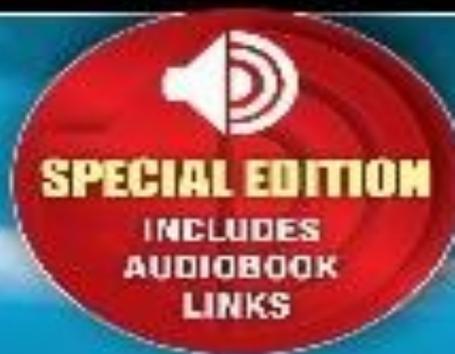


Devotionals for Christians in the Workplace

Arise, shine, for your light
has risen upon you. Arise, shine,
for the Lord has risen upon
you. The glory of the Lord has
risen upon me. Arise, shine,
for your light has risen upon
you.



Volume

Arise SHINE

Be Encouraged

Your New Life
in Jesus Christ

GARY L. SELMAN

Devotionals for Christians in the Workplace

Arise, SHINE,
Be Encouraged

SPECIAL EDITION
INCLUDES AUDIOBOOK LINKS

Volume II
Your New Life in Jesus Christ

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Arise, SHINE, Be Encouraged SPECIAL EDITION INCLUDES AUDIOBOOK LINKS
Volume II Your New Life in Jesus Christ

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ISBN 978-0-9977443-3-0

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Cover design by Ken Fraser.

*“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

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 Mama Esther

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

I dedicate this book to Esther Thomas Jones, or as we call her, “Mama or Queen Esther”, Karen’s 89-year-old mother. I felt your genuine love and acceptance from the first day I met you. Whenever I tell people that we live with you, many ask how that is going and do we get along? I always smile and say, “Absolutely, I love her, and she loves me. She is the mother I never had and always wanted.”

I see you more and more each day in your daughter, my sweetheart and wife. Thank you for opening your arms and your heart to me and for loving me as your son. You have taught me how to love, be loved and live in family. Our family times are always filled with great conversation and lots of laughter. You shared your love for gardening with me, taught me to speak to my plants and tell them to grow.

As a fellow author and lover of words, I have found great enjoyment in our conversations about God’s Word and the work He has called us to do. I recall all the times that I read my Daily Devotionals to you, read, and proofed your manuscript, and we talked about our love for God and His Word. I praise God that He chose me to help you bring your 20-year labor of love, “The King’s English: Everyday Language from the Bible” to completion. I know your book will serve as a rich legacy and bless many just as your spoken words and gentle spirit have blessed me. Mama, as I tell our story in many of these messages, I pray that others will come to know you and love you as I have loved you!

*Yours always,
Sunny Boy*

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 God's truth that benefit you and me. I love the way Gary has segmented his messages by theme and put them in chapters by theme. 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

Host, Culture Shapers Summit, Washington DC, March 2019

Preface

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

Like Volume I, this collection of devotionals was written over a rich period of revelation and time with the Lord from October 2010 - November 2011. After six years of online global distribution, I was led to publish Volume I (217 Daily Devotionals) in November 2016. In June 2017, God graciously opened a door with iDisciple and their audience of 1.3 million global subscribers. I am deeply humbled that my work became part of a growing collection of over 65,000 sermons, devotionals, articles, blogs, podcasts, Christian music, and movies. I agreed to provide my “Doing Business God’s Way” Blogs plus both Volumes of *Arise, SHINE, Be Encouraged Daily Devotionals* (365 devotionals). Once the team loaded Volume II, God elevated us on their platform by featuring my work in the Daily Devotionals category. I praise God that He is enabling Christians across the globe who are hungry for His Word to access my Blogs and Daily Devotionals on this amazing platform. Join us and see how God is using technology and social media to take His Word, Truth, Grace and Hope to a lost and hungry world. You can use these links: www.idisciple.org and www.idisciple.org/devotional/arise-shine-be-encouraged. This Volume (148 devotionals) was written for both the unbeliever who is searching for answers and curious about Jesus, and the mature believer who desires a deeper and more intimate walk with Christ.

