mentoring, promoting, and supporting others in their careers. I am interested in the fruit of their leadership. I explain that I am interested in knowing and understanding the quality of their roots or the depth to which they have planted God’s Word in their hearts and minds; strength of their trunk and branches as evidenced by an intimate daily relationship with Jesus Christ; age of their tree or their level of spiritual maturity which can be measured by the renewal of their minds and shift from worldly to kingdom thinking and behaving; overall health of their tree as reflected in their love walk and Christ-like behavior with others; prevailing attitudes and personal habits about sacrifice and servant leadership; abundance of healthy leaves and blossoms on their tree; degree of harvest or the amount of fruit they have produced and the quality of their fruit. I explain that their life as a leader will be judged on the truth of these verses not on their resume, titles, or amount of money they earned. I explain that God will ask, “Did you produce good fruit?” If this perspective is new to them, I warn them of the dangers of a life based on the selfish and self-centered mindset, “What about me?”

Child of God, I encourage you to adopt a selfless focus with a commitment to serving others and to lead like Jesus. As a leader, are you producing good fruit in abundance? If not, copy and imitate the life of Jesus. Invite Him to teach you and to show you how.

*Lord, thank you planting the roots of your Word in my heart, mind, and spirit. Jesus,
give me the grace and help me to produce good fruit that is pleasing in your sight.*

Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

The Costs of Unforgiveness

(Walk in Love)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/183%20chapt%208%20dev%2020.mp3>

“But the king said, ‘He must go to his own house; he must not see my face.’ So Absalom went to his own house and did not see the face of the king.... Three sons and a daughter were born to Absalom. The daughter’s name was Tamar, and she became a beautiful woman. Absalom lived two years in Jerusalem without seeing the king’s face.”
(2 Samuel 14:24; 27-28, NIV)

It has been five long years since Absalom killed Amnon and fled out of fear. For the last two years, Absalom has lived in Jerusalem, seen the birth of four children and his father David still refuses to see him or his own grandchildren. This family quarrel grew out of David’s sin but was maintained by fear, arrogance, and pride. This story has been played out in countless families since it was written.

I have counseled many people who struggle with unforgiveness and the havoc that it brings. The stronghold of unforgiveness played out in my life as well. For the last 5-6 generations, members of both my paternal and maternal family have had a reputation for being quick-tempered and for holding grudges. Unfortunately, this has been the case for both men and women in the family. They wear their anger, hurt and unforgiveness on their chest as if it were a badge of honor. They make excuses for it, tell stories about it, and shrug it off. My grandfather, father, uncles, brothers, and nephews have all acted this way. Until recently, I too lived with unforgiveness. Thankfully, through His grace, God has delivered me from this stronghold and destroyed this generational curse. He has taught me much about forgiveness and the power of love to heal and restore. I admit, the journey has not been easy, but God has given me the grace and strength to walk it out. I now encourage my younger brothers to break this curse – before it destroys any more relationships in our family.

Child of God, I encourage you to ask God to show you the strongholds and generational curses that are operating in your family. Pray and surrender these situations to God. Ask for His forgiveness. Next, forgive yourself and others and trust His love to heal and restore your life.

Lord, thank you for loving me unconditionally. Jesus, teach me to copy you and walk in love and forgiveness with others at all times. Remove all traces of unforgiveness, heal and restore my heart and spirit. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Judas Was No Surprise

(Forgiveness in the Face of Betrayal)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/184%20chapt%208%20dev%2021.mp3>

“Jesus answered them, ‘Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?’” (John 6:70, NASB)

The truth of this verse is penetrating. Jesus chose Judas knowing he would betray Him. It is hard to image what the human side of Jesus felt at times as He sat across from Judas knowing what Judas would do and the impact it would have on his life. That Jesus chose Judas, knowing who he was and what he would do, illustrates Jesus’ ability to walk in love. It also points out the depth of Jesus’ commitment to fulfilling God’s will and plans while He lived on this earth. Jesus understood that Judas’ betrayal was a necessary part of God’s overall plan for mankind.

Most of us know the sting of deceit and betrayal. The hurt and disappointment can last years before forgiveness comes. I have faced betrayal both in my personal life and in my professional life. Being betrayed at the office and stabbed in the back for a promotion and advancement hurt, but it paled in comparison to the personal betrayal by my best friend and brother in Christ. I praise God for His grace that has allowed me to forgive and reconcile with my friend.

Child of God, I suggest you ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you about any unresolved hurt, anger, bitterness, or resentment over a betrayal in your life. Ask God to show you what He wants you to learn from the experience. Pray and ask God to forgive you for your sin of unforgiveness. Open your heart to His grace so you can forgive. Don’t drink the poison of bitterness, anger, hurt and unforgiveness. It is a poison that will destroy your life. I encourage you to choose today to walk in love with everyone, regardless of their actions. When betrayal comes, copy Jesus, be faithful to His call on your life, be forgiving and walk in love.

Lord, thank you for forgiveness of my sins. Jesus, the example you set with Judas and those who persecuted you, encourages me and challenges me. Teach me to look at people and situations through your eyes and your heart. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

CHAPTER 9

Miracles, Healing and Deliverance

“He was despised and rejected and forsaken by men, a Man of sorrows and pains, and acquainted with grief and sickness; and like One from Whom men hide their faces He was despised, and we did not appreciate His worth or have any esteem for Him.

Surely He has borne our griefs (sicknesses, weaknesses, and distresses) and carried our sorrows and pains [of punishment], yet we [ignorantly] considered Him stricken, smitten, and afflicted by God [as if with leprosy]. [Matt. 8:17.] But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our guilt and iniquities; the chastisement [needful to obtain] peace and well-being for us was upon Him, and with the stripes [that wounded] Him we are healed and made whole.”

(Isaiah 53: 3-5, AMP)

“So the report of Him spread throughout all Syria, and they brought Him all who were sick, those afflicted with various diseases and torments, those under the power of demons, and epileptics, and paralyzed people, and He healed them.”

(Matthew 4:24, AMP)



I Am the Resurrection

(Die to Self and Live)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/184%20chapt%208%20dev%2021.mp3>

“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?’”

(John 11: 25-26, NASB)

In this passage Jesus explains to Martha that Lazarus will rise again. At first, she thinks He is saying Lazarus will rise again on the last day when Jesus returns. Jesus’ next statement is very profound. He says, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies.” Several minutes later as Jesus approached the tomb, Scripture tells us that he was deeply moved in spirit and seeing the tomb He wept. I’m always moved by Jesus’ humanness. In sorrow and grief, he wept. Ignoring his grief, He entered the tomb and cried out, “Lazarus come out.” Lazarus got up and came out.

As a Christian, I find great joy and comfort knowing that not only was Christ resurrected from death after the cross; He is resurrection and life for me and every Christian. In this passage, Jesus gives to Lazarus what He gives to all who believe in Him – resurrection and life. On the third day, Jesus rose from His tomb. His body complete with the scars from the wounds he suffered. Alive in heaven, He sits on the throne of grace at the right hand of God.

I’ve lost all fear of dying. Sometimes I look forward to dying and going to heaven to see Jesus, the disciples and all the saints. I’m at peace knowing He did it for Lazarus, and He will do for me. He only had to command Lazarus to get up. Jesus paid a far greater price for me. He shed His blood and died at Calvary for my resurrection and eternal life! I will not let His sacrifice, death, or blood be wasted. I choose to believe in you Jesus and accept your gift of eternal life. I encourage you to join me and simply believe in Jesus. Eternity in hell is a long time to have regrets.

Lord, thank you for your Son Jesus and His sacrifice on the cross. Jesus, I choose to believe in you. Help me to live a life that is a tribute to you and worthy of the price you paid for me on the cross. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

This Mummy Is No Horror Story

(Jesus Raises the Dead)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/187%20chapt%209%20dev%202.mp3>

“When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come out!’ The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus said to them, ‘Take off the grave clothes and let him go.’”

(John 11: 43-44, NIV)

A common theme in modern horror movies is the return of the “walking dead” or mummy. In these stories, when the mummy appears, people are terrified and run for their lives. The mummy is always a force of evil and destruction. In sharp contrast, the mummy in this passage, Lazarus, beloved brother to Mary and Martha, friend of Jesus and the disciples, is embraced and welcomed back to life by family, friends, and fellow believers. Following Jesus’ instructions to the crowd they immediately removed the linen wraps from his body so that he could walk freely. We read on that many who witnessed this miracle believed in Jesus and were saved. In this original “Mummy” story, we see that resurrection life was granted not only to Lazarus but also to many of Mary and Martha’s friends and neighbors. They came to mourn a death and left celebrating eternal life. Imagine how upset Satan must have been that day as he watched Lazarus rise from the dead and could only watch as many were saved! What Jesus did for the glory of God was a reminder to Satan that God rules over all things even death and that good will always prevail over evil.

Reading this verse gives me a new perspective on Hollywood horror movies. Like everything Satan does, they are cheap and twisted imitations of the original “Mummy” story. I know Satan has an influence on Hollywood scripts since they give power to evil and create fear. Even though Jesus’ original story line seems to have been lost on the cutting room floor, I guess Satan doesn’t watch many Hollywood movies because in the end good always triumphs over evil. I must admit, I look forward to a Christian production of the story about the life of Lazarus. Now that is a real “Mummy” story worth seeing!

Lord, thank you for the miracle of resurrection life. Jesus, I give you praise, glory, and honor every time a lost soul accepts you as Lord and Savior, leaves the world and joins you in eternal life. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

A Divine Facelift

(Jesus Gives Makeovers)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/188%20chapt%209%20dev%203.mp3>

“And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”
(2 Corinthians 3:18, NIV)

Our society is obsessed with the image of youth and physical beauty. Reports indicate that in 2015, 15.9 million cosmetic procedures were performed in the United States at a cost of \$13.5 billion. People of all ages had facelifts, tummy tucks, Botox injections, implants, and other procedures to enhance their physical beauty and pursuit of the elusive image of youth. Many procedures were attempts to repair, conceal, or remove “physical imperfections.” Sadly, attempts to correct these issues often leave a deeper blemish, a broken and shattered soul (mind).

As Christians, our spirits have been made perfect. Through the Word of God, we renew our minds and inject His DNA into our soul. As Paul reminds us, each day we get a “divine facelift” as we are transformed into the likeness of Christ. As we embrace our new identity in Him, we have no need to hide our face, be ashamed or embarrassed. Our new Christ-like face reflects the Lord’s glory. His glory increases, invades our spirit and fills us with His love. His love in us begins to glow and is visible to all.

Child of God, submit to God and let Him inject you, filling all your empty recesses with His love; cut away and remove all that is offensive in His sight; lift all that has fallen; apply the cream of mercy and grace and watch as it erases all the wrinkles, blemishes, dry and cracked pieces of your body and soul; repair and remove the stretch marks and deep crease lines caused by hurt and unforgiveness; pamper you with daily treatments of grace, love, and mercy. Have you taken a long look in the mirror lately? How do you look? Is it time for a facelift? If so, forget the cosmetic surgeon. Seek the Master Physician and invite Jesus to go to work on you. Trust Him as He performs a divine facelift. You will be amazed at the results!

*Lord, thank you for your love, mercy, and grace. Jesus, shape, mold me and transform me into your very image and likeness. I surrender every part of me to you.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

A 2-Piece Fish Meal and a Miracle

(Keep Your Eyes on Jesus)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/189%20chapt%209%20dev%204.mp3>

“Bring them here to me,” he said. And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.”
(Matthew 14:18-20, NIV)

In these verses, Jesus performs His greatest miracle, and feeds a crowd of 5,000 men, plus women and children, with only five loaves of bread and two fish. We see that Jesus: spent time alone just before He met the crowd; felt compassion for the crowd and healed the sick; ignored the disciples’ suggestion that He send the crowd away so they could go buy food; asked for available resources; gave thanks to God and blessed the “2-Piece Fish Meal”; supernaturally fed the crowd and produced food in abundance. Reading on, we see that Jesus made the disciples get into a boat to cross the lake. He dismissed the crowd and went to be alone and pray. Notice, He spent time with God in prayer immediately before and after the miracle. Can you imagine the disciples’ conversation as they got into the boat and began the journey across the lake? They did not know that there was more to come. Scripture tells us they witnessed another miracle, as first Jesus and then Peter, walked on water.

As an Executive Coach working with fellow Christians, I spend a lot of time teaching my clients to “Be Still.” Like Jesus, we must have an intimate connection to God’s supernatural power and anointing. I encourage them to spend time with God in prayer before making decisions; to take confident and bold action; and to expect miracles. It’s a simple process but requires radical change in thinking and behavior.

Child of God, do you need a miracle at work or home? I encourage you to set your eyes on Jesus, believe in Him, pray and watch with an expectant heart as He turns “a little” into “more than enough.” I pray that you, like Peter, will have the faith to step out of the boat and walk on water!

Lord, thank you for showing us your miraculous power. Jesus, help me have the faith to believe in you and in your divine power. Give me the faith to step out of the boat whenever you call me. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Faith in the Master Physician

(Healing and Deliverance)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/190%20chapt%209%20dev%205.mp3>

*“And He said to her, ‘Daughter, your faith has made you well;
go in peace and be healed of your affliction.’”*

(Mark 5:34, NASB)

In the verses leading up to this one, we’re told the woman had suffered from a hemorrhage for twelve years. She had gone to many doctors and spent all the money she had to no avail while her condition worsened. As a last resort, she joined the crowd and pressed in to touch the hem of Jesus’ robe. Refusing to give up, she held on to her faith believing that a simple touch would heal her. We see she was rewarded for her faith. Instantly she was healed and left in peace (whole and complete in every area of her life).

I’m sure that in the twelve years she suffered from this disease, she had placed her faith in doctors, treatments, ointments, herbs, and spices (medicines) they gave her. Yet, nothing cured her. It took her twelve years to find the Master Physician. Jesus, the Master Physician: never failed or lost a patient; always provided a miraculous cure; released healing power through a simple touch of His robe; did not need to examine her or get her medical history; did not need to ask her what she had already tried; did not have her wait in the office until He could break free; only needed to see her for a brief moment while He was on the way to perform another miracle; did not need to prescribe medicines to see if they might work; only had to connect with the woman’s faith to heal her.

Child of God, are you tired of the pain and suffering in your life? If so, I encourage you to reach out in faith to the Master Physician. Jesus is still in the miracle business. Seek Him. All it takes is a touch of His robe to be healed. Then you too can go in peace!

*Lord, thank you for your grace and power to heal and restore broken bodies and broken lives.
I have faith in you Jesus as the Master Physician and know you are all I need.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Be Loosed and Set Free

(Jesus Will Set You Free)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/191%20chapt%209%20dev%206.mp3>

“Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted.

You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.”

(Romans 6:16-19, NIV)

Every day we see people in slavery and bondage to sin who need to be set free. People who are: wrapped in a straight-jacket of anger, hurt and depression; tied and bound to yesterday’s memories and unable to enjoy the present or imagine the future; chained in a stronghold of addiction to food, drugs, alcohol, or sex; imprisoned in a dark dungeon filled with the torment of generational curses; tethered with ropes of fear, doubt and unbelief and incapable of reaching for and holding onto life; locked in a closet of hurt and resentment and afraid to let anyone come into their lives and love again; bound by handcuffs of disappointment and failure and are reluctant to try and reach for their dreams; shackled with chains of hopelessness and despair and no longer able to stand or run the race;) in a steel mask that covers their eyes and blinds them to their own selfishness; covered in a tight scarf that blocks out all sound and the Word of God. Over time their heart becomes accustomed to the leash of bitterness, envy, and jealousy and becomes hardened. In a similar fashion, their minds are dulled, and they are rendered unable to focus and fix their mind on God. They even stop testing the chains, give in, accept their fate, and lose all hope of freedom.

Child of God, what has you handcuffed and is keeping you in bondage? I encourage you to ask Jesus to come into your life and to remove every chain. Trust Him and the power of His Word. In the name of Jesus, “Be loosed and set free.”

Lord, thank you for your mercy and grace. Jesus, help me trust in you. I stand on the truth of your Word that when you died on the cross, every chain was broken. Your sacrifice set me free from all past, present, and future sins. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Access Granted

(Hear God's Voice and Simply Believe)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/192%20chapt%209%20dev%207.mp3>

“But there are some of you who do not believe.’ For Jesus knew from the beginning Who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him. And He was saying, ‘For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father.’”

(John 6:64-65, NASB)

We live in a world of limited or restricted access. In many office buildings, you need a keycard or code just to enter the restroom. Security guards scrutinize you when you enter and sign in at the Visitor Desk. Many buildings have metal detectors and security cameras covering all points of access. Employees and Guests wear name badges that are pre-programmed to allow access to certain floors and deny access to others. Cell phones and many software programs require a password to operate. Get it wrong and you are locked out. The screen simply reads, “Access Denied.” Get it right and you are allowed to continue with your task.

It's the same way in the kingdom of heaven. You must be called or chosen. God speaks to your heart, but you must hear His voice and respond in faith and belief. When you believe with your heart and confess with your mouth, suddenly, the door to heaven opens. As you spend time in His Word and on your knees in prayer, a gentle whisper penetrates your heart with the message, “Access Granted.” Suddenly you are granted access to the mysteries of the ages, the hidden secrets of God which can only be seen by His Children. Truth is revealed. Divine power, dominion and authority come via special delivery by the Holy Spirit. Signs, wonders and miracles show up to greet you. The doors to the vaults of unlimited grace are opened. The keys to abundant life are handed to you.

Child of God, I encourage you to pray for the lost, for friends and family who don't know Jesus. Pray that they too will hear Jesus' knock at the door and that they will say, “Yes” and invite Him in. Pray that they too will have the peace and joy that comes with “Access Granted” to the kingdom of God.

Lord, thank you for choosing me and for granting me access to you through your Son Jesus Christ. Jesus, you are my password to heaven and access to the throne of God. Help me to encourage others to desire you and to know you are their only access to eternal life.

Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Jesus Christ Supernatural Superglue

(Mend Your Broken Parts)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/193%20chapt%209%20dev%208.mp3>

“Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?”
(Romans 8:35, NASB)

Dr. Robert L. Jones (Bob) my former professor, mentor, and boss was the “King of Superglue.” He absolutely loved it. No matter what the task, he reached for Superglue. Consistent with his excessive personality, whenever he reached for the tube, you knew he was going to use the whole tube. You could forget the “1-2 drops is all you need.” His approach was the more the better. I admit, most of the time his efforts worked, and we came to accept his approach and shrugged it off.