In October 2018, God graciously expanded our sphere of kingdom impact by connecting me with an anointed man of God named Frederick Gray (see *Special Tribute to Frederick Gary*). Drawing upon his four decades of radio broadcasting and recording experience, Frederick skillfully recorded Volume I. It provides almost 10 hours of listening time. Midyear 2019, we took Volume II into the recording studio. You can hear both volumes (all 365 messages and 17 hours of listening time) on our dedicated site: www.GodEncouragesMe.com. This site supports the audio links in these volumes. My initial research into the devotional book market suggested that products were either in written or audible format. We all know people have unique preferences or learning styles. In my own experience as the author, I was shocked when I discovered how much I was drawn to the audio messages once they were recorded. I seldom read my written copy because the audio messages speak directly to my heart and to my particular learning style. This behavioral preference was reinforced in my PRAY NOW PRAY BOLDLY Weekly Prayer calls. I noticed that some prayer partners read the messages before the calls, while others listened. I took this discovery to the Lord in prayer, and asked the Holy Spirit what to do. This set, “SPECIAL EDITION Daily Devotionals with Audio Links” is the answer He 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 God’s Word says, **“faith comes by hearing.”** I praise God for the opportunity to be a vessel of revelation truth, hope and encouragement. I pray these devotionals will draw you into a deeper level of intimacy with Christ, and that you will . . . ***Get Understanding and Be Encouraged!***

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, almost ten years later, his desire and my fervent prayer, were 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 must first acknowledge my Heavenly Father, Almighty God and my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for the divine calling 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. Next, I want to express my love and appreciation to my wife, best friend, sweetheart and Godsend, Karen, for your love and faithfulness. You are truly a Proverbs 31 wife and rich blessing from God.

To all of my Brothers and Sisters in Christ who participated in the PRAY NOW PRAY BOLDLY (PNPB) Weekly Prayer Calls, I salute you and praise God for your desire to take God to work! To my PNPB Co-Founders, Victor Hanna, Allan Witkowski, and Colin Millar, I thank God for you every day for the abundant blessings you have brought into my life. To my faithful WWW clients: John Simmons, Bill Simmons, Dennis Weisgerber, Garcia Major, Eddie Oliver, Josh Ellis, and Brian Nielsen, I thank God for you. It was a privilege and honor to serve you as your Coach. To my inner circle of friends and fellow saints including Les Selman, Lionel Sims, Keith Henson, Angela Roubique, Pam Lilly, Dick Harris, Quincy Hodge, and Michele Sabino, I praise God for your loving friendship, support, and encouragement.

To my LinkedIn connections and iDisciple staff and followers, I love you and want you to know that you are God's beloved. To my SPECIAL EDITION and www.GodEncouragesMe.com listening audience, I salute you for your desire to honor God by integrating your faith into your daily work life. I send a deep and heartfelt appreciation to my Sister in Christ, Cathy Phillips, who rescued me with invaluable assistance with the manuscript when I really needed it.

Finally, to all of you who will read these pages or listen to the recorded messages, I salute you and applaud your pursuit of God and His Word and your desire to integrate faith and work.

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Section One

Jesus Brings Good News to Mankind

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-X1.mp3>

“The Spirit of the Lord [is] upon Me, because He has anointed Me [the Anointed One, the Messiah] to preach the good news (the Gospel) to the poor; He has sent Me to announce release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to send forth as delivered those who are oppressed [who are downtrodden, bruised, crushed, and broken down by calamity], To proclaim the accepted and acceptable year of the Lord [the day when salvation and the free favors of God profusely abound].

[Isa. 61:1, 2.]” (Luke 4:18-19, AMP)

“I have loved you, [just] as the Father has loved Me; abide in My love [continue in His love with Me]. If you keep My commandments [if you continue to obey My instructions], you will abide in My love and live on in it, just as I have obeyed My Father's commandments and live on in His love.”

(John 15:9-10, AMP)



Chapter 1
The DNA and Character of Jesus



The King's Arrival

(A Humble Entrance for a Humble Man)

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

"The next day a vast crowd of those who had come to the Passover Feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him. And as they went, they kept shouting, Hosanna! Blessed is He and praise to Him Who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel! [Ps. 118:26.] And Jesus, having found a young donkey, rode upon it, [just] as it is written in the Scriptures, Do not fear, O Daughter of Zion! Look! Your King is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt! [Zech. 9:9.]"