Reading this verse, Bob comes to mind. Suddenly, I have an image of a tube on the shelf. In big bold letters, it reads, “Jesus Christ Supernatural Superglue.” As a Child of God, I’m intrigued. I can’t help myself. I have to stop and take a look. As I turn the box over, I read, “Consists of pure unfiltered blood of Jesus Christ mixed with equal parts of love, mercy, and grace. Guaranteed to work in every situation, on all kinds of surfaces and conditions for both the novice and mature believer. Jesus Christ Supernatural Superglue will give you complete confidence as it mends all the broken pieces of your life. Backed by the Creator’s Lifetime and Eternity Warranty, as long as you have faith nothing will be impossible for you. Once the emptiness in your heart, mind and spirit is filled with our special formula, you cannot be moved. You will not crumble, decay, dissolve, cave in, give up or quit. Our product is impregnable and withstands all trials, temptations, tests, persecution, hunger, or demonic forces. It will fully restore you, redeem you, reconcile you, and heal you from all brokenness, lack and insufficiency. Your complete satisfaction is guaranteed for all eternity. We have been recommended by countless saints and angels for over 2,000 years.” Jesus Christ Supernatural Superglue – try it today. Remember, don’t leave home without it!

Lord, thank you for your love and compassion. Jesus, when you shed your blood on the cross you showed me the depth of your love, mercy, and grace. Jesus, I will rest knowing that your blood has already fixed every broken piece of my life. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Begging for a Simple Touch

(Divine Healing)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/194%20chapt%209%20dev%209.mp3>

“And when the men of that place recognized Him, they sent out into all that surrounding region, brought to Him all who were sick, and begged Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched it were made perfectly well.

(Matthew 14:35-36, NKJV)

The world of business is usually a reflection of life in general. Heroes are almost always depicted wearing some sort of costume or uniform. For years, the captains or leaders of the business world wore navy blue 3-piece suits with white shirts and bright red ties. Times and values changed, and the uniform relaxed to “business casual” even for leading law firms and banking institutions. Policemen and firemen are everyday heroes and have a “standard uniform” that is readily recognizable. In the world of entertainment, when you think of “Superman,” “Batman,” “Wonder Women,” or “Luke Skywalker,” your mind will summon images of their costumes.

Jesus, our hero, did not wear an elaborate costume, just a simple robe. Imagine the scene as word spreads that Jesus has come to town to preach and heal the sick. Quickly the crowd gathers, and presses close as people reach out and beg to simply touch the hem of his robe believing they would be healed. I wonder if they thought His robe possessed supernatural powers or simply believed that His anointing was so strong it would pass through and restore anything and everything it touched. The scene described in the verses above gets played out across the world daily as crazed fans push and shove to get close enough to touch their favorite Hollywood celebrity, comedian, or rock star. While Lady Gaga captures lots of attention with her over-the-top costumes, there have never been reports of miraculous healing through a simple touch.

Child of God, do you need healing today? Forget Lady Gaga and reach out for the one whose anointing heals with a simple touch of His robe – Jesus Christ.

Lord, thank you for the anointing and healing power of your Son Jesus Christ. Jesus, may I always run to your mercy and your grace every time I have any sickness in my life knowing that a simple touch of your robe is all I need. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

CHAPTER 10

Humility, Obedience and Faithfulness

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right, persevering, and steadfast spirit within me.”

(Psalm 51:10, AMP)

“And have you [completely] forgotten the divine word of appeal and encouragement in which you are reasoned with and addressed as sons? My son, do not think lightly or scorn to submit to the correction and discipline of the Lord, nor lose courage and give up and faint when you are reproved or corrected by Him; For the Lord corrects and disciplines everyone whom He loves, and He punishes, even scourges, every son whom He accepts and welcomes to His heart and cherishes. You must submit to and endure [correction] for discipline; God is dealing with you as with sons. For what son is there whom his father does not [thus] train and correct and discipline? Now if you are exempt from correction and left without discipline in which all [of God's children] share, then you are illegitimate offspring and not true sons [at all]. [Prov. 3:11, 12.]”

(Hebrews 12: 5-8, AMP)



A Servant for the Lord

(Are You Faithful and Dedicated?)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/195%20chapt%2010%20dev%201.mp3>

“Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Bring the tribe of Levi near and set them before Aaron the priest, that they may serve him. They shall perform the duties for him and for the whole congregation before the tent of meeting, to do the service of the tabernacle.’”

(Numbers 3:5-7, NASB)

Why did God choose the tribe of Levi and not another to serve under Aaron and in the Lord’s house? To answer this question and understand the significance of God’s regard for the Levites, we must look back to a time when the Israelites rebelled against God. In Exodus CHAPTER 32, we see that the Levites exhibited a supreme act of faithfulness and dedication to the Lord by taking the life of 3,000 friends and relatives who had been disobedient and worshiped the golden calf. Excerpts from this passage, verses 25-29 read, “Now when Moses saw that the people were out of control... then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, ‘Whoever is for the LORD, come to me!’ And all the sons of Levi gathered together to him. He said to them, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel... go back and forth... and kill every man his brother, and every man his friend... So the sons of Levi did as Moses instructed...Then Moses said, ‘Dedicate yourselves today to the LORD...’”

Child of God, how far will you go to demonstrate your love for and obedience to the Lord? Will you be faithful to God even when the personal cost is high? Will you risk your business, reputation, finances, security, and welfare? Are you willing to serve only when it is easy and convenient, or will you do what God requires even when it is hard? Obedience always carries a price of personal sacrifice. God proved how far He was willing to go by sacrificing His Son on the cross for us. Ask God to speak to you today about your level of obedience and faithfulness. Like the Levites, dedicate yourself and become a servant for the Lord. The costs may be great, but the rewards are far greater as God will reward you for all eternity with riches in heaven!

Lord, thank you for this lesson on faithfulness and dedication. Jesus, you are the supreme example of faithfulness. Teach me to be faithful and help me to be willing to pay whatever price of sacrifice you ask of me. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Who Is Operating Your Controls?

(Submission and Surrender)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/197%20chapt%2010%20dev%202.mp3>

"If we live by the [Holy] Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. [If by the Holy Spirit we have our life in God, let us go forward walking in line, our conduct controlled by the Spirit.]"
(Galatians 5:25, AMP)

Like most boys his age, my ten-year old nephew loves to play with remote-controlled toys. Whenever I watch him play with his car, I'm reminded that the toy does not have a mind of its own. It does exactly what my nephew tells it to do through the remote. There are times I certainly wish I had someone operating the controls in my life.

My pastor often says, "God is a very courteous gentleman. He'll never force you to do anything." Looking back on my life, I see clearly all the times I had the controls in my hands, things did not turn out well. I seemed to always: crash; go off the path and get lost; find myself behind immovable objects; get stuck in reverse; go around in circles never getting anywhere. My life seemed to be filled with endless starts and stops.

The more I grow in Christ, the more I am learning to surrender the controls to Him. I'm thankful that I'm not only willing to hand over the remote, but before I start my day, I invite the Holy Spirit to operate my controls. Life in His hands is so much easier. I never have hard crashes. In His hands my power never runs out. His pace is always perfect. The path He chooses is always smooth and free of obstacles. He always gets me where I need to be on time. I look forward to the journey each day as the Holy Spirit operates the controls in my life. I have peace and joy in His hands that I never had before.

Child of God, how about you, how is your journey? Is it time to hand off the remote to the Holy Spirit? I encourage you to decide today to trust God and surrender your life to Him. Invite Him to take over and operate your controls. You'll be glad you did!

Lord, thank you for waiting patiently for me to surrender my life to you. Thank you for the Holy Spirit. My life is so much easier with the Holy Spirit operating the controls. Lead, guide, and direct me as you choose. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Jesus Followed Orders

(Love-Based Obedience)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/198%20chapt%2010%20dev%203.mp3>

“For this [reason] the Father loves Me, because I lay down my [own] life—to take it back again. No one takes it away from Me. On the contrary, I lay it down voluntarily. [I put it from Myself.] I am authorized and have power to lay it down (to resign it) and I am authorized and have power to take it back again. These are the instructions (orders) which I have received [as My charge] from My Father.”
(John 10:17-18, AMP)

Jesus tells us that He followed the instructions or orders He had been given by His Father. We know from Scripture that Jesus never did anything or said anything on His own initiative. He always asked for instructions before taking action. He always followed God’s instructions completely no matter what, even on the cross. Lastly, He followed orders with a willing heart.

As I read this verse, I’m reminded of my own relationship with my father. It was very difficult and painful at times, filled with physical and emotional abuse followed by long periods of silence and withdrawal on both sides. I’m confident that I was a good son in many ways, but I failed in comparison to the standard set by Jesus. I confess, I often followed my Dad’s orders out of fear, certainly not because I aimed to please. I obeyed reluctantly with dread and hesitation.

As a Christian, we can turn to Jesus. He set the standard for all father-son relationships, communication, and obedience. As God’s Son, Jesus showed us how to: stop and ask for direction and guidance; express love and compassion for others; deny self-interests and put others first; sacrifice ourselves for the benefit of others; walk in excellence and faithfulness; speak the truth in love; do what is right because it’s right; willingly commit our lives to God.

Child of God, I encourage you to ask God to speak to you about His desires for you in terms of father-son relationship and communication. Ask Him to reveal any areas in your life where you need to learn how to willingly obey and follow orders.

Lord, thank you for the life of Jesus and His lessons on being a faithful Son. Jesus, teach me about willing and faithful obedience so that I, like you, might follow your instructions at all times. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Above Reproach

(Held to a Higher Standard)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/199%20chapt%2010%20dev%204.mp3>

“For the overseer must be above reproach as God’s steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.”

(Titus 1:7-9, NASB)

In the first verse of this passage, Paul says that the overseer (bishop, deacon, elder, or leader) must be above reproach. Webster’s Dictionary defines “reproach” as: to find fault with a person, to blame or censure, disapprove, or bring discredit upon oneself or family. I have developed a deep respect for Paul’s teaching on the character and behavior of leaders.

As an Executive Coach, Ministry Leader, Disciple Teacher, and husband, I’ve learned that God holds me to a higher standard. Paul is very clear about what the standard is: to be above reproach. As leaders in our church, Karen and I understand that our actions are on display to our congregation, to those we serve and most of all to God.

I confess that for many years of my life, as a Prodigal Son, I was unconcerned and ignorant of this standard. Now I regularly examine my thoughts and behavior to see if I measure up. I ask the Holy Spirit to convict me any time my actions are not pleasing to God and to help me change my thinking and actions to align with God’s Word. God has shown me what is at stake and helped me to understand why His standards of accountability for leaders and teachers are so high. While I do not want to bring dishonor to my wife and family, I especially do not want to dishonor God. I pray daily that God will help me to glorify and honor Him in all I do and say and that I will be pleasing in His sight.

Child of God, what about you? Are you meeting God’s standard of excellence in your public and private life? I encourage you to ask Him to give you the grace through faith to live a life above reproach.

Lord, thank you for the power and truth of your Word. Jesus, help me to imitate you in all I do and say. Help me to walk in holiness, according to your Word and to be pleasing to you in every way. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Will You Do Exactly What You're Told?

(Jesus Followed Orders)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/200%20chapt%2010%20dev%205.mp3>

"For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. I know that his command leads to eternal life.

So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say."

(John 12:49-50, NIV)

There seems to be at least one employee who defies this description on every team. This person will argue and debate with you about everything you say. They're always difficult to deal with and the last person you want to go and ask to volunteer, to stay late, to come in early, to put a rush on the order! It seems, "Yes," "OK," "Sure," "No problem," or "I'll be happy to" is beyond their capability.

This verse gets my attention every time I read it. Jesus, the obedient and faithful Son, always said and did exactly what God instructed. As leaders and managers, we strive to lead others in the pursuit of a common goal or purpose. We give instructions and expect our employees to comply because we want to achieve our goal. As parents, we give our children instructions about washing dirty hands before dinner; brushing their teeth before bed; looking both ways before crossing the street; what to do when approached by strangers; the importunate of using seatbelts and obeying speed limits when driving; sexual abstinence and saying "No" to drugs and alcohol. We give these instructions because we love them and want them to be safe and flourish.

Looking back at my life, I never got in trouble, but had numerous acts of rebellion as a child of the 60's. I praise God that I'm at a place where I desire to do and say exactly what God tells me – not halfway, mostly, sort of, but exactly. I'm learning it takes constant focus. I intentionally move more slowly now. I'm learning to stop and ask God for directions before I take action or speak. The more I do it, the easier it gets.

Have you asked Jesus to lead and guide your every step and every word you speak? Do you follow His instructions? If your answer is, "Not exactly," I encourage you to start today.

Lord, thank you for leading and guiding my steps and the words of my mouth. Jesus, teach me to be faithful and obedient and to copy you in all I do and say.

Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Are You a Deserter or Faithful Follower?

(Do Not Quit)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/201%20chapt%2010%20dev%206.mp3>

*"I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you
by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel."*

(Galatians 1:6, NASB)

Paul takes issue with Christians who desert Jesus and turn from the Gospel of Christ. Dictionary.com defines the word "desert" as: to fail (someone) at a time of need; to abandon, forsake or leave behind persons, places, or things; to intentionally violate an oath, formal obligation, or duty; to give up wholly and completely. Desertion seems to come easy to many people in our culture. We see it in the numbers of: people who run away from the commitment and responsibilities of marriage because they are no longer "in love" and marriage has become difficult; absentee fathers who have abandoned wives and children and fail to provide financial and emotional support; students who dropout of high school and college because education and learning is hard work; people who walk off their jobs in frustration because their expectations of entitlement, promotion and increase are not being met; church members who become offended, upset, and move from church to church, but never get engaged and serve.

Like Paul, I am amazed at the number of Christians in general, and ministry leaders, who abandon their faith, leave their post, and walk away over issues of personal offense or unwillingness to submit to authority. The more I serve in ministry, the more I understand the urge to desert, give up, cave in, and quit. I praise God that as I grow in Christ Jesus, the more resolved I become to follow Him and obey His call on my life no matter what.

Child of God, I encourage you to ask God to speak to you about any area of your life where you have deserted your post. Ask God to tell you what to do and move from a deserter to faithful follower!

*Lord, thank you for your calling on my life. Jesus, your faithfulness encourages me.
Teach me to be faithful and obedient in all my assignments and commitments
and to resist the urge to desert my post. Through the blood
of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Ask God to Be Your Master Gardener

(Pruning Is a Necessity)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/202%20chapt%2010%20dev%207.mp3>

"I am the True Vine, and My Father is the Vinedresser. Any branch in Me that does not bear fruit [that stops bearing] He cuts away (trims off, takes away); and He cleanses and repeatedly prunes every branch that continues to bear fruit, to make it bear more and richer and more excellent fruit."

(John 15:1-2, AMP)

I know the importance of starting with a clean slate, a blank page. While this sounds simple and easy, it's very difficult. Even when it is negative and causes them pain, people hang on to their past. I've learned to be patient and kind as I assist my clients and teach them to let go of old tapes (ways of thinking and behaving, hurts and disappointments). I convince them that before they can rebuild their lives, they have to inspect their foundation, repair, and seal all cracks, forgive themselves and others, and let go of any regrets, guilt, and condemnation.

In 2006, a year before Karen and I were married, we attended a 4-day ministry conference that offered prophetic sessions. Curious, we agreed to participate and listen to each other's session. I was awed by the words spoken over Karen. In contrast, I walked away despondent and frustrated. I remember telling her, "He kept repeating the need for intense pruning and purging in my life." Karen and I have commented about the truth of those words many times. The five years after the session were filled with powerful revelation, emotional upheaval, and spiritual growth. God, the Master Gardener did indeed prune and purge many areas of my life. He renewed my mind with His Word and destroyed strongholds and addictions. I praise God that He gave me the grace to change. I bear little resemblance to the man I used to be. Like Saul, I have become a new man, a new creature in Christ. Friends who haven't seen me in a while remark, "You've changed," "You're very different now," or "You seem to have so much peace in your life now."

God deserves all the glory and honor for the transformation. He is truly the Master Gardener. If you let Him, He will prune and purge you. Trust Him and watch Him give you an abundant, fruit-bearing life.

*Lord, thank you for the pruning and purging in my life. Continue to shape me and mold me according to your perfect will that I may bear much fruit.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Pride and Arrogance

(Satan's Calling Cards)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/203%20chapt%2010%20dev%208.mp3>

*"An argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest."
(Luke 9:46, NIV)*

Satan must have stalked Jesus and His disciples. It's clear that Satan was very busy and actively engaged in his assault and attempts to cause the disciples to walk in fear and doubt and rob them of their destiny. Reading Luke, we know that on two previous occasions the disciples failed to effectively use the power and authority Jesus gave them. They failed to feed the multitude, instead they sat back as Jesus performed a miracle, and they failed to cast out demons in the young boy. Yet rather than acknowledge their failure, repent, and walk in humility, they allowed themselves to copy Satan and turned their thoughts to a prideful and selfish desire for status and position, power, and recognition.

As an Executive Coach and Ministry Leader, I've witnessed this scene play out many times in the lives of my clients and fellow Christians. In the spiritual realm, pride and arrogance and humility and submission are mortal enemies. Pride and arrogance always mask an underlying insecurity, fear and lack of confidence. It expresses itself in a selfish desire to manipulate, control, and take advantage of others. A prideful and arrogant attitude looks in the mirror and says, "I'm fine, there is nothing wrong with me. You are the problem!" Pride and arrogance are Satan's calling cards.

Child of God, I encourage you to ask God to reveal any area of your life where you have turned away from God and are walking in pride and arrogance. Repent and come before God with a humble, clean, and pure heart and ask Him for forgiveness. Ask Him to give you a Servant Leader's heart and strive to grow in Christ, knowing the "greatest" is alive and well within you!

Lord, thank you for your loving heart. Jesus, your life is the model I strive to copy. Teach me to walk in humility and to turn away from pride and arrogance. I'm comforted knowing that you are alive and reside in me. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

CHAPTER 11

Pride, Selfishness, Rebellion and Disobedience

*“Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.
Better it is to be of a humble spirit with the meek and poor
than to divide the spoil with the proud.”
(Proverbs 16:18-19, AMP)*

*“‘Proud,’ ‘Haughty,’ ‘Scoffer,’ are his names, Who acts
with insolent pride. . . A man's pride will bring him low,
But a humble spirit will obtain honor.”
(Proverbs 21:24; 29:23, NASB)*

*“But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come.
For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant,
revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving,
irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal,
haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of
pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of
godliness, although they have denied its power;”
(2 Timothy 3:1-5, NASB)*



Forget Drano

(Are Your Pipes Clogged?)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/205%20chapt%2011%20dev%201.mp3>

“Declare this in the house of Jacob And proclaim it in Judah, saying, ‘Now hear this, O foolish and senseless people, Who have eyes but do not see; Who have ears but do not hear... Your iniquities have turned these away, And your sins have withheld good from you.’”

(Jeremiah 5:20-21, 25, NASB)

God used Jeremiah to speak a stern warning and rebuke to the people of Jerusalem. God tells the Israelites their sin, rebelliousness and disobedience has turned away and blocked their blessings. When we face a problem with a clogged drain and water backs up in our sink, we reach for Drano Liquid Clog Remover with the confidence that it will remove the sludge that is blocking our drains and causing our problem. When the water flow from the faucet is diminished, we unscrew the filter and clean out the sediment to ensure water flows freely.