(John 12: 12-15, AMP)

Jesus turned the world upside down and constantly defied worldly customs, habits, and expectations, especially those of the Jewish priesthood and religious community. In this passage, we see Jesus riding into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey. The crowds greeted Him with shouts of "Hosanna", which means "save now or please save." Jesus, the "King of the Jews" or "Messiah" had arrived. His arrival was accompanied by crowds of excited fans and believers who threw palm branches along His path. Yes, Jesus rode on the back of a donkey. That's it – no more fanfare. There were no gold-plated chariots pulled by teams of prancing highly decorated horses, a royal guard of angels marching in full armor, accompanying dignitaries or city officials waving at the crowd, or formal announcements and pre-planned activities designated in His honor. He came just the way He was supposed to come so that scripture might be fulfilled – riding on the back of a donkey.

It really doesn't matter how He came. What matters is that He came. He came to preach the Gospel (good news) that we might have salvation. He came to redeem us and reconcile us with God. He came to teach and show us how to express love and forgiveness. He came to save us from sin and bondage. He came to give us abundance, wholeness, health, peace, and joy. As a Christian, I am comforted to know that Jesus Christ, our King's arrival is still celebrated after 2,000 years. His arrival, life, death on the cross, and resurrection changed the world for millions of believers for all eternity.

Child of God, aren't you glad He came?

Lord, thank you for Jesus' arrival that Scripture might be fulfilled. Jesus, I kneel before You as the King, Savior, and Lord of my life. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Counted with the Lawless

(Jesus Took on the Guilt and Sins of the World)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-3.mp3>

“They crucified two robbers with him, one on his right and one on his left, [and the scripture was fulfilled which says, ‘He was counted with the lawless ones.’]”

(Mark 15:27-28, NIV)

Here we see Jesus in the final moments of His life on earth before He is lifted up to heaven to sit at the right hand of God. Jesus Christ, the Messiah, Son of Almighty God is hanging on a cross between two criminals. The two men who flanked Him were thieves and deserved their fate. What was Jesus’ crime? Did He assault or harm any man, or ever lie or misrepresent Himself? Did He secretly amass great fortunes from the ministry coffers, or use His fame to defraud and take advantage of His followers? Did He commit acts of indiscretion with anyone, or betray public trust for His own personal benefit? Did He resort to alcohol as a way of dealing with the pressure, or ever injure anyone during His acts of miraculous healing? Did He manipulate and instruct people to do evil in His name through the use of evil spirits, or commit libel or slander against the Sadducees and Pharisees? Did He persuade people to sell everything they owned to make himself rich, or embezzle funds that were intended for the kingdom? To all of these, the answer is “No.”

What did Jesus do that led to His fate? He came to save the world from disobedience and sin, darkness and evil, lack and hunger, sickness, and death. To fulfill Scripture, Jesus was counted with the lawless and hung on a cross. He became a curse and took on the sin and guilt of the world. He died that every man might have eternal salvation by simply accepting Him as Savior and Lord.

I praise God that Jesus was raised from the dead and that He is counted holy, and in Him I am counted righteous and holy. Do you know Jesus? Have you accepted Him as your Lord and Savior? Before the throne of God, how will you be counted?

Lord, thank you for your righteous hand that rules over heaven and earth. Jesus, you became sin that we might be free from sin and have eternal life. I choose to live a life of righteousness and holiness and follow you. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Are You Ashamed?

(Reject Shame and Confess Jesus as Lord)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-4.mp3>

“If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels.”

(Mark 8:38, NIV)

In the world (Satan's realm) we are taught and encouraged from an early age to fit in and conform to the crowd, imitate, and copy others, blend in, join the group and go with the flow. Unfortunately, we live in a world that is going in the wrong direction – away from God and His Word. Society encourages us to leave God at home and act like “closet Christians.” We strive to be politically correct at all times. We refrain from using expressions like “So help me God”; stop praying in public places, especially schools; and refrain from stating the Pledge of Allegiance because it contains the words, “One nation under God.”