Everything that exists on earth must first occur in the spiritual realm and then it is manifested in the world. Just as grease and food particles will clog and block your pipes in your kitchen sink sin, rebelliousness and disobedience will clog your spiritual pipes and limit the flow of God’s blessings and anointing in your life.

Child of God, are you walking in sin and disobedience? Are your spiritual pipes clogged and limiting the flow of God’s blessings, favor, protection, and provision in your life? Are you carrying anger, resentment and unforgiveness toward anyone? Are you committing sin in the dark in the back of the room when no one is watching? Did you do the last thing God told you to do? Is God’s Word the final authority in your life or have you built your world around the latest trend on Oprah Winfrey? If your spiritual pipes are clogged, I encourage you to forget Drano. Inject your spiritual pipes with a heavy dose of repentance and faithful obedience. Don’t force God to perform a “Personal Service Call” to clean your spiritual pipes. He will show up and do the work for you, but it will not be pretty, and it usually requires some pain and suffering.

Lord, thank you your lessons on the consequences of sin and disobedience. Remove any area of sin and disobedience I have, as I want and need your favor, protection, and provision.

May your blessings always flow freely in my life. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

The Perverted Mind of a Willful Rebel

(A Hardened Heart)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/207%20chapt%2011%20dev%202.mp3>

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper.”

(Romans 1:18-19, 28, NASB)

Paul addresses the life of the willful rebel, the person who knows about God, but willfully and intentionally chooses to ignore, reject, and disobey Him. Paul says of these men and women, that “God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper.” Other translations describe the mind of the willful rebel as: reprobate, base and condemned, debased, and dirty. Webster’s Dictionary defines “reprobate” as unapproved, rejected, worthless castaway and depraved, corrupt, wicked, morally evil, sinful, and perverted. Paul goes on in verses 29-30, to say that a depraved or perverted (unnatural, abnormal, or misguided) mind leads to many forms of evil, unrighteousness, and sin including homosexuality, sexual immorality, greed, envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice, gossip, slander, arrogance, boasting, and parental disobedience. Paul says the willful rebel is without understanding, and is untrustworthy, unloving, and without mercy. He not only engages in evil and sinful acts but also encourages others to perform these acts as well.

We see ISIS and other terrorist and hate groups recruit and encourage others to perpetrate evil on a daily basis. It is impossible to watch the daily news on TV or look at the headlines on the Internet without seeing the truth of Paul’s words. We are bombarded with evidence of depravity and perversion that often defies understanding.

As Christians, we must accept God’s Word as our truth and allow it to penetrate and change our thought life. Right thinking aligns with God’s Word and God’s ways. Any thought or action that does not align with the Word of God is evil, corrupt, wicked, condemned, and perverted. Child of God, I encourage you to ask God to speak to you today and reveal any perversion in your life. Do not become a willful rebel and exchange God’s truth for the lies of Satan. Acknowledge God in all your ways (Proverbs 3:5-7).

Lord, thank you for the penetrating truth and power of your Word. Holy Spirit, help me to consider and acknowledge the Lord, lean on Him and trust in Him. Help me to see God’s hand and His face every day everywhere I look. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Close Encounters with a Whale

(Cost of Disobedience)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/208%20chapt%2011%20dev%203.mp3>

“Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me. But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. . . So they picked up Jonah, threw him into the sea, and the sea stopped its raging. Then the men feared the LORD greatly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows. And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights.”

(Jonah 1:2-3, 15-17, NASB)

How often do we imitate the behavior of Jonah depicted in this passage? God tells us to do something. We hear His voice clearly, understand what He is telling us to do, but instead of obeying Him we do just the opposite. Like Jonah, we run the other way. Later, we come face-to-face with the unpleasant consequences of our stubbornness and disobedience. Jonah’s disobedience caused him to be thrown into the sea where he ended up in the belly of a whale for three days and nights. After the fish spit him out, he went on to obey God’s instructions.

I suffered a broken ankle and spent months in a cast because of my refusal to listen to the Holy Spirit’s warnings. When the Spirit prompted me not to get on the tree swing, it was not a divine mission. He was simply trying to protect me from harm. But I, like Jonah, refused to listen. In an act of male pride and ego to satisfy a dare, I took hold of the tree swing rope and floated freely through the air until my hand slipped and I came crashing to the ground. My disobedience and the painful consequences are a reminder to put my personal desires, plans, and agenda aside and simply obey God. Today, I can say that I’m grateful for the experience and the lesson I learned.

Child of God, do you imitate Jonah? Do you hear God’s voice clearly then run the other way? Do you put your own ego, plans, and desires before God’s? I encourage you to ask God to show you where an act of willful disobedience has led to hardship and difficulty in your life? If you continue, God may use a hungry whale to teach you a lesson on the importance of obedience. I pray all your close encounters are with God and never whales!

Lord, thank you for this powerful lesson on the importance of obedience. Help me to hear and obey your voice at all times. Grant me close encounters with your Spirit. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Are You a Sheep or a Goat?

(Do You Follow or Wander Off?)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/209%20chapt%2011%20dev%204.mp3>

“He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.”
(Matthew 25:33, NIV)

Imagine the scene as one of heaven’s angels stands at the gate announcing, “Sheep on the right and goats to the left.” I can only imagine the confusion, questions, surprise, shock and sighs of relief, the angel hears daily. For me, many questions come to mind: Do all sheep know that they are sheep? Do goats know they are goats? Do they get it confused? Do people often go and stand in the wrong line? Do people argue and debate as they stand in line as to who is a goat and who is a sheep?

A few minutes of research on the Internet revealed many similarities and differences between goats and sheep. One characteristic really stood out and helped put this verse in perspective. The definition, explained, “Goats are curious by nature and are quite independent. A sheep on the other hand prefers to stay put in its flock.” Suddenly the distinction was clear. Goats are stubborn, express their independence and rely on self, turning away from God. In contrast, sheep listen and willingly follow the Shepherd (Jesus).

The Holy Spirit explained that it’s this issue of independence that God finds so offensive that ultimately disqualifies goats from the kingdom. Goats reject Jesus and refuse to follow Him. God wants sheep that by nature know His voice and follow Him and only Him. The Word makes it clear that the Lamb of God loves His sheep. He proved it by sacrificing His life for us. While goats resemble sheep, Jesus knows the difference and in the end that’s all that matters.

Child of God, I encourage you to resist the temptation to go your own way, acting like a goat. Be a sheep and follow Him. Don’t spend eternity in hell wishing you had made a different choice!

Lord, thank you for loving us so much that you sent the Lamb of God to die on the cross for our sins. Help me to always recognize His voice and come to His waiting arms where I will find safety, comfort, and joy. Jesus, my Shepherd, lead me to green pastures and still waters. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Rebellion in the Ranks

(Rebellion and Resistance)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/209%20chapt%2011%20dev%204.mp3>

“Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses because of his Cushite wife, for he had married a Cushite. ‘Has the LORD spoken only through Moses?’ they asked. ‘Hasn’t he also spoken through us?’ And the LORD heard this.”

(Numbers 12:1-2, NIV)

Sadly, sooner or later every leader will face the spirit of rebellion in the troops. Most often it comes from the inner circle. I’ve developed a special interest in the subject of spiritual authority over the last several years as Pastor Dollar has taught on this important subject both in his messages from the pulpit to the congregation and in his leadership, development calls with WCCI Ministry Leaders. I’ve come to realize through his teachings that rebellion and sedition are common occurrences in the body of Christ and are major tools Satan uses to attack the church and thwart kingdom business. I’m beginning to learn just how effective Satan has been in convincing many Christians that the church should operate and run like the world.

The world uses opinion polls, focus groups, democratic elections, consensus, cultural norms, and emerging trends to decide between right and wrong and establish direction. Be clear, all of these practices are in direct opposition to the kingdom of God. In the spiritual realm, it’s different. In the spirit realm (kingdom) God rules. God decides, decrees, commands, establishes order, vision and direction, chain of command, rewards, and penalties. The kingdom of God is not a democracy. Rebellion, sedition, open defiance of spiritual leaders, murmuring and complaining is offensive to God. It is designed by Satan to destroy the church and undermine the kingdom. God expressed his anger over this behavior to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. Aaron was spared but Miriam was struck with leprosy because she spoke negatively against Moses, God’s ordained leader.

Child of God, I encourage you to obey God’s Word as it relates to spiritual authority. Submit to your leaders, honor them, follow them in excellence, and pray for them. Understand that they have been appointed by God. Do not fall for Satan’s tricks. Rebellion (disobedience, sedition, and complaining) will not go unnoticed and always carries a penalty.

Lord, thank you for this important lesson on spiritual authority. Holy Spirit, teach me and help me submit to my leaders, pray for them, and honor them at all times. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Spiritual Blindness

(Blindness of the Heart)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/211%20chapt%2011%20dev%206.mp3>

“Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.”

(Ephesians 4:12, KJV)

Blindness takes many forms. It can be temporary and treatable or permanent and defy treatment. It can occur as a result of aging, physical injury, sickness, or disease. It can happen suddenly or develop over time due to improper diet, poor nutrition, exposure to poison or as a result of genetic history.

Spiritual blindness also occurs, according to Paul. He says spiritual blindness is a result of a heart condition. It occurs whenever a person chooses to rebel against the Word of God and to live a life of sin. It is a progressive condition that: is caused by a hardening of spiritual arteries that block the flow of God’s love and goodness; progresses due to a closed mind that refuses to accept and believe God’s Word; develops into willful rebellion and alienation from God, His Word, and His ways; produces ignorance and foolish behavior and leads to pride and arrogance; produces a false sense of trust and dependence on money, power, possessions, fame, and worldly acceptance; causes a heightened level of fear and selfishness; results in an inability to see God’s presence, mercy, grace, and favor in the world.

Thankfully, spiritual blindness is curable. There is hope for anyone who suffers from this ailment. In an instant, it can be cured. Healing requires repentance and a pure heart. Spiritual sight is restored as you confess Jesus as Lord and Savior. Saturating your mind with God’s Word and accepting the finished works of Jesus Christ will restore a hardened heart and in time enable you to see clearly. Sight improves as you change your thinking so that it aligns with God’s Word. A steady diet of God’s Word and regimen of prayer leads to increased vision. Spiritual sight equips you to see the presence, wonder, majesty, and grace of God. Believe Jesus when He says, “Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see...” (Luke 10:23-24).

*Lord, thank you for being a God who cannot lie. Thank you for softening my heart to your promises in your Word. I praise you for giving me eyes to see you clearly every day.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

A Single Act of Rebellion

(Living Under Jesus' Rules)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/212%20chapt%2011%20dev%207.mp3>

"Then Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came forth abundantly, and the congregation and their beasts drank. But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, 'Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.'"

(Numbers 20:11-12, NASB)

Every time I think of Moses and read this passage, my heart aches for him. I'm stunned at the cost of a single act of rebellion and disobedience. To the Israelites Moses was a hero. Because of him, the people had water to drink from a rock. In God's eyes, this single act of disobedience was a defining moment. Moses, God's trusted servant, had rebelled. Moses had allowed his emotions to rule, and he defied God and disobeyed His commandment. God told him to speak to the rock and water would flow freely. Instead, out of frustration, he struck the rock with his staff.

I'm humbled by God's mercy and tolerance of the many years of rebellious behavior in my life. There have been times that Satan tried to persuade me that my rebellion cancelled the fulfillment of God's promises in my life. He has tried to cause me to walk in shame and condemnation and convince me that the "Moses Rule" (one strike and you're out) ensures that I too will never inherit God's promises. I praise God that I live under the "Jesus Rule," (His blood did it all). Through His blood sacrifice on the cross I have full reconciliation, redemption, restoration, and forgiveness for my sins (past, present, and future). I rest in the confidence that God's Word tells me, when God looks at me, He sees me in light of what Jesus did on the cross. Jesus' faithfulness and sacrifice did it all (Hebrews 10:14-17).

Child of God, without mercy and grace, we would all fail to receive the promises of God. I encourage you to give God praise and thanksgiving today for Calvary. Next time Satan comes to taunt you remind him that you live under the "Jesus Rule" and that Jesus is your personal guarantee for access into heaven and eternal life!

Lord, thank you for your boundless mercy and grace. Jesus, I am so thankful that your blood on the cross allows me to live under the "Jesus Rule" and that all of my sins are forgiven. I thank you that by your grace I am able to inherit every promise God made in His Word.

Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Are You Ready to Obey and Submit?

(Overcome Strongholds)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/213%20chapt%2011%20dev%208.mp3>

“Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.”

(Hebrews 13:17, NIV)

When you look at the behavior of Christians in the workplace, it is clear that many of us are not reading God’s Word and do not know what the Word tells us to do, or we simply choose to be rebellious and disobedient and refuse to submit to the leaders in our lives.

I confess in my own life, I struggled with the issue of obedience and submission for decades. Over the last five years as I began to study on spiritual authority and obedience, I was shocked when the Holy Spirit revealed the startling truth and power of this stronghold in my life. I spent several decades as the Prodigal Son living apart from the Word and cut off from God. Looking back on my life, I was stunned to realize that every important mentor in my life struggled with the same issues. They were all fiercely independent and rebellious. Without realizing it, I had copied and mimicked their mindset and behavior never giving a second thought to the consequences my actions would have on my life and others around me. As a result, the Lord intervened. He fought Satan and orchestrated a Damascus Road experience to get my attention. This was followed by three years of intense pruning and purging as I cried out to the Lord and surrendered the different areas of disobedience and rebellion, generational curses, and strongholds to the Lord. By God’s grace, I now find it easy to obey. I’m eager to submit and finally at a place where I obey willingly and joyfully to please God and honor Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross.

Child of God, I encourage you to ask God today to show you the areas of your life where you need to obey and submit to authority in honor to Him and His Word. Trust God and His ways. You will be glad you did.

Lord, thank you for the season of pruning and purging in my life. Teach me about joyful and willing submission and obedience. Jesus, help me to be humble and faithful.

Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Do You Break all The Rules?

(Vision and Teams)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/214%20chapt%2011%20dev%209.mp3>

“But these people have hearts that draw back from God and wills that rebel against Him; they have revolted and quit His service and have gone away [into idolatry]. Nor do they say in their hearts, Let us now reverently fear and worship the Lord our God, Who gives rain, both the autumn and the spring rain in its season, Who reserves and keeps for us the appointed weeks of the harvest. Your iniquities have turned these blessings away, and your sins have kept good [harvests] from you.”

(Jeremiah 5:23-25, AMP)

No leader, manager or supervisor accomplishes anything alone. We all depend on the willing and dedicated efforts of others. Leaders must first create the vision and then communicate the vision to others. It's everyone else's job to accept the vision, embrace it and execute. To ensure that everyone is on the same page and going in the same direction, companies create policies and procedures, checklists, rules, and guidelines. Leaders use these tools to ensure their teams achieve the desired results in an efficient and effective manner. However, all these “tools, rules and guidelines” will only work if people follow them. Obedience and compliance are critical ingredients in the process. Sounds simple and easy right?

In reality, it's never easy. Why? Disobedience and willful rebellion are rampant in our world today; in our homes, schools, at work, even in the Body of Christ. We have turned our backs on authority. We pride ourselves on our independence. In this age of the “Me-Man,” we want to be the boss, the “Lord” of our lives. Yet, in the midst of rebellion, we wonder why we are having hard times and why we are suffering. The words of Jeremiah ring as true today as they did when he first wrote them. Our stubbornness, hardened hearts, and willful disregard for God and His Word have become a great dam, a wall or barrier that stops the blessings and favor of God.

Child of God, do you want a new life at work or home that is rich in the abundant favor of God? Do you need God's blessings to rain on your life? I encourage you to decide today, to remove the wall and destroy the dam. Obey God and watch the blessings and favor begin to flow.

Lord, thank you for the obedience and faithfulness of Jesus. Jesus may your presence in me soften my heart. I need your grace, your blessings and favor. Help me love you and obey you at all times. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

CHAPTER 12

Temptation and Divine Destiny

“And He came back and found them sleeping, and He said to Peter, Simon, are you asleep? Have you not the strength to keep awake and watch [with Me for] one hour? Keep awake and watch and pray [constantly], that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

(Mark 14:37-38, AMP)

“For no temptation (no trial regarded as enticing to sin), [no matter how it comes or where it leads] has overtaken you and laid hold on you that is not common to man [that is, no temptation or trial has come to you that is beyond human resistance and that is not adjusted and adapted and belonging to human experience, and such as man can bear]. But God is faithful [to His Word and to His compassionate nature], and He [can be trusted] not to let you be tempted and tried and assayed beyond your ability and strength of resistance and power to endure, but with the temptation He will [always] also provide the way out (the means of escape to a landing place), that you may be capable and strong and powerful to bear up under it patiently.”

(1 Corinthians 10:13, AMP)



My Grief Is Almost Killing Me

(Victory over Depression)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/215%20chapt%2012%20dev%201.mp3>

“And He took with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be struck with terror and amazement and deeply troubled and depressed. And He said to them, My soul is exceedingly sad (overwhelmed with grief) so that it almost kills Me! Remain here and keep awake and be watching.”
(Mark 14:33-34, AMP)

Here, we see the humanness of Jesus in contrast to the powerful, miracle working Son of God who came to walk the earth. We see the man who is, “struck with terror and amazement and deeply troubled and depressed.” A man overwhelmed with such intense terror, grief, and sadness that He says, “...it almost kills Me!” My mind goes numb with the full realization of the level of emotional and spiritual agony Jesus experienced in the Garden of Gethsemane and the indescribable pain that He endured as He was scourged and crucified.

As I read this passage, I am reminded of a period in my own life where my depression and sadness were so intense that I thought I might die. In fact, many days I thought of suicide and longed for death as an escape. I can't help but wonder how anyone can read this passage and think, “Jesus does not understand what I am going through?” Reading on in Mark we find that Jesus must have felt abandoned by Peter, James, and John in the Garden. Three times He asked them to stay awake, keep watch and pray; yet each time He returned and found them asleep. What intense disappointment and hurt He must have felt. Yet, we see Jesus rise above His emotions to face His ultimate betrayal by Judas, torture and crucifixion with courage and trust in God. He was resolved to fulfill His divine destiny as Christ, The Messiah.

Child of God, the next time you're feeling depressed and sad, believing that the pain is just too much to bear, I encourage you to remember Jesus. Remember Jesus knows suffering and pain. He knows how it feels to stare death in the face. Cry out to Him and trust Him to lift you up, pour out His love and grace. He will help you walk into your divine destiny!

Lord, thank you for showing me the human side of Jesus. Jesus, you overcame abandonment, feelings of sadness, grief, and depression and refused to give up or quit. Jesus, in you I have strength and courage to walk out my divine destiny. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Heaven's Escape Artist

(God Makes a Way Out)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/217%20chapt%2012%20dev%202.mp3>

"Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he will never see death."
(John 8:51, NASB)

The world is fascinated with stories of people who narrowly escape death. Circus performers, Hollywood movies with teams of stunt artists, and magicians draw large crowds by promoting "death-defying acts." This fascination with death is rampant in our society. We are surrounded by individuals and groups of people who are drawn to death and destruction. We watch the evening news and are bombarded with heinous acts of cruelty, pain, and suffering; acts of brutal violence, abuse, and murder. Those who reject Jesus live in fear of death and destruction in their lives and the lives of others.

In marked contrast, this verse reminds me that eternal life and death-defying acts should describe the everyday life of Christians. Belief in God's Word: gives us the supernatural ability to pull off death-defying acts regardless of our circumstances; is the key that unlocks every lock, breaks every chain, and destroys every cell or stronghold; opens the window that allows us to escape; provides the rope we need to climb to safety; ensures that the storm changes directions before it hits our house; causes our car to stop instantly, seconds before impact as we veer off the road straight for a tree; protects us from Zika, Ebola and other deadly diseases; releases the net that catches us when we fall (9) builds a wall of protection around our finances in a recession.

Forget Harry Houdini, Child of God. He can't teach you a thing. I encourage you to commit today to simply believe and honor God's Word with your faithful and willing obedience. Fulfill this Scripture, become one of "Heaven's Escape Artists" and have eternal life!

Lord, thank you for salvation and eternal life through Your Son. Jesus, your Word, and your grace are all I need to escape every trial, test and break every chain. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Everyone Deserted Him and Fled

(The Pain of Betrayal)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/218%20chapt%2012%20dev%203.mp3>

“Then everyone deserted him and fled.”
(Mark 14:50, NIV)

Every time I read this verse; my spirit is grieved. The defining moment in Jesus’ life and ministry was at hand. Judas betrays Him. A large group of soldiers sent by the chief priests come and arrest Him. The soldiers take Jesus away and His journey to the cross begins. Scripture is fulfilled as suddenly the disciples scatter and run away in fear. Jesus is left alone, betrayed, and abandoned. The disciples that He personally selected, taught, and lived with for three years all deserted Him and fled for their lives. I cannot begin to comprehend what Jesus, the man, must have felt in that moment.

Sadly, betrayal is a part of life that most of us will face at some point in time. Betrayal was born in the Garden of Eden as Adam and Eve disobeyed and betrayed God. It was present in the life of Jacob and Esau, Joseph and his brothers, King Saul and David, King Ahasuerus, Haman, and Esther.

As a man who knows the pain and agony of professional and personal betrayal, the Holy Spirit showed me that each time we run away from a situation, we betray ourselves and undermine God’s perfect will and plan for our lives. In essence, we delay our spiritual development and postpone our divine destiny. As Christians, we must commit that running away, giving up, caving in and quitting will never be an option.

Child of God, have others deserted and betrayed you? If so, like Jesus, forgive them and move on. In selfishness and fear have you deserted someone in a time of need or crisis? Ask God to show you the people you have deserted or situations you have run away from. Like Peter, repent with all your heart, mind and spirit and return to walk out your divine destiny!

Lord, thank you for your Son Jesus Christ. Jesus, your actions in the face of betrayal and desertion encourage me and give me confidence to go forward. Teach me to rely on and trust you no matter what. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

A Liar and a Thief

(Beware of the “Kiss of Death”)

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“But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, ‘Why wasn’t this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year’s wages.’ He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.”

(John 12: 4-6, NIV)

In this passage we get a good look at the dark character of Judas Iscariot and the part he played in the life of Jesus and the disciples. All twelve disciples were chosen by Jesus because they had a crucial part to play in His divine mission on earth. As the personification of evil and the messenger of Satan, Judas’ character and motivations are not aligned with the rest of the disciples. We see here that he was driven by greed and selfish desires without regard for the poor. He was a thief and often stole from the money bag, taking for himself what belonged to Jesus and the disciples. Scripture states he was offended over the loss of personal gain and objected to Mary’s actions. His anger and resentment may have been the final trigger that led him to betray Jesus. Scripture tells us the disciples embraced and kissed each other, perhaps Jesus as well. Their actions were motivated by love and affection whereas Judas’ kiss in the olive garden was motivated by envy, deceit, and betrayal. Judas’ kiss of greeting would come to be known as the “kiss of death.”

I am comforted to know that while Satan sent Judas to steal, kill, and destroy, he failed miserably. Yes, Jesus was crucified after the mockery of a trial. Yes, He was buried, but on the third day He rose again and defeated Satan and every principality of darkness for all time. Judas’ betrayal fulfilled prophecies and served as a catalyst to launch the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which changed the world.

Child of God, the next time Satan knocks on your door, remember who he is and why he came. Refuse to accept his kiss. Instead greet him with these words, “You are a liar and a thief, and you are not welcome here!”

Lord, thank you for your divine plan and for your Son Jesus Christ. Jesus, help me to always walk in your will with a pure and clean heart. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

CHAPTER 13

Stand Firm in the Face of Adversity

“Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us? But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: ‘God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble and oppressed.’ Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

(James 4:5-7, TNIV)

“Be alert and on your guard; stand firm in your faith (your conviction respecting man's relationship to God and divine things, keeping the trust and holy fervor born of faith and a part of it). Act like men and be courageous; grow in strength!” [Ps. 31:24.]

(1 Corinthians 16:13, AMP)



Lessons from the Classroom of Adversity

(Let God Lead You)

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“And though the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide Himself any more, but your eyes will constantly behold your Teacher. And your ears will hear a word behind you, saying, This is the way; walk in it, when you turn to the right hand and when you turn to the left.”
(Isaiah 30:20-21, AMP)

Many famous people in science, politics, entertainment, arts, and business failed miserably before they ever achieved success. Examples include Henry Ford, R. H. Macy, F.W. Woolworth, Soichiro Honda, Harland Sanders, Walt Disney, Bill Gates, Albert Einstein, Thomas Edison, Orville and Wilbur Wright, Winston Churchill, Abraham Lincoln, Charlie Chaplin, Fred Astaire, Lucille Ball, and Vincent Van Gogh. Their lives are proof that success never teaches us as clearly or profoundly as adversity or failure.

After a very painful divorce, I had to learn how to be a godly man and godly husband. When I married Karen (my sweetheart and God send), I was determined not to repeat the same mistakes and learn from my failure. I knew I did not know how to succeed without God. Since this was Karen’s first marriage we had to learn together. We committed to have a Christ-centered marriage, pray, and seek God daily, turn to the Bible and use it as the final authority for all of our decisions. In the midst of conflict and difficulty, I learned to cry out, “Lord help me and come quickly. I need you Jesus.” I’m amazed at the peace that comes as the Holy Spirit shows up to lead and guide us to a place of love, respect, acceptance, and surrender.

I encourage you to ask God to help you with the relationships in your life or situations that are causing you pain and stealing your joy and peace. Two verses before this passage, Isaiah tells us, “the Lord longs to be gracious to you...” Isaiah and Jesus promised us help is waiting in the wings. The next time you’re experiencing challenges, be still and cry out to the Lord. Ask the Holy Spirit to intervene. Tell Him what you need. The Spirit of God longs to be gracious, to comfort you, help you and lead you to a place of victory, peace, and rest!

Lord, thank you for allowing trials to come into my life so I might grow stronger in my faith. Soften my heart and remove all pride and arrogance from me. Holy Spirit, lead me in humility in times of difficulty and help me obey your instructions. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

The Secret to Peace

(Overcoming Adversity)

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"I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need."
(Philippians 4:12, NASB)

I'm drawn to Paul's powerful testimony here. He says that he has "learned the secret of being filled and going hungry..." The secret Paul refers to is having peace, joy, and contentment that is independent of your circumstances. Paul learned how to hold onto his peace. Every day we have the option to choose how we will respond to situations. We are free to choose joy or sadness, anger or acceptance, fear, or courage, hope or despair. Paul encourages us to choose peace in spite of our circumstances.

Looking back on my life, I see that I spent decades in a state of "emotional hijack" where I was controlled or led by my emotions. I allowed my circumstances to determine my mood, thoughts, actions, and decisions. I give God praise that the Holy Spirit has shared Paul's secret with me. As I grow spiritually it becomes easier to control my emotions, to set my mind, heart, and spirit on God's Word, His promises, and to live by faith. I am learning to look beyond immediate situations and say, "I don't care what it looks like, I refuse to walk in fear, doubt, and unbelief." I've learned to encourage myself by going deeper into God's Word. I've resolved that I will not be moved by what it looks like. In the midst of trial, I use my mouth to call forth things that are not as though they were, and I thank God for them before they happen.

Child of God, how about you? Are you struggling with your circumstances? Do you allow your emotions to lead you to a place where you begin to question God's Word and His promises? Do you believe the facts of your situation more than you believe God's Word? I encourage you to trust God and His grace. Hold onto your peace, joy, and contentment no matter what happens!

Lord, thank you for your grace that sustains me each day. Jesus, your love, and grace hold the secret of peace. I will trust in you Jesus and hold onto my peace, joy, and contentment no matter what. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

A Willing Spirit

(Good Intentions are Not Enough)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/224%20chapt%2013%20dev%203.mp3>

“Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. ‘Simon,’ he said to Peter, ‘are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.’”
(Mark 14:37-38, NIV)

In this passage, Jesus has just returned to the disciples after spending time alone in prayer asking God to prepare Him for what He was about to face on the cross. Knowing the challenges that were ahead for both himself and the disciples, He specifically instructs them to, “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.” While Jesus admonished them for not keeping watch and praying instead of falling asleep, He declared, “The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.”

How often do you face the same agonizing dilemma that Jesus addressed, and that Paul describes, “I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature”? For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing.” (Romans 7:17-18). What are the areas of your life where the spirit is willing, but your body and mind are weak? Where can Satan cause you to stumble and fall into temptation? In the hours leading up to His arrest, as a man, Jesus suffered and struggled to face His fate. He didn’t just tell the disciples what to do in a time of personal crisis. By spending time alone before God in prayer, Jesus demonstrated and modeled how to resist and overcome temptation.

Child of God, I encourage you to make a decision today to trust God in the midst of whatever test or trial you might be facing. Pray and ask Him for help, with the confidence that Jesus knows your struggles. Through your faith, He will give you the grace to overcome every challenge and test. Remember, it is Jesus who will strengthen you with His grace. In Him, you will have a willing spirit, strong mind, and body to face every trial.

Lord, thank you for being my Rock, my Fortress, and my Shield of strength. Jesus, help me to have a willing spirit, a strong body and mind to resist every temptation. In you Jesus, in your grace, I win every battle, every time. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Down, But Never Out

(I Am Ready for a Fight)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/225%20chapt%2013%20dev%204.mp3>

"We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed."

(2 Corinthians 4:8-9, NIV)

We all face hardship, trials, temporary setbacks, and difficulties in both our personal and professional lives. God's Word tells us that trials and temptations will come, but this verse encourages me. I'm comforted and have confidence that when I face hardship and pressure from every side, I will not be crushed; encounter difficult situations, people around me are out of control and things do not make sense, I will not feel despair; am surrounded by others who refuse to step up and carry their load or fail to honor a commitment, I will not feel alone; encounter "Goliath-sized" problems and experience a setback, I will not be defeated or destroyed; am under attack by every weapon in Satan's arsenal, I may be wounded, but I will not give up; grow tired and weary, I will not cave in or quit; feel like everything is hopeless, I will not take my eyes off Jesus and the Word of God.

I know that I win every time as long as I walk in the love and grace of God. As a Child of Light, I will not be intimidated, controlled, or manipulated by forces of darkness. I will pursue and take hold of every promise God made to me in His Word. I know that I will never walk alone, that the Spirit of God and His angels are with me. I'm always armed and ready and refuse to back down from Satan. When spiritual warfare comes, I say to Satan, it is written, "Greater is He who lives within me than you who are in this world." Satan, I put you on notice, "I'm coming after you. Get ready for a fight. The victory is mine and the battle has already been won. I refuse to walk in fear. I find confidence knowing that you may knock me down, but you will NEVER knock me out!"

Lord, thank you for your Word of Truth and Grace. Jesus, your sacrifice on the cross settled the battle with Satan for all time. Satan, with Jesus on my side, you lose.

I will not give up, cave in, or quit no matter what. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Do You Have Walk-on-Water Faith?

(No Fear Here)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/226%20chapt%2013%20dev%205.mp3>

“When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, ‘It is a ghost!’ And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid.’ Peter said to Him, ‘Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.’ And He said, ‘Come!’ And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus.”

(Matthew 14:26-29, NASB)

I’m always drawn to Jesus and Peter’s interaction in this passage. Jesus tells the disciples not to fear, and Peter responds, “Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.” Jesus answers Peter with a single but powerful word, “Come!” Without hesitation or further discussion Peter obeys, puts his trust in Jesus and steps out of the boat. His actions defied reason and natural laws. Peter walked on water! Soon he becomes distracted by the raging wind and waves and takes his eyes off Jesus. In that moment, Satan introduces fear, doubt, and unbelief and Peter begins to sink. He cries out to Jesus and Jesus grabs his hand and saves him!

President Franklin D. Roosevelt exhibited great faith and reverence for God in his Inaugural Address on March 4, 1933. His speech contains a reference to fear that has been repeated often. He said, “...This great Nation will endure as it has endured, will revive, and will prosper. So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself – nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance.” What is less known or quoted is the last sentence of Roosevelt’s speech where he said, “In this dedication of a Nation we humbly ask the blessing of God. May He protect each and every one of us. May He guide me in the days to come?”

Child of God, I encourage you to model the thinking and behavior of Peter and President Roosevelt. Have faith and trust God. Don’t worry about logic, common sense, natural laws, or peer pressure. Refuse to allow fear, doubt, and unbelief to stop you. Remember, God is with you. Keep your eyes on Jesus and boldly step out of the boat. Exercise “Walk-on-Water Faith” and expect a miracle!

Lord, thank you for showing me the power of your Word. Jesus, remove all fear, doubt, and unbelief from my heart and help me trust you at all times. Give me “Walk-on-Water Faith” that I may boldly step out of the boat and come to you. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

A Thorn to Keep Me Humble

(Pain Serves a Purpose)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/227%20chapt%2013%20dev%206.mp3>

“And to keep me from being puffed up and too much elated by the exceeding greatness (preeminence) of these revelations, there was given me a thorn (a splinter) in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to rack and buffet and harass me, to keep me from being excessively exalted.” [Job. 2:6.]
(2 Corinthians 12:7, AMP)

This verse leads to one of the most frequently quoted passages in the New Testament. In verse 9 Paul says, “And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” God’s grace was a gift to Paul to help him deal with his thorn. Many theologians have written and speculated about the nature of Paul’s thorn. Although Paul fails to give us specifics, he tells us it caused him great pain and anguish. While he recognized the purpose of the thorn was to keep him humble, he goes on to tell us he asked God to remove it three times.

Thinking about thorns, I recall Adam and Eve’s sin in the Garden of Eden. We see in Genesis 3:9-19, that God cursed the serpent to crawl on his belly in dust among thorns and thistles; told Eve she would have to endure the pain of childbirth (thorn) then God tells Adam that because of his sin, the ground will be cursed and produce thorns. Work becomes hard, filled with sweat and sorrow, because of his disobedience. Based on these passages, scholars point to the thorn as a symbol of the curse (empowerment to fail). Life, especially our work, becomes difficult, hard, and painful! Life is full of thorns. Almost daily we face sticky and prickly situations, people with issues, complex challenges that poke and prod us and make work life difficult. We’ve coined expressions for these situations. We say, “He sure is acting like he has a burr (thorn) under his saddle” or “My coworker is a real thorn in my side.”

Every Christian should accept that there will be thorns in life. What thorny situations are you facing? Is someone’s prickly behavior causing you pain and making life difficult? Maybe you’re the one going around with a “burr” under your saddle? I encourage you to pray and ask God to show you His purpose for the thorn. Like Paul, walk in humility. Trust God’s grace. His grace is bigger than any thorn.

Lord, thank you for your grace. Jesus, help me to humble myself, to rely on you and trust in your grace every time I face difficult situations in my life. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Joy at the Finish Line

(Refuse to Give Up, Cave In or Quit)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/228%20chapt%2013%20dev%207.mp3>

“Moreover [let us also be full of joy now!] let us exult and triumph in our troubles and rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that pressure and affliction and hardship produce patient and unswerving endurance. And endurance (fortitude) develops maturity of character (approved faith and tried integrity). And character [of this sort] produces [the habit of] joyful and confident hope of eternal salvation.”

(Romans 5:3-4, AMP)

Paul encourages us to greet troubles with joy knowing that pressure and hardship lead to spiritual growth and maturity. As Christians we do seem to have grasped the fact that we must run the race set before us. But it seems many of us think the race is a 100-yard dash! We must change our thinking if we are to succeed and overcome life’s trials. The race of faith is never a short sprint. It’s always a race of endurance. Think of it as a “super marathon,” certainly not a 5K race in perfect weather. I want to emphasize the challenge we face and prepare you by saying, “Get ready for the toughest race of your life.” It’s imperative that when you get: to training camp, you resolve to get spiritually fit and build strength and conditioning; out of the car and head to the track, you understand this is a race of endurance; to the starting line, you have the proper mindset to persevere; out of the blocks, you focus and find your stride; bumped, tripped, stumble and fall, you get back up and keep running; dehydrated and thirsty, you call on Jesus for a drink of living water; muscle cramps and your legs ache, you remember Jesus’ suffering on the cross (8) tired and discouraged, you call on Jesus for more grace; disoriented and out of your lane, you ask Jesus to direct your steps; on the verge of collapse feeling like you can’t take another step, you surrender and let Jesus carry you; an opportunity to look into the crowd, you look for Jesus’ face cheering you on; to the finish line, you see Jesus’ banner that reads, “With me, all things are possible.”

Child of God, as you cross the finish line, I encourage you to listen for the roar of applause and cheers from the saints. Have joy at the finish line. Be glad that you did not give up, cave in, or quit but finished the race of faith!

Lord, thank you for your grace to run the race you have set before me. Jesus, if I get tired and want to give up, fill me with your grace, help me to persevere and keep running.

Give me joy at the finish line, knowing that victory is mine. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

A Foolish Thing

(Counting vs. Trusting)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/229%20chapt%2013%20dev%208.mp3>

“David was conscience-stricken after he had counted the fighting men, and he said to the LORD, ‘I have sinned greatly in what I have done. Now, O LORD, I beg you, take away the guilt of your servant. I have done a very foolish thing.’”
(2 Samuel 24:10, NIV)

David’s success and reputation as an anointed warrior was unparalleled. He always sought the Lord and depended on Him for victory. Suddenly things changed and David gave into fear. He took his eyes off God and ordered Joab, his commanding officer, to count the troops. David made a decision to quit trusting God and focus on what he could do in his own strength.