We refrain from being sensitive to the needs of others based on their beliefs and are careful not to offend anyone by talking openly about Jesus, the Bible, and our faith, especially at work. At meals, we skip the prayer and go ahead and eat. We pray for others later in private, so we don't draw attention to ourselves. We hold back and are timid about sharing our personal testimony about God's grace and goodness in our lives. We edit our marketplace presentations and eliminate all references to God. We overlook people in need and walk by, so we don't draw unnecessary attention to ourselves. We justify our failure to obey and follow God's commandments because we deem them old-fashioned and out of touch in our modern world.

As a Christian, I am grieved over the state of affairs in our country. I grieve that we act this way. I encourage you to ask God to show you any area of your life where you have become a part of this stubborn and sinful generation.

Child of God, repent today for walking in fear and allowing shame to turn you away from God. Commit today to be completely sold-out for Jesus!

Lord, thank you for your Son and His sacrifice on the cross. Jesus, I confess my faith in you, bow down and call you Lord and Savior. Holy Spirit help me to walk boldly in my faith at all times. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Jesus Is the Cornerstone

(Build Your Life on Him)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-5.mp3>

“Have you not even read this [passage of] Scripture: The very Stone which [after putting It to the test] the builders rejected has become the Head of the corner [Cornerstone]; This is from the Lord and is His doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?” [Ps. 118:22, 23]
(Mark 12:10-11, AMP)

In the world of construction, there is a great deal of importance placed on a structure’s foundation (Cornerstone). Webster’s Dictionary defines “cornerstone” as: the stone representing the nominal starting place in the construction of a structure and it is usually carved with the date and laid with appropriate ceremonies; something that is essential, indispensable, or basic; chief foundation on which something is constructed or developed.

Jesus is both the Head and the Cornerstone for all of Christianity – the Body of the Church. He is the cornerstone for my personal faith and relationship with God. For every Christian, Jesus is our Head, and we are His body. He came first and must be first in our lives. We must build and construct our very lives on and around Him. He carries our weight and supports us. He is our foundation and the anchor that connects us to God. He is our source of strength, Alpha and Omega, author, and finisher of our faith. He is our way out of sin, freedom from condemnation and death, and an indispensable element of life itself. Jesus is the Living Word, Truth, Light, and our Way to Heaven. I wake up every morning and give Jesus praise and thanksgiving for serving as the Cornerstone, Lord, and Savior of my life. Whenever the ground shakes or strong winds come, I know that my house will stand firm and not be moved.

Child of God, have you built your life on Jesus and His Word? If not, I encourage you to invite Jesus to be your Cornerstone!

Lord, thank you for sending your Son to be the Cornerstone of my life and the foundation of my faith. Holy Spirit, help me to build my life on God’s Word so I might stand firm in times of test and trial. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Hanging on to Every Word

(What Are You Hanging Onto?)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-6.mp3>

“And He was teaching daily in the temple; but the chief priests and the scribes and the leading men among the people were trying to destroy Him, and they could not find anything that they might do, for all the people were hanging on to every word He said.”

(Luke 19:47-48, NIV)

I’m drawn to a phrase in this passage. We’re told Jesus preached in the temple daily and “all the people were hanging on to every word He said.” Imagine the scene, as Jesus, the itinerant rabbi appears in the temple and marketplace preaching, healing, and performing miracles in city after city throughout the region. The chief priests and scribes plotted to kill Him but held back because, “all the people were hanging on to every word.”

As a Christian, when was the last time a sermon captured your total attention and you sat on the edge of your seat hanging on to every word? When was the last time a prophetic voice stirred you in the depths of your soul and you were blessed by every word; sermon on renewing your mind convicted your Spirit to the point that you grieved over every word; message on love and forgiveness caused tears to run down your face and joy accompanied every word; personal testimony persuaded you to step out in faith, act in boldness, and encouraged you with every word; song during the worship service led you to your feet and you danced in the aisle and swayed to every word; quiet time of meditation in God’s Word exploded in revelation truth and hidden mysteries jumped off the page and ministered to you through every word?