For me, the issue was not counting soldiers but counting dollars. Suddenly, contracts ended, and the phone quit ringing. My days became silent and still. Within a few months my income dropped to less than a third of what it had been. At least the Lord revealed to me that this season was coming and that He was going to use this season to teach me some important life lessons. He taught me to acknowledge Him as my only Source, that everything else was just a resource. He taught me how to be a better steward over all that He gave us. He wanted me to see that, like David, I had the wrong perspective. He showed me that when I turned to my earning power, bank account and reserves for my sense of well-being, I failed to trust Him. He reminded me of His Word, in Philippians 4:19 that says, “My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.” I came to understand that, like David, I had sinned greatly and done a foolish thing! While this is normal thinking and behavior for unbelievers, it is not the way God wants me to think or live. He wants all of me (heart, mind, and spirit). He wants me to trust Him as my Source for everything. He wants me to reject fear, doubt, and unbelief.

Child of God, what fears are keeping you from trusting and obeying God? Are you relying on God’s strength or your own? I encourage you to ask God to reveal any area of your life where you have sinned greatly and done a foolish thing.

Lord, thank you for your grace, mercy, and provision. Jesus, help me to trust and rely on you for everything. I know that you are faithful to always meet my needs. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

You of Little Faith

(Giving in to Fear)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/230%20chapt%2013%20dev%209.mp3>

“Without warning, a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. The disciples went and woke him, saying, ‘Lord, save us! We’re going to drown!’ He replied, ‘You of little faith, why are you so afraid?’ Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. The men were amazed and asked, ‘What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!’”
(Matthew 8:24-27, NIV)

As I read these verses, I think of all the times as an Executive Coach and Ministry Leader my clients and peers have recounted similar situations when suddenly a storm appeared and either they or their employees or volunteers panicked and were overcome by fear based on the circumstances.

Careful review of these verses reveals crucial points about Jesus’ servant leadership behavior. Jesus: examined the disciples’ thoughts and emotions and understood their actions were motivated by fear and concern for their personal safety and welfare; resisted the urge to respond emotionally out of anger or frustration; recognized what needed to happen to restore their sense of well-being; demonstrated a sense of urgency and took immediate action; showed total confidence in His ability to quiet the storm (solve the problem) and meet their emotional and spiritual needs; remained silent when it was all over so that the disciples could process and reflect on what happened and learn from their experience.

As leaders are you and your team in the midst of storms that seemed to blow in without warning? Are the raging winds and waves a serious threat to your production capability, quality, customer base, profit margin, employee morale, goals, and objectives? When you face storms and your team is emotionally high jacked, I encourage you to read and study the Gospels. Pay close attention to the words and actions of Jesus, the greatest model of servant leadership in human history. Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you how to lead like Jesus. Ask Him to show you how to: walk in faith; assess the situation; control your emotions; show a sense of urgency by taking action; model confidence; use the storms as a learning opportunity. The Spirit of God will teach you. Lead like Jesus and prepare to be amazed.

*Lord, thank you for teaching me valuable lessons on leadership as I study the Gospels and the life of Jesus. Thank you for giving me a servant leader’s heart and helping me “lead like Jesus.”
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

A Moment of Truth

(Letting Go of Hurt and Disappointment)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/231%20chapt%2013%20dev%2010.mp3>

“The LORD therefore be judge and decide between you and me; and may He see and plead my cause and deliver me from your hand. When David had finished speaking these words to Saul, Saul said, ‘Is this your voice, my son David?’ Then Saul lifted up his voice and wept. He said to David, ‘You are more righteous than I; for you have dealt well with me, while I have dealt wickedly with you.’”
(1 Samuel 24:15-17, NIV)

In the verses leading up to this passage, we read that Saul’s back was turned to David. In an instant David could have taken his life. Instead, he reached out and cut off the bottom of Saul’s robe. A few minutes later, overwhelmed with shame and sorrow, David calls out to Saul and confesses what he had done. These verses capture part of their conversation.

For me, this moment was played out the day I sat on my Dad’s bed as he lay dying of cancer. For the first time in decades, we sat, held each other, talked, cried, and shared from our hearts. The weight of years of regret, guilt, anger, hurt, disappointment, struggle, and conflict suddenly disappeared and no longer mattered. We silently agreed to let go of our broken past, celebrate, and enjoy each another in the moment. In the moment, we: created a new reality with new rules of behavior – a reality free of expectations, promises, apologies, excuses, and regrets; chose to forgive, love, and cherish each other unconditionally as father and son; chose to accept and overlook each other’s brokenness, faults, and differences. We were finally at peace. In the moment, I came to understand David and Saul’s interaction as I recalled Paul’s treatise on love written to the church in Corinth. His words showed me God’s heart. They softened my heart, became real and changed me. . . “love bears, believes, hopes, and endures all things.” (1 Co 13:7-8). Most of all, in the moment of truth with my Dad, I learned that love never fails.

Child of God, I encourage you to ask God to show you the truth of His love regarding a difficult relationship in your life. Remember, God is love and His love will never fail you!

Lord, thank you for your unconditional love and the healing power of your love. Jesus, help me to show forgiveness, love, and compassion to others. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Job Search Is a Journey in the Wilderness

(Trust God)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/232%20chapt%2013%20dev%2011.mp3>

“For the Lord your God has blessed you in all that you have done; He has known your wanderings through this great wilderness. These forty years the Lord your God has been with you; you have not lacked a thing.”

(Deuteronomy 2:7, NASB)

Job search and career transition (promotion, transfer, and relocation) are often times of intense trial, emotional upheaval, and financial strain that test your self-confidence, faith, and the very fabric of your marriage, family, and work relationships. For Christians, it can be compared to the time the Israelites spent in the wilderness. It’s a time of radical change and discomfort as you face an uncertain future and deal with the unknown. Life in the wilderness is different. The rules and consequences are more severe. Like the Israelites, you may long for the certainty of Egypt (your old job) even though you were very unhappy there.

In the wilderness, you will face challenges and tests every day. Will you trust God, walk in faith, refuse to believe Satan’s lies, and resist the urge to murmur and complain? Remember God doesn’t like complaining, so be careful that you don’t turn an 11-day journey into a 40-year trek! How long you spend in the wilderness depends on your level of trust and dependence on God and the lessons He wants you to learn. Use your time in the wilderness to draw closer to God. Start every day: feasting (studying and meditating) on His Word; confessing His Word over your life; being still in prayer as you seek His will and plans for your life; giving thanks and praise for His goodness; thinking of your work as worship to God; asking Him to lead you to a place where you can take your faith to work and honor Him.

Child of God, celebrate your freedom in the wilderness and trust God to provide for you. Believe in His Word and His promises. Rely on His goodness, faithfulness, and grace. With confidence and expectant hope, allow His spirit to lead you to your promised land (ideal job). Once you’re there don’t forget to praise Him!

*Lord, thank you for the transitions in my life, for opening doors and for closing them.
Softening my heart and drawing me closer to you during times of change. Seal my lips
to complaining and replace them with songs of joy, thanksgiving, and praise.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

CHAPTER 14

Faith and Work

“Do not be conformed to this world (this age), [fashioned after and adapted to its external, superficial customs], but be transformed (changed) by the [entire] renewal of your mind [by its new ideals and its new attitude], so that you may prove [for yourselves] what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, even the thing which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His sight for you].”
(Romans 12:2, AMP)

“Whatever may be your task, work at it heartily (from the soul), as [something done] for the Lord and not for men, knowing [with all certainty] that it is from the Lord [and not from men] that you will receive the inheritance which is your [real] reward. [The One Whom] you are actually serving [is] the Lord Christ (the Messiah).”
(Colossians 3:23-24, AMP)



God Created the First Start-up

(Heaven and Earth)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/233%20chapt%2014%20dev%201.mp3>

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”
(Genesis 1:1, NASB)

Many people including Christians have never seriously considered the relationship between God and work or looked at work from God’s perspective. Diligent and responsible work that honors God and reflects excellence is a core value in the kingdom. God worked to create the heavens and the earth and everything in it. Jesus came to work, preach the Gospel, heal the sick, and cast out demons. When Jesus ascended to heaven, He gave us the Holy Spirit who is always at work within us, comforting, teaching, leading, guiding, and helping us achieve the will of God in our everyday life.

God understands work and business (operations, economics and finance, resource allocation, leadership, etc.) In Genesis 1:1-31, we find God at work creating heaven and earth and every living creature. Twenty-six verses show God working: establishing vision; planning and creating; communicating; inspecting, approving, or modifying; creating, assigning, and empowering a workforce (Adam and Eve); establishing job duties and responsibilities, compensation, and benefit programs. God had a vision or (Master Plan) for earth and all of mankind. For a brief period, everything worked according to plan. Then Satan (the serpent) led Adam and Eve into disobedience and sin. This changed everything. Like many startups, changes had to be made that impacted every part of His business. God sent Moses, other prophets and ultimately His Son Jesus Christ, to oversee a turnaround. Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross was part of God’s plan for restoration and reconciliation.

If you don’t know Jesus today, believe in Him and the One who sent Him. Repent, and ask Jesus to become your personal Savior. Become part of the Master’s Plan for salvation. Ask God to speak to you about His vision and purpose for your life. Ask Him to lead and guide you as you pursue His will. Trust Him in your daily work life. Remember, God knows a great deal about work because He created it!

Lord, thank you for the beauty and wonder of your creation. Jesus, I know you are at work and are part of God’s Master Plan for my life. Show me your perfect will and plans for my life and help me to walk it out by faith. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Business God's Way

(Supernatural Manifestation)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/235%20chapt%2014%20dev%202.mp3>

“He called out to them, ‘Friends haven’t you any fish?’ ‘No,’ they answered. He said, ‘Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.’ When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.”

(John 21:5-6, NIV)

Events in this CHAPTER take place after the crucifixion. This is the third time that Jesus has appeared to the disciples after His resurrection. This scene is described in verses 1-14 and illustrates the advantages of doing business God's way and operating in the supernatural. Important lessons in this passage point to the fact that you must: know who you are and whose you are. As Christians, we are friends of God, Children of God, and Sons and Daughters of God. We're called and chosen by Him and have special rights and privileges. We must be able to hear and recognize the Holy Spirit's voice. Jesus spoke directly to the disciples, but we have the Holy Spirit to speak to us. We must obey God quickly and willingly when prompted as delayed obedience is disobedience. We must not let our feelings or emotions get in the way and prevent you from doing what God tells you to do. The disciples had fished all night without catching any fish and were probably tired and frustrated. Do what God tells you to do regardless of how you feel, We must come to expect supernatural provision, abundance, and miracles when you do business God's way. The disciples' experience the night before suggests there were no fish to be caught. Fishing God's way yielded a catch of 153 large fish so many that the nets began to tear. You must pursue a deep, intimate relationship with Jesus by spending time with Him in fellowship, thanksgiving, and prayer. I confess that I've come to prefer doing business God's way according to His Word and operating according to His laws and kingdom principles. It's so much easier and the harvest is amazing.

Child of God, I encourage you to ask God to show you how to do business His way. You'll be glad you did.

Lord, thank you for lessons on doing business your way, according to your Word.

Holy Spirit, direct my steps every day and help me to be like Jesus in all I do.

Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

God Created Contracts

(Covenants and Faithfulness)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/236%20chapt%2014%20dev%203.mp3>

“Behold, I, even I am bringing the flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall perish. But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife, and your sons' wives with you. . . Thus, Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did.”

(Genesis 6:17-18, 22, NASB)

Whenever I speak to business and ministry groups about God and work and the Bible and work, I point out that God created contracts. The Bible has a lot to say about contracts (covenants). In this verse, we see God making a covenant (contract) with Noah. Bible Gateway lists 5,467 examples of God’s vows, pledges, promises, and covenants with man!

Careful study of Scripture shows that God always honors His covenants. In sharp contrast, man often breaks, disregards, cancels or changes his contracts to suit his circumstance or personal interest. As a Child of God, it’s critical that we come to understand covenants from God’s point of view. We must always remember to: be still before God and seek His will in the Word and in prayer about agreements and relationships; seek Godly counsel, advice and confirmation before we enter into a contract; weigh the cost and be prepared to pay the price even if circumstances change; honor the contract (keeping your word to others is to honor God and His Word); let your “Yes” mean “Yes” and your “No” mean “No”; be obedient with the understanding that disobedience will block God’s blessings and favor; follow through no matter what (8) expect God to reward your faithfulness and restore you even when others have lied, cheated or taken advantage of you.

Child of God, I encourage you to ask God to show you any area in your life where you have broken a promise, failed to honor a vow or pledge and did not live up to the terms of a contract. Repent and ask for forgiveness. Remember to pray and seek God’s will before you enter into contracts. When you do, follow the example of Noah, do all that you are directed to do. God expects nothing less.

*Lord, thank you for honoring every vow and promise you made in your Word.
I’m encouraged by your faithfulness. Jesus, you were obedient and faithful
to the cross. Teach me to walk in honor, integrity, and faithfulness.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Working “God’s List”

(First Things FIRST)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/237%20chapt%2014%20dev%204.mp3>

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be firm (steadfast), immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord [always being superior, excelling, doing more than enough in the service of the Lord], knowing and being continually aware that your labor in the Lord is not futile [it is never wasted or to no purpose].”

(1 Corinthians 15:58, AMP)

To practice Paul’s directive, we must start by asking a simple question, “Lord, what do you want me to do today?” This has been an area of my life where I have struggled. I spent years “driving the bus” focusing on my plans and agenda and never asked God what He wanted me to do.

In 2010, God called me to walk His path, where I say, go and do what He tells me. One morning Karen said, “Honey, what’s on your agenda today?” I replied, “Please don’t ask me that. That’s not who I am now. I need you to ask, ‘What does God want you to do today? This will help remind me God is in charge.’” I replaced my “To Do List” with “God’s List.”

I’ve made other necessary changes to honor God and walk this out. I now work and sleep on a different time zone, “Holy Spirit Time” (HST). I get up, work, and go to sleep when He tells me to. I seldom look at the clock anymore. Generally, I’m up around 3AM while the world is quiet and still. Because God wants to be first in my life, He gave me this instruction: “No emails allowed before you spend quality time with me, in my Word and in prayer.” God made it clear. The world can wait. He wants to be FIRST. He transformed the time I spend writing into one of meditation and intimate conversation with Him. He is teaching me to talk with Him about every phone call, meeting, project, proposal, speaking opportunity, and decision.

Child of God, when was the last time you talked to God about your “To Do List?” I encourage you to pray and ask God to help you replace your list with His. Work “God’s List” in excellence with a willing and joyful heart. Your labor in the Lord is never wasted or without purpose!

Lord, thank you for leading and guiding my steps and giving me a heart to put you FIRST in all I do. Teach me your ways as I study your Word and allow the Holy Spirit to direct my steps. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Are Visitors Welcome?

(Do You Take God to Work?)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/238%20chapt%2014%20dev%205.mp3>

“He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.”
(Matthew 10:40, NASB)

Many companies have formal policies and procedures for “Visitors.” How they treat visitors speaks loudly about their core values and beliefs. For example, are visitors welcomed and treated warmly as a part of the “corporate family” or do they get a cold reception as if they are a nuisance or intruder? Most companies require visitors to sign in at the front desk and get a “Visitor badge” before they can proceed. Industrial companies often require visitors to watch a safety video, sign a release form, wear a hard-hat and safety goggles to tour the premises. In almost all cases visitors are only allowed in certain areas and restricted from others. I’ve observed that many Christians operate in a similar fashion when it comes to their faith walk and relationship with Jesus.

As a Christian, do you allow God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit unlimited access to your work and home life? Do you require advance notice so that you can do a walk-through and tidy up all the mess before you allow them to come in and take a tour? Do you have limited days or hours of visitation? Do you keep certain areas of your life “private” and locked away hoping Jesus won’t notice? Does Jesus need a hard-hat and goggles for protection from all of the debris and sin in your life? In this verse, Jesus tells His disciples that whoever receives them receives Him and whoever receives Him receives God.

Child of God, I encourage you to ask God to show you any areas of your work or home life where you need to change the way you receive heavenly visitors. Open your heart, office, and home today. Lay out a “Welcome Mat” for God. Invite Him in and tell Him to stay as long as He wants. You’ll be glad you did.

Lord, thank you for sending Jesus to visit us and give us eternal life. Jesus, you are always welcome in my life. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

The Greatest Recruiting Drive in History

(Say Yes to Jesus)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/239%20chapt%2014%20dev%206.mp3>

“Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And He said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.’ Immediately they left their nets and followed Him.”
(Matthew 4:18-20, NASB)

When corporate executives face a labor shortage, they turn to Human Resources (HR) for help. HR will use internal recruiters, external recruiters, and staffing agencies. They will source candidates using social media sites, advertise, post openings on Job Boards and conduct “Open House” events and Job Fairs.

The first recruiting drive occurred over 2,000 years ago and was conducted by Jesus. As He traveled and preached, He recruited men to be His disciples and spread the Gospel. Unlike today’s recruiting programs, His approach was simple and straightforward. He preached, interacted briefly, and invited others to join Him. His efforts defied reason and Jewish religious customs. He did not approach educated, trained religious leaders, and invite them to bring their following into the ranks. Since His messages were often preached in the marketplace, He recruited 12 ordinary men: Peter, Andrew, James, and John (fishermen), Matthew (tax collector), Judas (prior occupation unknown, group treasurer), Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, James, Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot (occupation unknown).

After just three years of preaching, teaching, healing the sick and casting out demons, Jesus was crucified, resurrected and His disciples were baptized in the spirit to preach the Gospel. Over the next several decades the Holy Spirit led them as they preached, healed the sick, raised the dead, established churches, and brought salvation to many. By any standard, the results of Jesus’ recruiting efforts are remarkable. The Bible is the most widely read book ever written. Christianity is preached all over the world and millions have been saved. Mission accomplished. The life and death of Jesus Christ changed human history.

Child of God, I encourage you to imitate Jesus. Walk in His perfect love and grace. Watch as Jesus uses you to recruit others and lead them to salvation.

Lord, thank you for sending your Son to preach the Gospel and save the world. Jesus, help me to follow you, walk in your love and grace with others, and continue your work. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Ask Your Boss for a Double Portion

(Ask for Promotion)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/240%20chapt%2014%20dev%207.mp3>

“When they had crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, ‘Ask what I shall do for you before I am taken from you.’ And Elisha said, ‘Please, let a double portion of your spirit be upon me.’”

(2 Kings 2:9, NASB)

Ask any boss and they will tell you they prefer employees who speak up and ask for what they need and want. Bosses aren't mind readers and don't know you: are feeling bored and stale in your job and ready for a change; need time off or more flexibility in your schedule due to family issues; are open to a promotion or transfer; are hoping to take advantage of a newly initiated training program and want to be added to the list. You must tell them. You must have the confidence and boldness to ask for what you need or want. As you read the verse above, consider the times in life where you asked for more. Have you ever done it? What did you ask for? Did you ask for a raise or promotion? Did you volunteer to work extra schedules when the crew was shorthanded? Did you ask for a transfer to enhance your career?

Elisha was very bold in his request. He asked Elijah for a double portion of his anointing (power and grace). I'm awed by his confidence. We see in verses 13-14, Elisha's request was granted, and the spirit of Elijah (mantel) came to rest on him. What motivated Elisha to make his request? In 1 Kings 19: 19-21 we get a glimpse of his heart's desire when he ran after Elijah and offered to serve him. Elijah said, "No" and walked on. Instead of going away, Elisha killed his oxen and abandoned his field. Recognizing that his former life was gone, he was steadfast on following Elijah and serving God.

Child of God, I encourage you to ask God to show you what you need to walk away from and leave behind. Ask Jesus for a double portion of anointing and grace. Ask Him boldly with an expectant heart and step into your divine future.

Lord, thank you for your anointing on my life. Jesus, grant me the power and grace I need to serve you with courage and boldness. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Unbelief Cancels Your Rights

(Faith vs. Unbelief)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/241%20chapt%2014%20dev%208.mp3>

“So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.”
(Hebrews 3:19, NASB)

Following the tragic terrorist attack of September 11, 2001, most commercial office buildings dramatically elevated their security procedures to protect their property and ensure the safety and lives of their tenants. Since that time, all types of businesses have taken steps to control access by validating the identity and intent of everyone who enters the premises. In most cases, visitors can expect that you will: (1) be greeted by building security and required to sign in and declare your destination and purpose of the visit (2) be asked to show photo ID and submit bags and personal belongings for electronic screening or inspection (3) have to wait in the lobby until someone comes to get you and escort you (4) need a key card or code to use the restrooms (5) be given a temporary “Visitor badge” and required to properly display it at all times (6) be required to take special routes that are tightly controlled and monitored if you are dropping off packages. Employees must expect some of the precautions outlined above and will also: be required to carry and use electronic key cards for building and parking access; be recorded by security cameras 24/7. Why all the fuss? The answer is simple – to establish identity and ensure the safety of tenants, guests, and visitors. Failure to comply results in denied access.

We see that God had a similar goal and program in place in the wilderness. To protect His children and ensure their safety just before they entered the Promised Land, He implemented a simple, quick, and easy inspection. He routinely performed a heart check. I wonder if God had Moses announce often, **“Warning: Everyone with a hardened and unbelieving heart who murmurs and complains – ACCESS DENIED!”**

Child of God, I encourage you to walk in faith with God and simply believe. Your entry into heaven on earth and access to your Promise Land is depending on it.

Lord, thank you for your grace and faith to believe in your Son. Jesus, my faith in you has given me salvation and access to every promise in God's Word. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Centurion Faith

(Do You Have It?)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/242%20chapt%2014%20dev%209.mp3>

“The centurion replied, ‘Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.’ When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, ‘I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.’”

(Matthew 8:8-10, NIV)

Notice Jesus’ reaction to the centurion’s reply. He was astonished and went on to say to those following Him, “I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.” The centurion understood power and authority because he, like Jesus, walked in authority and exercised power over his soldiers. He had no doubts or reservations about Jesus’ supernatural ability to perform miracles and heal. He was totally convinced. His faith was so intense he believed that all Jesus had to do was give an order, “Say the word and my servant will be healed.” Every corporate executive, leader, manager, or supervisor I’ve ever worked with would be astonished to get this level of trust, support, and commitment from their employees. Sadly, we seldom see this level of unwavering faith and trust in our professional or personal lives. My spirit man knows that this fact grieves God as He watches and waits for His children to walk in faith and simply believe.

As Christians, this passage should challenge and inspire us to take our faith to a higher level. When you read the Word, especially Jesus’ teachings and promises, do you find yourself wanting to believe, but find that you struggle with doubt and unbelief? Are you absolutely certain that a spoken word is all you need to change your situation? Have you commanded your body to be healed and restored in the name of Jesus? Are you using your tongue to bless yourself and others? Are you declaring God’s Word over your life with an expectation that His Word will come true?

Child of God, I encourage you to ask the Lord to help you grow stronger in your faith and trust in Him. Ask Him to give you “Centurion Faith.” Be prepared to be astonished as you watch your faith change your life and the world around you!

Lord, thank you for your Word. Jesus, teach me and help me to have faith like the centurion with absolute confidence and trust in the power of your Word. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

How Bad Do You Want It?

(Asking Leads to Having)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/243%20chapt%2014%20dev%2010.mp3>

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.”

(Matthew 7:7-8, NIV)

Words lead to destiny. You must think it, believe it and speak it before you will ever have it. Our mouth is a divine instrument. Our mouth and the words we speak impact both the physical realm (life in the world) and the spiritual realm (life in the kingdom). As an Executive Coach, I often tell my clients, “I’m good at what I do but I’m not a mind reader. You must tell me about your visions, dreams, goals, plans, hopes, fears, strengths, weaknesses, failures, and disappointments. We will work on these. You must tell me what you need and want. Once you’ve learned to effectively communicate these things to me then you can tell your boss.”

Why are we so fearful and hesitant to ask for what we need or want? The answer is very simple – fear. Satan knows the truth and power of Jesus’ teaching here. As part of the Holy Trinity, Jesus knows we’ve been created in God’s image and been given a mouth to use as a divine instrument. He knows that having starts with believing and asking. If Satan can convince you that there will be negative consequences for even asking, or that you are wasting your time, then maybe you’ll just be quiet. I’ve talked with many bosses who found out in an exit interview what was important to a key employee who was on his way out the door. By this time, it’s too late to talk. The employee explored other opportunities, interviewed, received an offer, and accepted it, because they were too afraid to ask their boss for a transfer or promotion, salary increase or talk about a problem.

Bosses, have you established rapport and trust that fosters open two-way conversation? Employees, have you asked for what you need or want? I encourage you both to start talking and asking. Asking leads to having.

Lord, thank you for teaching me that my words have power. Jesus, help me to walk in faith and use my mouth as a divine instrument to create my destiny. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Lord, Because You Say So

(Will You Say, “Yes, Lord?”)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/244%20chapt%2014%20dev%2011.mp3>

“One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the people crowding around him and listening to the word of God, he saw at the water’s edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, ‘Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.’ Simon answered, ‘Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.’”

(Luke 5:1-5, NIV)

I’m fascinated by this passage. It’s the first example in the Gospels of what happens when we submit our lives to the Lord and do business God’s way. We experience supernatural provision when we humble ourselves before God. We see: a crowd surrounding Jesus; fishermen washing their nets; boats sitting on the beach; Jesus climbing into Simon’s boat; Jesus asking Simon to row out, so Jesus can preach; Simon accepting Jesus’ presence in his boat and agreeing to His request; Jesus telling Simon to drop his nets (8) Simon arguing that he’s tired, declaring fish were not biting, then agreeing to Jesus’ instructions.

In verses 6-11, we see the results of Simon’s willingness to submit to Jesus and commit his business (fishing boat, nets, and labor) to Jesus for kingdom business. Jesus rewards Simon, James, and John (Simon’s partners) supernaturally with so many fish that nets begin to break, and boats begin to sink. It’s a defining moment in Simon, James and John’s life and business and in Jesus’ ministry. Simon falls at Jesus’ feet and says, “Depart from me Lord for I am a sinful man.” Jesus responds, “Do not fear, from now on you will fish for people.” Immediately they leave everything and follow Jesus as His first disciples.

Child of God, we must be willing to accept Jesus when He suddenly appears in our lives. Like Simon, we must stop, put our agenda aside, and follow His instructions. Are you willing to allow Jesus to use your life, business, talents, and abilities for kingdom purposes? I encourage you to imitate Simon Peter. Say “Lord, because you say so, I will.” Dedicate your life and your business to Jesus for His purposes. There is more at stake than you know!

Lord, thank you for showing me that blessings and rewards follow obedience. Jesus, help me to trust you no matter how tired I am or difficult the task. Give me the grace to say, “because you say so, I will.” Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

What Name Shall We Call You?

(Reputation and Legacy)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/245%20chapt%2014%20dev%2012.mp3>

“Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement), sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles’ feet.”
(Acts 4:36-37, NIV)

Reputation (character) and legacy (what you leave behind) go hand in hand. As an Executive Coach, I counsel my clients to be very purposeful and intentional about WHO they are and WHAT they do. To help them understand this, I start by asking them about their reputation. I explain that we all have them. Reputation or character is the sum total of our actions. It is a direct expression of our core values, beliefs, habits, and customs. We create and build our reputation every day by the things we say and do. A simple way to discover your reputation is to ask others who you are to them. For many people this is a new way of thinking about themselves. Next, I introduce the subject of legacy and explain that legacy is the end-product of your reputation after you are gone – your impact on others.

Reading this verse, I’m moved by the name Joseph was given by the disciples. They called him “Barnabas” (Son of Encouragement). He is mentioned 28 times in Acts as we read about the power of the Holy Spirit, the disciples, and the early church. He is commended for his personal support of Paul and their mission trips to teach and preach the Gospel, planting, and nurturing startup churches, giving financially into the early church, and providing emotional and spiritual support to everyone he met. Biblical scholars even mention Barnabas as a possible author of Hebrews - one of my favorite books in the New Testament. I am deeply humbled that several years ago, a spiritual mentor and brother in Christ labeled me a modern-day Barnabas. Since that time, others have confirmed my reputation as a man who encourages and teaches, who offers comfort and support. I’ve come to realize that is God’s call on my life.

Child of God, what is your reputation? Ask God to reveal His name for you and start living it out. I encourage you to commit today to leave a lasting legacy that honors and glorifies God.

*Lord, thank you for the eternal legacy of your Son Jesus Christ. Jesus, teach me to live a life that honors and glorifies you. May your grace rest on me and your love guide me.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

A Careful Scrutiny

(Have You Examined Your Work Lately?)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/246%20chapt%2014%20dev%2013.mp3>

“But let every person carefully scrutinize and examine and test his own conduct and his own work. He can then have the personal satisfaction and joy of doing something commendable [in itself alone] without [resorting to] boastful comparison with his neighbor.”

(Galatians 6:4, AMP)

In 2009, I faced a crisis in my business. I lost my desire for coaching and doing “business as usual.” I needed more or I needed out. I cried out to God. He showed me His desire was that my faith and relationship with Jesus serve as the driving force in my life. Suddenly, I was filled with a longing to invite Jesus into every area of my life. I began to scrutinize my behavior and ask: Do I put God first in my business life, or do I edge Him out? Do I submit to Him in all that I do? Do I honor God with my work or leave Him at home? Do I practice stillness, pray, and listen for an answer before taking action? Do I turn to God’s Word as the final authority in my business?” I asked God to show me His will. I invited Him to take charge and committed that whatever He told me to do, I would do it.

God overhauled my business by taking these steps, He: showed me how to turn proposals into covenant agreements (giving clients the advantage); gave me new tools to help my clients renew their minds with His Word; told me to take my Bible to every meeting and use it as the final reference for all discussions; directed me to open and close every meeting or call with prayer; showed me how to teach my clients to use their mouth as a divine instrument; encouraged me to teach my clients to submit to authority; told me to look into the spiritual realm and take spiritual action first in every situation; taught me how to walk in His power, and authority. I stand in amazement at what God has done and the results I see on a daily basis.

Child of God, I encourage you to examine your daily work life. Invite Jesus to serve as the foundation for all you do.

*Lord, thank you for your Word. Holy Spirit test and examine my heart. Help me
Jesus to submit every area of my life to you. Through the blood
of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Don't Worry About What to Say

(Listen to the Holy Spirit)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/247%20chapt%2014%20dev%2014.mp3>

"But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you."
(Matthew 10:19-20, NIV)

In the business world, presentations can often make or break a career. Over the years almost every client I've worked with has come to me with worries and concerns over an upcoming presentation. I've given reading assignments and talked about the power of likability, the need for communication goals, conducted practice sessions with video cameras, and examined facial expressions and body language to assess the message and judge its impact. I've reviewed and edited PowerPoint slides. I committed all this effort to help my client give the "perfect presentation."

I'm thankful to God that I'm now in a place where my approach is much simpler and always successful. In a recent scheduled call, I reminded TJ, one of my clients, of the importance of renewing his mind and using kingdom laws and principles in his work. I encouraged him to set his mind and thinking on the eternal truth and power of God's Word (also see Luke 12:11-12). We prayed and confessed God's Word over his presentation to the Executive Committee and Board of Directors. After it was over, he would recount that he felt like a spectator watching the presentation. He endured the test and God rewarded his faithfulness. He was told afterwards that it was a defining moment in his career. A member of the executive committee in the audience labeled him a superstar. His worries and anxieties about presentations have now been replaced with confidence. Now he rests in the confidence that God has already equipped him with everything he needs to excel in every task he faces. He now walks in peace because he trusts in the Holy Spirit to teach him what he needs to do and say.

Child of God, do you need help today with a presentation or meeting agenda? I encourage you to call on the Holy Spirit and like TJ, be prepared to be amazed!

Lord, thank you for the truth and power of your Word. Holy Spirit, teach me to turn to you for guidance in the words I speak and the actions I take. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Commitment to Excellence

Doing Your Best or Just Enough?)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/248%20chapt%2014%20dev%2015.mp3>

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”
(Colossians 3:23-24, NIV)

We live in a world where requirements and standards are the norm. They're often communicated as conditions of employment, membership acceptance, and promotion or status within a group. In the workplace, the standards are applied in the form of performance reviews. Employees either “Exceed, meet, or fail to meet” performance expectations. Those who exceed the standards demonstrate a level of performance that approaches excellence. Most leaders will tell you the group of employees who “Exceeds” is much smaller than either the group that “Meets” or “Fail to Meet” required standards. Many people are content with “just enough to meet standards.” It's rare to find a highly skilled workforce that is highly motivated and highly engaged in the pursuit of excellence. When you find these traits in a team, remarkable things happen (NASA and Apple are examples).

As leaders, why are we so willing to tolerate blatantly poor performance rather than confront and deal with it? As employees, why do we continually test the limits and push the boundaries on performance reviews, tardiness, and use of PTO (Paid Time Off)?

As Christians, both leaders and employees, we must ask ourselves, “Who am I striving to please?” Paul's letter to the church in Colosse challenged them to strive for a different standard and to serve a higher calling. He encouraged them to see and perform their work as a task for the Lord and not for man. When viewed from this perspective, our work, and the things we do at work takes on a whole new meaning. Remember that God is a God of excellence. Look at the world around you and see the wonder of His creation.

Child of God, I encourage you to serve God today with your work. Strive to please and honor Him in all you do. Commit to excellence and always do your best. When you do, don't worry about the needs of man.

Lord, you are a God of work and I thank you for calling me to work. Jesus, give me the proper mindset and teach me to honor and please you in all that I do. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Hanging Out with Jesus

(Talking to a Friend)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/249%20chapt%2014%20dev%2016.mp3>

“For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

(Hebrews 4:15-16, NASB)

At work, just as in our personal lives, we feel closer to certain individuals than we do others. We spend much of our waking life with our “work family.” We work together, go to lunch, or take breaks, and often enjoy recreation activities outside of work. We get to know their families. We confide in them and they in turn share their lives with us. It’s normal that we feel comfortable around people whom we judge to be like us and uncomfortable around people who are different from us. Knowing that others are “like us” makes all the difference.

To fully grasp the meaning of this passage, we need to focus on the words, “One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.” Jesus understands and sympathizes with our weakness because He was also tempted. Knowing this helps me feel comfortable and at ease with Jesus. I have a common experience with Him. He has experienced challenges and issues similar to the ones I face. Since He knows what it feels like to be tempted, I can come before Him with a level of comfort and confidence that He will understand. Jesus gets it. I’m in awe, realizing that I know Him, and He knows me. As a man, son, brother, friend, leader, teacher, fellow carpenter, man of prayer, man who loves God, man who has been loved, tempted, and betrayed, I have a lot in common with Jesus. He is real. I’m comforted knowing that I can come to Him and just hang out and talk.

Child of God, the Word says that Jesus has called you “friend.” You can come to Him anytime and talk about your life with confidence and expectant hope that He will understand. Whenever you’re lonely, hurt, tempted, struggle or fall, talk to Him. He will listen and always help you.

Lord, thank you for loving me enough to give me your Son. Jesus, you have called me, “friend.” Draw me into a deeper and more personal relationship with you. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Your Boss Wants all of You

(Give All You Have)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/250%20chapt%2014%20dev%2017.mp3>

*“And you shall love the Lord your God with all your [mind and] heart
and with your entire being and with all your might.”*

(Deuteronomy 6:5, AMP)

Sooner or later every boss faces the situation where they're forced to ask themselves, "Who is this person? How could I have missed it and been so wrong? Is this the same person I interviewed and the one I thought I was hiring?" It happens more often than hiring managers care to admit. The person represented by the resume, that aced the panel interviews and showed lots of confidence and poise now seems lost, confused, disengaged, and immobilized. How and why does this happen?

Many powerful emotions, thoughts, and behavior (old baggage) shape our relationships with others: fear of success or failure, insecurity and self-doubt, selfishness and distrust, jealousy, and envy are just a few. When we experience these emotions, we remember the times we've been hurt or disappointed and we take defensive actions to protect ourselves. These negative thoughts and emotions cause us to avoid commitment altogether or we set strict boundaries which only serve to undermine our relationships and our performance. We go through the motions but never fully engage with others or commit to the task.

Why do we allow our negative feelings and thoughts to control us? Why are we so afraid and reluctant to commit? When we walk in fear, we're already convinced the reward is not worth the risk. We become guarded and before we even start, we want to know what the other person wants or expects. Do they want five percent, half, or all of me? Has Satan convinced you that no matter how small the cost, it's too much?

Child of God, we must refuse to walk in fear or selfishness. Jesus died on the cross to guarantee our reward – abundant life for all eternity. We must turn our backs on negative emotions, thoughts and behavior and place our trust in God. Surrender your cares and burdens to God. Remember, He wants all of you – your mind, heart, spirit, and strength!

*Lord, thank you for loving me and giving me eternal life through your Son.
Jesus, teach me to give all of me to you. Through the blood
of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Choose Carefully (Your Choices Matter)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/251%20chapt%2014%20dev%2018.mp3>

“Those tending the pigs ran off, went into the town and reported all this, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men. Then the whole town went out to meet Jesus. And when they saw him, they pleaded with him to leave their region.”

(Matthew 8:33-34, NIV)

To fully understand this passage, you must back up and read verses 28-32. Jesus encounters two demon-possessed men. The demons beg Jesus to send them into a herd of pigs. He does as they ask, and the entire herd runs into the lake and drowns. What happens next grieves my spirit and is very disturbing. Motivated by the report of the men’s miraculous deliverance, we see the entire town comes out to meet Jesus. Rather than giving God praise and thanksgiving for the miracles and inviting Jesus into their midst to preach the Gospel, heal the sick, and perform even more miracles, they beg him to leave as quickly as possible. While Scripture fails to mention the size of the city, I can’t help but wonder how many men, women, and children remained in sin, sickness, and torment as a result of their actions. A demonic spirit of fear closed the hearts and minds of the residents and led them to reject Jesus.