I praise God that I have come to a place where I too hang on every Word. In the predawn hours as I read my Bible, pray and talk with God in stillness, I too hang on to every word.

Child of God, you must remember that Jesus and His Word are alive. Wake up and pay attention. I encourage you to commit today to be still, listen to Him and allow your Spirit to hang on to every word!

Lord, thank you for your written, spoken and Living Word. Holy Spirit, teach me to listen fully with ears that hear, a mind that understands, a heart that receives, and a spirit that believes. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Jesus, Our Good Shepherd

(Jesus Died to Prove We Can Trust Him)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-7.mp3>

*"I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd risks and lays down His [own] life for the sheep."
[Ps. 23] (John 10:11, AMP)*

In this verse, Jesus refers to Himself as the "Good Shepherd." He goes on to say that a good shepherd risks His life and willingly gives His life for His sheep. Whenever I read this verse, I'm reminded of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and that His crucifixion and resurrection is why He came. He came to preach the Gospel and shed His blood for our sins that we might be saved, redeemed, and reconciled to God.

We hear stories on the news about acts of courage and heroism where a person risks or even sacrifices his life for the lives of others. We live in a society where we expect this level of sacrifice from men and women in the military, our firefighters and law enforcement personnel. The next time you go to the grocery store or walk into your office building, look around and see if you can identify the person who would readily risk or sacrifice his life for you. In fact, I encourage you to ask yourself, "Would I lay down my life for others, even people who have rejected or betrayed me?" For most of us, the answer would be "No." While we might like to think that we are brave, courageous and can be counted on in times of need, the truth is, we seldom stop and pull over to help a person change a flat tire. When was the last time you stopped to open a door or help a person load a cart of groceries into their car?

Child of God, when was the last time you thanked Jesus for His sacrifice on the cross? I praise God daily that He sent us Jesus, the Good Shepherd. Jesus already proved His love for us through His death on the cross. He proved that he can be trusted. I have decided to trust Him and follow Him anywhere! How about you?

Lord, thank you for sending your Son to be our Good Shepherd. Holy Spirit, teach me to hear you, trust you, and to follow you no matter what. Help me be a good shepherd and to sacrifice myself willingly for the needs of others. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Jesus, Is the Separator

(Jesus Is the Great Dividing Line)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-8.mp3>

“Then Jesus said, I came into this world for judgment [as a Separator, in order that there may be separation between those who believe on Me and those who reject Me], to make the sightless see and to make those who see become blind.”

(John 9:39, AMP)

In this verse, Jesus says that He came to be a “separator.” His mission was to separate those who choose to believe in Him from those who choose not to believe and reject Him. He tells us He will separate the sheep from the goats, those who see in the spirit from those who are blind in the spirit. He will separate those who trust in money and power from those who trust in Him, the prideful from the humble, and the obedient and faithful from the disobedient and rebellious. He will separate the righteous from the sinful, light from darkness, the oppressed from their oppressors, and the healthy and strong from sickness and disease. Jesus will separate His called and chosen ones from the world, the blessed and prosperous from the cursed, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness from sin and evil. He will separate those who are confident and hopeful in Him from despair and hopelessness, and His Children from the children of Satan.

I praise God that Jesus showed up and separated me from a path of destruction and death to an abundant life and eternal salvation. I bear little resemblance to the man I was before Jesus showed up and became the great dividing line in my life.

Child of God, how about you? What do you need to leave behind? What doors do you need to close? What chains, generational curses or strongholds do you need to sever? What negative thoughts do you need to stop thinking? I encourage you to ask God to show you where you need Jesus, the Separator in your life, and prepare to be set apart!

Lord, thank you for sending Jesus into my life that I might be separated from sin and death.

Holy Spirit, continue to help me see the world through the Light and Truth of Jesus.

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

Who Has Your Soul?

(Do You Belong to Jesus or Satan?)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-9.mp3>

“What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?”
(Mark 8:36, NIV)

We have a phrase that expresses the meaning of this verse. We say, “He sold his soul to the devil.” The expression takes its original meaning from the actions of Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. As we watch the news on TV or scan media sites on the Internet, I am often reminded of this verse. It would appear that selling your soul to Satan is a common practice in today’s world.