As a Christian, we should take notice of the strength and power of darkness and evil. Are you a part of a dark sinful company, work team, or family? Are your bosses, coworkers, friends, and family members openly rejecting Jesus and choosing to live in darkness and sin? Are you allowing them to shape your thinking and behavior and determine your destiny? If so, I encourage you to be on guard that you don’t give in to fear and unbelief, positioning yourself to face eternal death. If you are living and working in darkness and sin, I encourage you to accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and welcome the life-changing Light, Truth, and Grace of Jesus into your life.

Child of God, I encourage you to choose where you live and work carefully. Remember, your choices have eternal impact.

Lord, thank you for sending Light, Truth, and Grace into this dark world. Jesus, help me be a light for all who live in darkness. Use me as a vessel to invite and welcome others into your presence. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Personal Time with God

(Joy and Excitement)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/252%20chapt%2014%20dev%2019.mp3>

“Surely you have granted him unending blessings and made him glad with the joy of your presence.”

(Psalms 21:6, TNIV)

In the beginning, any relationship whether personal or professional has a unique and special character or attraction. I tell my clients that job search (interviewing, negotiating job offers, and hiring) is much like a courtship or old-fashioned “dating game.” Every step is critical, and one mistake can stop the process. Do you remember the dating steps? You get all dressed up and go to the party, dance with your date hoping you don’t step on their toes. The courtship ritual continues until over time you go your separate ways, or the mutual attraction leads to a marriage proposal. But the relationship does not end there. The honeymoon and the first 6 months are filled with a sense of adventure, discovery, and excitement. Then the reality of marriage settles in as you make the necessary adjustments and compromises required to build a new life as a couple and live in harmony on one accord. Many work relationships seem to follow a similar path of surprise, awkward adjustment, engagement, or detachment. We can become so numb and insensitive that we begin to take our boss or employees for granted. If we’re not careful this process of withdrawal not only happens at home and work, it can also happen in our spiritual relationship with God.

Child of God, have you lost all sense of excitement, joy, and desire for intimacy with God? Have you forgotten or taken for granted His love for you or that you are His beloved and precious child? If so, I encourage you to take command of your negative thoughts and emotions. Ask God to help you rekindle your excitement, anticipation, and passion for Him. Come into His presence with gladness, singing, dancing, praise, and thanksgiving. Let Him restore your soul. Decide today to dwell in a place of intimacy with God all the days of your life.

Lord, thank you for your presence in my life. Jesus, help me to know the joy that can only come by being with you. I command my soul to sing and dance before you. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Jealousy and Envy Can Kill

(Pull Up Poisonous Weeds)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/253%20chapt%2014%20dev%2020.mp3>

“As they danced, they sang: ‘Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands.’ Saul was very angry; this refrain galled him. ‘They have credited David with tens of thousands,’ he thought, ‘but me with only thousands. What more can he get but the kingdom?’ And from that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David.”
(1 Samuel 18:7-9, NIV)

Internal bickering, competition, jealousy, and envy have destroyed many partnerships, working relationships and teams. It usually starts with an “innocent prank or comment” that festers in the mind and heart of the recipient leading to strong feelings of mistreatment and resentment. Far too often, leaders and managers are aware but ignore the situation and fail to address it. As a result, the poison spreads and infects others. A simple refrain in a song of praise for David planted the seed and set the stage for Saul’s distrust of David. Now, jealousy, envy, anger, and resentment consumed their relationship. Jealousy and envy colored Saul’s perception of David from now on except for brief periods of remorse, shame, guilt, and condemnation. In the verses above, we see him once again acting like the frightened and timid young man who was hiding in the baggage just before he was anointed king. Only now, he is the king. By choosing to retreat to his jealousy and envy of David, he lost his anointing and undermined his destiny.

While jealousy and envy may start out small, once the seed is planted, it grows and becomes a treacherous weed with poisonous shoots that overtake, smother, and kill any good thing it touches. Jealousy and envy will cause you to act out your emotional insecurity and selfishness and attack those you have labeled as the source of your pain and hurt. Meanwhile the poisonous weed continues to flourish within your heart, mind and spirit killing you slowly.

Child of God, have you examined your heart lately? Have you planted poisonous weeds of jealousy and envy and allowed them to grow? If so, I encourage you to pull them up by the roots today. Repent and start with a new, clean, and pure heart. Don’t forsake God’s will and destiny for your life over a few seeds of jealousy and envy!

Lord, thank you for the penetrating power of your Word. Holy Spirit, remove all jealousy and envy from me and establish in me a clean and pure heart. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Effective Leaders See Clearly

(What Is Your Filter or Bias?)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/254%20chapt%2014%20dev%2021.mp3>

“You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.”

(Matthew 7:5, NASB)

I’m privileged to have been able to call the late Dr. Roger Birkman, Founder and Chairman of Birkman International, a fellow brother in Christ and personal friend. He was a true pioneer in the field of psychological testing and assessment and the application of psychological tools (the Birkman Method) in the marketplace. I remember the day he joined our Birkman Consultant’s training class and told the story of the time he spent hiding behind enemy lines in WWII. He spent his days reading countless books including the Bible. He smiled as he recounted the impact that today’s verse had on his thinking. As a pilot, he noticed during debriefing sessions, that every pilot on a bombing run had a different perception of what happened. They saw reality very differently. His fascination and curiosity with this behavior eventually led to his PhD dissertation and creation of the Birkman Method.

Many times, over the years I’ve had to deal with the reality of a senior executive who had almost no awareness or insight into the log that blocked his vision, but was intent on focusing on the speck of sawdust (weakness) he saw in the eye of a direct report or peer. I was blessed to have Management Intermetrics (360 Assessment and Feedback) and the Birkman Method in my toolbox to help them discover the truth and remove the log from their eye so they could see clearly. As Christians, we must carefully examine ourselves. We must ask the Holy Spirit to help us become aware of our own perceptions, biases, values, beliefs and needs and how they impact our relationships with others. We must be willing to remove the log that causes a blind spot and blocks our vision.

Child of God, ask God to remove any log you may have and to help you see clearly through His eyes.

*Lord, thank you for the penetrating power of your Word. Jesus, shine your light in me.
Remove every barrier so I may see myself and others through your eyes.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

God's Sprinkler System

(God Pours Out His Spirit on the World)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/255%20chapt%2014%20dev%2022.mp3>

“For I will pour out water on the thirsty land And streams on the dry ground; I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring And My blessing on your descendants; And they will spring up among the grass Like poplars by streams of water.”
(Isaiah 44:3-4, NASB)

Messages from the Office of the President carry weight and special meaning. In the U.S., we tune in to the Presidential Address. We listen to the State of the Union, the view from the Oval Office. In business, we get “All Employee Letters” or emails from the Office of the Chairman providing critical updates and informing us what to expect in the days ahead.

Since God is Founder, Creator and Chairman of Planet Earth, we should pay attention to this verse. God instructs Isaiah to declare that He will pour out water on the thirsty land... “I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring And My blessing on your descendants.” This message should encourage every Christian. It certainly encourages and comforts me since summertime in Houston is very hot and dry. Lawns and potted plants need watering every day. If you don’t water often the ground dries out and cracks, the grass and plants wither and die. If you want to keep them alive, then you must pour out water. It’s a real pain if you don’t have a sprinkler system. As Mama Esther (Karen’s mom) will attest, you can spend hours in the heat watering with an old-fashioned garden hose. Fortunately for every believer, God has provided a fully automated sprinkler system. God’s Sprinkler System pours out His Spirit and blessings on a regular basis. His system is simple and user-friendly (no dials or timers to set). It’s very comprehensive and covers every area of your life and the lives of your children. The system is fully functional whenever we walk in obedience. Obey God and His blessings and favor pour over you, giving nourishment to you and your children. Disobey God and the sprinklers stop.

Child of God, it’s your choice, you must decide. Summers can be long, hot, and dry. Will you make it through the summer?

*Lord, thank you for pouring out your Spirit, blessings and favor on my life and my family.
Jesus, help me remember the system is set on “automatic” as I
walk in faithful obedience with you. Through the blood
of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

God's 24-Hour Helpline

(Are You Sleepless in Seattle?)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/256%20chapt%2014%20dev%2023.mp3>

"My soul yearns for you in the night; in the morning my spirit longs for you. When your judgments come upon the earth, the people of the world learn righteousness."

(Isaiah 26:9, AMP)

You know you have it bad, really bad, when you're yearning for someone in the middle of the night. No matter how hard you try to sleep, thoughts of them keep racing through your mind. Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan (Sam and Annie) played out this scene in the 1993 hit movie, *Sleepless in Seattle*. Instead of tossing and turning in their beds, they would go to their computer and chat. Over time they shared more and more about themselves (their likes, dislikes, hopes, dreams, hurts, and disappointments). One day they discovered that in spite of the distance, and the fact they had never met face-to-face, they had fallen in love.

I'm certain that God had mixed feelings about this movie. On the one hand, He probably liked it and thought, "Now that people can see how this can work, even though they can't see me, they will finally understand that I too, am here for them day and night, eagerly waiting to talk. I can't wait to be with them and show them how much I love them." On the other hand, it probably made Him sad as He thought, "Why can't they believe I'm real and eager to chat?"

Like Sam and Annie, are you hurting and needing to talk? Do you need to tell God about your day? Run and grab your Bible in the middle of the night when you need company. Read God's love letters (written to you long before IM and chat). After you read His Words, cry out to Him. Believe it when He tells you to reach out anytime, day or night. Believe Him when He says He will always answer your call. Unlike Sam and Annie's story, this is real. God's Helpline is available 24-hours a day. He loves talking to His children and eagerly awaits your call.

Lord, thank you for always being there for me when I'm sleepless and need to talk. I'm comforted by the depth of your love for me. Teach me to seek you. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Going Before the Executive Committee

(Be Bold, Plead Your Case)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/257%20chapt%2014%20dev%2024.mp3>

“I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more. Review the past for me, let us argue the matter together; state the case for your innocence.”

(Isaiah 43:25-26, NIV)

Have you ever taken an issue all the way to the President’s office? Perhaps it was a proposal to increase production, cut costs, reduce accidents, and improve safety, build employee morale, or resolve an employee grievance or complaint.

I’ve had many of these opportunities as a Management Consultant and Executive Coach, but one of my first and most memorable was as a college student. During my senior year, I got a ticket for running a red light. I protested to the officer, but he kept on writing the ticket. Upset and determined, I set out to prove my innocence. I took the following steps: (1) measured the intersection (2) collected data using a stopwatch to time the duration of the yellow light (3) calculated the distance a car travels based on human response time and the speed limit (4) made numerous calculations and prepared my findings. After 2 weeks of preparation, I was ready to go before the judge. When he asked for my plea, I boldly declared my innocence. I proceeded to present the facts I gathered and closed with this statement, “Based on these facts your Honor, I’m sure you can see I’m not guilty of this charge. I respectfully ask that you dismiss my case.” Suddenly I realized the judge was smiling. He looked at me and said, “I’m impressed with your efforts, and I find you not guilty!” He then asked me several personal questions and I answered each one. He concluded with, “Good luck in school Mr. Selman. I’m sure you will do well.” Looking back, I can see that God was preparing me to come before Him and the Heavenly Court to plead my case, “Eternity in Heaven or Hell?”

Child of God, I encourage you to go confidently and boldly before the throne and plead your innocence based the blood of Jesus and God’s grace. Expect God to be smiling as He says, “I find you not guilty.”

Lord, thank you for the power of the blood of Jesus. Teach me to come boldly before your throne thanking you for your grace and mercy. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Do You Aim for Perfection?

(Look Up and Reach for the Stars)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/258%20chapt%2014%20dev%2025.mp3>

“Finally, brothers, good-bye. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.”

(2 Corinthians 13:11, NIV)

The world encourages us to be comfortable and tolerate mediocrity, that doing just enough to get by, getting a passing grade or meeting the minimum requirement is just fine. As Christians, called to a higher standard, shouldn't operating in a spirit of excellence be our norm? Apostle Paul, intensely passionate and bold, is a man after my own heart. Like Paul, I've always encouraged my clients to aim for perfection. Several years ago, as I wrote a sentence in a marketing piece I was about to send, I struggled to describe myself. Finally, my thoughts became clear, and I wrote, "I demand excellence." The truth of that statement settled in. I demand excellence from myself and my clients. I coach, mentor, support, and encourage them in their pursuit of excellence (perfection). I explain that as Christians, we can turn to the Gospels and read about the life of Jesus and see how He modeled excellence. I encourage my clients to think, act, speak, love, confront others, pray, and live by faith like Jesus. I'm quick to explain that without Him we can never reach our goal. I point out that when we rely on and trust in Him, and allow His grace to rest on us, perfection is possible.

Child of God, ask yourself if you're giving your very best at work and at home? Are you striving and stretching to grow and develop or hiding out in the shadows of mediocrity? Do you show up and give all you have or just go through the motions and watch the clock? If you went before Jesus today, would your faith walk speak for itself or would your life be a picture of good intentions, failed attempts, and endless excuses? I join Paul in encouraging you, begging you, to aim for excellence (perfection). In Jesus, it is possible.

Lord, thank you for showing us a model of excellence and perfection. Jesus, teach me to strive for excellence in all I do and say, knowing that in you, I am made perfect.

Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

A Loyal Employee

(Can Others Count on Your Faithfulness?)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/258%20chapt%2014%20dev%2026.mp3>

“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been Faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’”

(Matthew 25:21, NIV)

Loyalty and faithfulness are foundational building blocks that establish trust. Trust seems like a faded memory from a distant world of both work and family relationships. I remember when companies were loyal and trusted employees and employees were loyal and trustworthy. Marriages lasted a lifetime. Today, it’s rare to meet a person who keeps his word and honors a promise or commitment. When it happens, we’re surprised, especially when a long period of time has passed. Strong feelings of selfishness and entitlement run rampant in our society. Courts are filled with lawsuits among former business partners, feuding neighbors, doctors and patients, and family members arguing over the merits of a parent’s last will. Sadly, even among Christians 50% of marriages end in divorce. We easily and carelessly discard relationships and things we own. Why? Because so few of us understand stewardship, practice it, or would receive the feedback we see in this verse.

As Christians, we must come to understand that God owns everything. We’re simply stewards, temporary caretakers of our bodies, talents, gifts, resources, even this planet we call home. It’s time we wake up and ask ourselves: Am I taking care of God’s possessions? Have I been a loyal and faithful (trustworthy) steward? Do I regularly seek God’s direction as to what He wants me to do with His stuff?” In the midst of this self-examination, find comfort in the fact that God is faithful, even when we are not.

Child of God, I encourage you to be loyal and faithful in every area of your life. Operate in a spirit of excellence. Make a commitment to be on time (early is better), refuse to bend the rules or take advantage of others. Show God, your spouse and children, boss, and coworkers that you can be counted on. Choose to live according to His Word and become a faithful steward over all that God has entrusted to you.

Lord, thank you for your faithfulness. Jesus, teach me to be a good and faithful steward at all times. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Your Face Is always on God's Mind

(God's Tattoo)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/260%20chapt%2014%20dev%2027.mp3>

*"Behold, I have indelibly imprinted (tattooed a picture of) you on the palm of each of My hands;
[O Zion] your walls are continually before Me."
(Isaiah 49:16, AMP)*

Many industries and companies have very strict requirements and policies about body tattoos and piercings. Most require that an employee's tattoos are covered and not visible to public view. In some industries, entertainment, and professional sports especially, tattoos are widely accepted, even the norm. International travel allows you to see that the practice of adorning the human body with tattoos and piercings has been going on for centuries. Various cultures have used tattoos to signify everything from tribal origin and status, marital status, group identity, idol worship, rites of passage, personal courage or bravery, and victory in battle. We live in a culture that embraces tattoos and body piercings. Go to any mall or football stadium where there is a large crowd and you will see hearts filled with the name of a first love; an endless stream of designs, animals, gang symbols, slogans, signs, and nicknames. While most tattoos last a lifetime, a common practice in some cultures is to paint designs or images on the hands with henna. The advantage of this procedure is that it is temporary and easily removed. Even "permanent" tattoos can be removed but it is a costly and painful process.

Where did all this start? This verse tells us that it all started with God. Your image is imprinted on the palm of God's hands as a reminder to Him of His love for you. As a Christian, we should be encouraged and comforted knowing that our tattoo on God's hand will never wash off, be removed, or go out of style, and God will never grow tired of looking at you. Isaiah tells us that God is constantly reminded of you. Your face is always on His mind!

Child of God, I encourage you to copy God's behavior. Ask the Holy Spirit to imprint the face of Jesus Christ on your heart, mind, and spirit. Wear His tattoo proudly for all to see.

Lord, thank you for imprinting me on your heart and on your hands. Jesus, the image of your face has been tattooed on my heart, mind, and spirit. I will never grow tired of looking into your face. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Jesus Is Your High Priest

(A Recommendation that Lasts for Eternity)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/261%20chapt%2014%20dev%2028.mp3>

“So too Christ (the Messiah) did not exalt Himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed and exalted by Him Who said to Him, You are My Son; today I have begotten You; [Psa 2:7] As He says also in another place, You are a Priest [appointed] forever after the order (with the rank) of Melchizedek.” [Psa 110:4]
(Hebrews 5:5-6, AMP)

In the business world bosses are supposed to defend you and take up for you with senior management. Most of the time, former bosses will even come to your aid and serve as a willing reference and vouch for you when you are in transition and interviewing with a new potential employer. Good bosses don't leave you defenseless. They go to bat for you.

In the first verse of CHAPTER 5, we find these words, “FOR EVERY high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in things relating to God, to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.” In the verse above, Paul tells us that Jesus was appointed our High Priest forever. In His role as our High Priest, Jesus gave us: His living Word; the gift of salvation, gifts of the Spirit, His grace; an example on how to live and treat others; protection when He prayed to God for us; keys to the kingdom of heaven (divine power and might); everything we need to overcome Satan and the powers of darkness; victory on the cross and destruction of strongholds; power to perform miracles, heal the sick, and cast out demons; the blessing connection when we offer our tithes. Above all this, Jesus, our High Priest, made the ultimate sacrifice on the cross on our behalf. He willingly endured humiliation, torture, and crucifixion on the cross and shed His blood for us. Jesus, who was without sin, paid the full penalty for our sins. He stood before Satan in hell and God in heaven and defended us.

Child of God, have you spent time lately with Jesus, your High Priest? Have you taken advantage of the gifts and sacrifices He made for you? Jesus has already gone before God for you. He has vouched for you and His recommendation lasts for all eternity. Jesus is the only reference you will ever need.