As Christians, we must examine ourselves and determine whom we have crowned Lord of our lives. A quick look at your checkbook and your calendar will usually reveal WHO or WHAT you love and WHO owns your soul. As a Christian, do you say you love the Lord, but seldom read His Word or worship with other believers? Do you stop to pray only when you have a major problem? Are you walking in love with your own family and people at work? Is God’s Word the final authority in your life? Do you have the heart of a servant leader and readily give others the advantage? Do you live a holy life, or sin readily and hope to clean up the mess with a superficial, “I’m sorry Lord”? Who do you trust and follow on a daily basis? Is your mind, heart and soul set on God or the things of this world? Do you put God and His Word first in your life?

Child of God, I encourage you to ask God to speak to you today and show you WHO or WHAT you have chosen to worship, and to reveal WHO owns the rights to your soul. Have you crowned money, possessions, fame, or power Lord of your life? Do you bow down and submit to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior? Have you gained the world, but lost your soul?

*Lord, thank you for your Word and for the gift of salvation. Holy Spirit, help me live a life of righteousness and to be focused on storing treasures in heaven.
Jesus, I reject Satan and the world and call you Lord and Savior of my life.
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.

You Can't See the Forest for the Trees

(Jesus is Right in Front of You)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-13.mp3>

*"You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life."
(John 5:39-40, NIV)*

In the world, we have an expression for the meaning of this verse. We say, "You can't see the forest for the trees." In John 1: verse 1 and then verse 14 we read, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory..." Jesus tells the Pharisees they study, mediate, and memorize Scripture seeking eternal life, yet they fail to recognize that Jesus is standing right in front of them and that they must see Him as the path to salvation. Memorizing or knowing the Word will not save you. You must first believe in Jesus (God's living Word) and accept Jesus as Savior and Lord. Salvation only comes from the "source of life and light" – Jesus. Scripture tells us about God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit; but to have salvation, we must first believe, accept and connect with Jesus.

Think of the last Valentine's Day card from your sweetheart or spouse that confessed a deep and abiding love for you. While the words and sentiment in the card may have touched your heart, the card does not and can never replace your loved one. Jesus was trying to tell the Pharisees that you are so focused on the card, you fail to lift your eyes and see that I, the one who wrote and sent the card, am standing right in front of you.

Child of God, are you focused on Jesus, the only One that matters? I pray that you will not make the same mistake the Pharisees and countless unbelievers over the centuries have made. Don't fail to see the forest because of the trees. Set your eyes on Jesus. He is the tree of life. He is the Light, Path, Truth, and Way to salvation. Look to Jesus and look no more!

Lord, thank you for sending your Son Jesus to earth that I can know Him and have life and salvation through an intimate relationship with Him. Holy Spirit, keep my eyes and heart focused on you as I go through my day. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

God Gives Personal Invitations to Heaven

(The “Eternal Life” List)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-12.mp3>

“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 6:65, NASB)

Graduations, weddings, and baby dedications are often announced by expensive and personalized invitations. In this verse, Jesus tells us God extended a personal invitation offering us access to Jesus and eternal salvation. The invitation was extended while we were still living in sin and rebellion.

I confess, the significance of this verse is hard for me to comprehend. Have you ever stopped to think about it? I do, all the time. On a planet with 7.9 billion people, God extended a personal invitation to me from heaven for eternal salvation through Jesus. I can’t wait to ask God what made Him pick me? Can it really be true that God put my name on the list before the foundation of the world? My mind comes up with other times God might have thought of me: while I was still a fetus in my mother’s womb; during the first few weeks of life as I struggled to live as a preemie weighing a mere 3 lb. 11 oz.; the day I was released from the hospital as a firstborn son at 4 months of age; maybe when I was 6 and starting first grade, or my first day of Vacation Bible School? I suppose the timing really doesn’t matter. I thank God every day for choosing me and for adopting me as a Son. I simply can’t imagine life without Him, the brief time we have here on earth, much less all eternity.