Lord, thank you for sending Jesus to stand before you on my behalf. Jesus, you are my High Priest. Draw me into a deeper relationship with you today. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Fight the Good Fight

(What Is Your Record of Wins vs. Losses?)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/262%20chapt%2014%20dev%2029.mp3>

“Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”

(1 Timothy 6:12, NASB)

What is your record of wins and losses, accomplishments, and failures? What would former bosses and coworkers say about you? Are you known for being courageous and bold? Do you show a history of willingness and openness to face change and confront the unknown with confidence and expectant hope? Do you volunteer for new assignments, tasks, and challenges? Whenever your boss announces a change do you grumble, complain, and resist or readily embrace it?

Why do so many Christians seem to think that our life will be easy and trouble free? Why do we lack understanding of the need for spiritual training as a way to get spiritually fit and strong? Why do we cave in, give up and quit when life gets difficult? Why are we spiritual wimps and run when the warfare begins? Child of God, you have been complacent and easy-going too long. Now it is time to stand up and fight! It's time to start a disciplined regimen of intensive spiritual training, get on a strict daily diet of God's Word and prayer, renew your mind, and change your thinking and behavior. If we ever hope to win the fight of faith in the marketplace, we must subject our bodies to a strict routine of holiness and learn to say "No" to self. We must: be committed to walk in love with God and man; expect a fight on a daily basis; fight and win over fear, doubt and unbelief; fight and win over our emotions and do what is right, because it's right, even when we don't feel like it; fight and win over every temptation, test and trail; fight and win over Satan and forces of darkness; fight and win over lack (8) fight and win over sickness and disease.

I encourage you to confess out loud, "With Christ in my corner, I fight and win all the time, no matter what!"

Lord, thank you for Jesus' victory on the cross. Jesus, I am encouraged by your victory over Satan. Give me courage, boldness, and strength to fight. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Follow Leaders Who Walk with a Limp!

(The Price of Transformation)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/263%20chapt%2014%20dev%2030.mp3>

“And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel [the face of God], saying, For I have seen God face to face, and my life is spared and not snatched away. And as he passed Penuel [Peniel], the sun rose upon him, and he was limping because of his thigh.”

(Genesis 32:30-31, AMP)

Leadership requires an unforgiving price, and most leaders bear the scars to prove it. For Jacob, the price of transformation from a schemer, supplanter, trickster, and swindler into a fearless, faithful, and obedient servant leader was not a scar but a limp. As we read the verses leading up to this passage, we see that Jacob wrestled with an angel of God. Jacob refused to let him go until the angel blessed him. The angel touched him on the thigh and dislocated his hip. In a moment, Jacob was transformed. He became Israel – one who contended with God and prevailed. Forever after, Jacob, now known as Israel, would walk with a limp.

As a leader, boss, and husband, I have scars that linger, yes, even a limp that tells the story of my trials and tests. I have learned to value these reminders of what I went through and the lessons I learned. I praise God for the lessons. Child of God, I encourage you to reflect on the scars that you carry and the price that you paid for a new life. As you grow as a servant leader, you must be willing to give up personal pride, ego, selfishness, fear, and unbelief and replace it with humility, love and compassion, faith, belief, and self-sacrifice.

I encourage you to examine the leaders in your workplace today. Are they holding on tight and wrestling with worldly choices or have they been blessed and changed forever by God’s mighty touch? Look closely to determine what scars or visible marks they carry. What price have they paid for transformation? I encourage you to beware of any leader in business or ministry that does not walk with a limp!

Lord, thank you for transformation. Jesus, change me and remove all that is not pleasing in your sight. Give me a new name, clean and pure heart, and renewed spirit.

Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Yes, and Amen

(Power in Agreement)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/264%20chapt%2014%20dev%2031.mp3>

“For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by me and Silas and Timothy, was not ‘Yes’ and ‘No,’ but in him it has always been ‘Yes.’ For no matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ. And so through him the ‘Amen’ is spoken by us to the glory of God.”
(2 Corinthians 1:19-20, NIV)

Understanding and agreement are powerful. Boards of Directors aim for understanding and agreement to oversee daily operations and guide the complex process of company mergers or acquisitions. Executives and managers aim for understanding and agreement from employees on profitability, production, quality, and safety goals and objectives. Supervisors aim for understanding and agreement on work assignments, schedules, and priorities. Employees aim for understanding and agreement with each other so they can work as a team and meet expectations placed on them by supervisors.

In these verses Paul urges us to add “Amen” to Jesus’ “Yes.” With Jesus the answer was always “Yes.” He never wavered or said, “Maybe.” He never said, “Yes,” when He meant, “No.” He never hesitated to say, “Yes” and perform God’s will. He never said, “I’m too busy. Sorry, I have to go, I’m running late.” To the lost, sick, blind, lame, hungry, poor, and needy, Jesus always says, “Yes.”

Are you in the habit of saying, “Yes” to every prompting from the Holy Spirit? Are you learning to imitate Jesus by looking for the needy wherever you go? Do you stop to give encouragement, comfort, or prayer to total strangers? Do you seek opportunities to add, “Amen” to every “Yes?” What does “Amen” really mean? Is it simply, “That’s it, end of the sermon or prayer?” It’s important to understand that it means “it is so, so be it.” We’re expressing agreement with God and each other when we say, “Amen.”

Child of God, I encourage you to ask God to show you the “Yes and Amen” moments in your life. Say, “Yes and Amen,” to God’s will for your life. Like Jesus, always say, “Yes” to God and end your conversations with a loud, “Amen.”

*Lord, thank you for your Word. Jesus, teach me to be like you in all I do and speak,
“Yes, and Amen,” to the Holy Spirit that I may honor and glorify you.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Jesus and Branding

(Do You Wear His Brand?)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/265%20chapt%2014%20dev%2032.mp3>

“From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus.”
(Galatians 6:17, NASB)

Branding takes many forms of expression in our world today. Simply look at body tattoos and piercings, designer-label clothes, the cars we drive, friends we hang out with, where we live, and what we do for fun as evidence. In the world of work, branding is expressed through company logos, signs, uniforms, caps, decals, product packaging, and product design. Steve Jobs, a master of branding, insisted that all Apple products have a certain look and feel. In this verse, Paul tells us about his own experience with branding, as his body bore the marks of torture and abuse, he received for preaching the gospel.

Christians love signs and symbols and happily endorse the “Christian” brand. We proudly wear crosses on our neck and wrist. We put bumper stickers on our cars. We wear our John 3:16 T-shirt. What disturbs me about all this behavior is that it seems we’re more committed to carrying or wearing signs than we are with being a sign. Have you been branded and bear the marks of Christ? Can other people look at you and see Christ in you? Are you a source of light in the world? Do you walk in love with the person at work who is irritating and annoying? Do you complain or gossip about others who are struggling, or do you encourage them and pray for them? Do you speak and act like Jesus?

Child of God, I encourage you to walk in love at all times even with people who are difficult to love. Turn away from selfishness and give others the advantage. Put others first and be a servant leader and lead like Jesus. Read, study, and obey God’s Word. Protect Jesus’ brand by forgiving easily. Wear the mark of Jesus. Be a bright light in a dark world. Live and walk in Him and be a sign to others!

*Lord, thank you for the blood of Jesus. Jesus, your blood serves as a stamp of ownership that I belong to you. Teach me to wear your mark at all times that I may be a sign.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

What Are Your Communication Goals?

(Think, Say, Do)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/mp3/266%20chapt%2014%20dev%2033.mp3>

*“But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart
and a good conscience and a sincere faith.”*

(2 Timothy 1:5, NASB)

As a Coach, Speaker, and Author, I know how important it is that you identify your communication goals before you have a one-on-one, step in front of a crowd, or write a sentence. I’ve found it useful to teach my clients how to identify their communication goals. It’s not real complicated. In fact, it’s rather easy to establish your goals, by taking a few minutes to ask three basic questions: (1) What do you want people to think and say as they walk away (Mind)? (2) What do you want them to feel (Heart)? (3) What do you want them to do after the conversation or presentation (Action)? Once you’re clear about your goals, then you can create your basic talking points so that you meet your goals.

We know that the disciples endured hardship, persecution, and death to preach the Gospel to all who would listen. Above, Paul tells us their three-part goal for their instruction: love from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith. The disciples shared the life-changing teachings of Jesus, and followed the promptings of the Holy Spirit. They taught the importance of renewing your mind with God’s Word and obeying Jesus’ commandment to walk in love (mind). They taught that living in the Spirit will produce peace, contentment, joy, happiness and freedom from guilt and condemnation (heart). They preached so that sinners might believe and accept Christ as their Savior and walk in faith (action). By addressing these three (thoughts, feelings, and actions), the Gospel is alive today 2,000 years after Jesus died on the cross and millions have been saved.

Child of God, have you allowed the Gospel of Jesus Christ to change the way you think, speak and act? Jesus and His disciples did their part. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you do your part. Decide today as eternity is waiting on your answer!

*Lord, thank you for loving us so much you sent your Son to die on the cross for our sins. Jesus, teach me each day to renew my mind, have peace in my heart and to walk in faith.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

A Final Word of Encouragement

<https://godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-152.mp3>

I want to thank you for joining me on this journey. I salute your willingness to spend time in God's Word and your efforts to integrate His Word into every area of your daily life – especially the workplace. I pray that you have discovered many rich and wonderful things about God, yourself, and your relationship to Him as you read these pages. While the journey is different for each of us, He assures us that He will never leave us or forsake us. Continue to put God first, start each day in His Word and spend time with Him in intimate fellowship, prayer, and thanksgiving. Allow His Word and His grace to manifest in your life. Listen to God's voice and hear His call. When you hear that small voice of the Holy Spirit, be quick to obey. Rely on His abundant grace for all He calls you to do. I pray that you have started to examine your heart and that you are beginning to see yourself and others through God's eyes, His mind, and His heart. Refuse to let the political turmoil here at home and abroad, forecasts of economic downturns and market declines, corporate layoffs, random acts of terrorism or violence cause you to walk in fear, doubt and unbelief and withdraw from God and the world around you. Draw close to God and engage with others with the love of Christ.

Child of God, strive to be a light, source of hope and encouragement to others. Look into the eyes, heart, and soul of people you pass on the street. Smile and greet them with respect and kindness. Develop a habit of expressing love and compassion to everyone around you. Be present and engaged in the moment. Adopt a "PRAY NOW PRAY BOLDLY" mindset and habit. Be Christ's Ambassador in the world. Serve others so that they will see Christ in you. Remember, we are all a work in progress so quit expecting people to be perfect (the way you want them to be). How they treat you is not your business. How you treat them must be your focus and priority. Ask God to give you the spiritual eyes to see the hurt and fear that others carry and to reveal ways you can love them right where they are and make a difference in their lives. Quit judging and being critical. Allow God's love for you and in you to come out. Be loving and compassionate, accepting, and forgiving. Trust God to use His Word and the Holy Spirit to change you, mold and shape you into His likeness. As you experience deeper levels of intimacy with God, breakthroughs, and revelations, be sure to share your testimonies and praise reports with others so that they may be encouraged. I invite you to share them with us. We would love to hear from you.

Special Note: While this volume was written for believers to help them grow in their faith walk, if you have never accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, then the Prayer of Salvation is for you. Simply read, declare this prayer, and believe in your heart and you will be saved. When you do, angels and saints in heaven will rejoice. In closing, I declare over you and yours, "The Lord bless you and watch, guard, and keep you; The Lord make His face to shine upon and enlighten you and be gracious (kind, merciful, and giving favor) to you; The Lord lift up His [approving] countenance upon you and give you peace (tranquility of heart and life continually)."

The Sinner's Prayer for Salvation

Lord Jesus, this is my simple prayer to you. I know that I am a sinner and that I often fall short of the glory of God. No longer will I close the door when I hear You knocking. By faith, I gratefully receive Your gift of salvation. I'm ready to trust You as my Lord and Savior. Thank You, Lord Jesus, for coming to Earth. I believe You are the Son of God who died on the cross for my sins and rose from the dead on the third day. Thank You for Your forgiveness of sins and for giving me the gift of eternal life. I invite you Jesus to come into my heart and be my Savior. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Note of Encouragement: PRAISE GOD. Congratulations. Your decision and actions have changed your life for all eternity. Now when you pass from this life, as a spirit being, you will join all the saints, angels, and heavenly host, and come before the throne of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. I urge you to: seek counsel from other Christians about a new church home that teaches the Gospel of Grace; visit several churches and allow the Holy Spirit to tell you when you are at the right place (if you are married, I suggest you take your spouse with you; meet with your new pastor and get baptized; go to www.Biblegateway.com and explore different Bibles if you don't have one (I recommend a Study Bible (NLT: New Living Translation or NIV: New International Version)); commit to reading and studying your Bible several times a week; explore www.TBN.org and get to know different pastors, messages, and delivery styles from the comfort of your home (I recommend the following Pastors: Creflo & Taffi Dollar, Andrew Womack, Robert Morris, Bishop TD Jakes, Joyce Meyer, and Jentezen Franklin; allow the Holy Spirit to teach you about the importance of praise / worship / tithing / and serving; be open and willing to the voice and direction ask the Holy Spirit as He creates new ways of think and behaving. You can access our website (www.GarySelman.com) for free resources to help you grow spiritually and listen to our audiobook messages in Volume II Your New Life in Jesus Christ on our dedicated site www.GodEncouragesMe.com.

Fellow Saint, be prepared for change. Over time your old life will pass away, and God will make you a new creation. I look forward to seeing you in heaven!

Psalm 91 Daily Faith Confession

(Security of the One Who Trusts in the Lord)

As the Chief Prayer Officer of your home, family, or work team in this time of darkness and strife, it is important that you stand on God's Word and His unwavering promises. Now, more than ever you must use your mouth and activate your divine authority and power. It is time that you create the habit of declaring God's Word and His faithful promises over your life daily. I have adapted *Psalm 91 (AMP)* and turned it into a *Daily Faith Confession*. **I urge you to speak this out loud daily and watch as God blesses and protects you and yours.**

"I declare that I dwell in the shelter of the Most High

I declare that I always remain secure *and* rest in the shadow of the Almighty whose power no enemy can withstand

I declare that I say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom I trust with great confidence, and on whom I rely!"

I declare that He saves me and my family from the trap of the fowler, And from deadly pestilence.

I declare that He covers me *and* completely protects me and my family with His pinions, And under His wings I find refuge;

I declare that His faithfulness is a shield and a wall.

I declare that I will not be afraid of the terror of night, or the arrow that flies by day, or the pestilence that stalks in darkness, or the destruction and sudden death that lays waste at noon.

I declare that A thousand may fall at my side, And ten thousand at my right hand, But danger will not come near me.

I declare that I am only be a spectator as I look on with my eyes And witness the divine repayment of the wicked as I watch safely from the shelter of the Most High.

I declare that because I have made the LORD, who is my refuge, Even the Most High, my dwelling place, No evil will befall me, No plague will come near my house.

I declare that He commands His angels in regard to me, To protect *and* defend *and* guard me in all my ways of obedience and service.

I declare that they lift me up in their hands, So that I do not even strike my foot against a stone.

I declare that I tread upon the lion and cobra; the young lion and serpent I will trample under my feet.

I declare that because I have set my love on Him, He saves me;

I declare that He sets me [securely] on high, because I know His name, I confidently trust and rely on Him, knowing that He never abandons me, no, never!

I declare that when I call Him, He answers me;

I declare that He is with me in times of trouble;

I declare that He rescues me and honors me and satisfies me with a long life.

I declare that He will let me see His salvation.

It is in the blood and in the name of Jesus I pray, AMEN.

I declare that I am Psalm 91 equipped. It is well with me and my house.”

Appendix

About the Author



Gary has spent over forty-five years as an Entrepreneur, Consultant, Executive Coach and Author pursuing his calling – serving, teaching, and encouraging others. Over the span of his business career, God showed Gary favor and opened doors for him to speak at many professional groups and ministries in Houston. He was nominated by Ernst and Young as Entrepreneur of the Year. God blessed his company three times with a position on the “Houston 100

List of Fastest Growing Companies.” While his business life prospered, his personal life as a Prodigal Son, separated from God, led to seven years of adversity and trials. He experienced an intense time of brokenness following a divorce, financial crisis including personal bankruptcy, and year-long depression with thoughts of suicide.

In 2006, God answered his prayers and brought Karen into his life, and they married a year later. An extreme five-year period of pruning and purging began. God began to give Gary an intense hunger and thirst for His Word and desire for an intimate relationship with Christ. These devotional books are the result of Gary’s time with the Lord in the early morning hours over 13 months in late 2010 - 2011. God orchestrated a series of events leading to Gary and Karen’s assignment to serve on the team that planted World Changers Church – Houston, part of World Changers Church International (Creflo Dollar Ministries) under the direction of Pastors Archie and Melissa Collins. In his eleven years of ministry experience, Gary served in leadership roles in Operations, Career and Employment, Vision Keepers, Altar and Prayer, and Children’s Ministries.

In 2012, he and Karen founded First Call Advisory Group LLC. God used Karen’s gifts and talents to create the anointed Scripture Art on the website. As a modern-day Barnabas, Gary uses autobiographical Daily Devotionals, “Doing Business God’s Way” Blogs, Books, Kingdom Life Study Lessons, Scripture Art, and Speaking Engagements to educate, equip, and encourage Christians to develop a Biblical Worldview, grow spiritually, and conduct business God’s Way. Gary’s mission statement serves as both an encouragement to others and a personal call to action. . .

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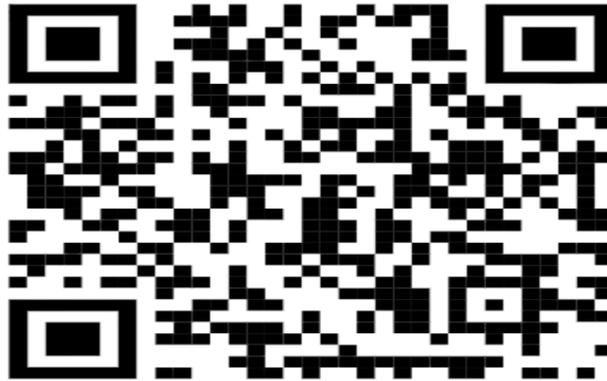
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I dedicate this Volumes to you, our Kingdom Partners, and want to express my heartfelt appreciation and praise for your commitment to help Christians integrate faith into every arena of their lives especially their work life. In approximately 460 B. C., God used Mordecai to warn his niece (Queen Esther) of an impending threat by Haman to kill God's people. Queen Esther took immediate action and God's people were saved. Today, I echo Mordecai's words to you, *"For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?"* (Esther 4:14, NIV) Together, we can take God's Word, Grace, Truth and Light to the world and leave a mark that cannot be erased. **Help me achieve our Kingdom Goal God gave me: Give away 1 million FREE copies a year for 7 years.**



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