Are you lost and in need of salvation? If so, I encourage you to listen for the voice of God calling you to come before Jesus and confess your sins. Ask for His forgiveness and invite Him to be your Savior and Lord of your life. Say “Yes” when God extends His loving arms and personal invitation to heaven through Jesus. I know I am going to heaven, and I hope to see you there!

Lord, thank you for choosing me and calling me into relationship with your Son. Jesus, I celebrate the day I received my invitation to join you and Almighty God in heaven for all eternity. I can’t wait to thank you in person. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Father, Forgive Them

(Grace and Forgiveness on the Cross)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-14.mp3>

*“Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.’
And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.”
(Luke 23:34, NIV)*

Reading this verse, I am amazed that as Jesus was on the cross dying, He had the mercy and grace to cry out to God and plead for forgiveness for mankind. He even defended our actions by telling the Lord, “They don’t know what they are doing.” In that moment, Jesus refused to feel anger, hurt, resentment and bitterness over mankind’s stubborn rejection of Him and the Gospel of grace and salvation that He came to preach. In His dying moments, Jesus refused to submit to human desires for retribution and call legions of heavenly angels to avenge Him. He refused to stop loving us and desiring good things for us; stop caring for the lost, poor, and needy; give in to bitterness and resentment; keep a record of our sins or turn His back on us. He refused to give up on mankind and write us off, renounce us before God, or condemn us and curse us for our rebellious minds and our hardened hearts. Jesus refused to abandon us at the very moment when mankind needed Him the most. He refused to be disloyal and disobedient to God; give in to temptation and feelings of anguish, torment, and separation from God; or abandon His divine mission before His job was complete.

On the cross, Jesus suffered and endured the pain and refused to cave in, give up or quit. In that moment, Jesus showed all of mankind, then and now, that He was more than a man. He was the Son of the Almighty God. In that moment on the cross, in His mercy and grace, Jesus forgave us and asked God to forgive us.

Child of God, I encourage you to join me in songs of joy, praise, and thanksgiving that Jesus did what He did. Jesus, thank you for asking our Heavenly Father for our His forgiveness! Your forgiveness fills me with joy and encourages me to forgive others.

*Lord, thank you for your love for us. Jesus, I thank you for your mercy, grace, and most of all, your faithfulness on the cross. Holy Spirit, help me to be a faithful and obedient son and to walk in love and forgiveness with others at all times.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Chapter 2

Forget Religion, Seek Relationship with Jesus



Jesus Defines Family

(Join Jesus as Sons and Daughters of God)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-15.mp3>

“For whoever does the things God wills is My brother and sister and mother!”
(Mark 3:35, AMP)

Notice that Jesus defines kingdom family for every Christian in this verse. He declares, “For whoever does the things God wills is My brother and sister and mother!” This is very different from the world’s definition of family. We usually define family in terms of biological or legal standards. We have a saying, “You can pick your friends, but you can’t pick your family.” This verse shows the limitations and distorted truth of this way of thinking. In the kingdom realm, we can pick our family. As Christians, we get to choose our family the moment we invite Jesus into our life as our Lord and Savior. While I became an orphan in this world when my dad and mom died, I gained a Heavenly Father when I said “Yes” to Jesus. I gained a “Big Brother” in Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

I confess that I am really excited about life in heaven. I am eager to sit down with Adam, Abraham, Moses, Jacob, Joshua, David, Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and the rest of the Patriarchs. I’m eager to listen to my “Big Brothers in Christ” talk about their life with Jesus and their walk with God. I look forward to discussions with Paul, Peter, John, Timothy, and the rest of the disciples. I want to hear intimate details about the early days of the church and their mission trips. I long to talk with Eve, Sarah, Rachel, Naomi, Ruth, Hannah, Esther, Bathsheba, Mary of Nazareth, Mary and Martha and others who are my “Mothers and Big Sisters in Christ.” I look forward to family gatherings and conversations as we sit around God’s table.

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ, aren’t you glad that Jesus knew how to define and create family? If you’re lost and alone, I encourage you to invite Jesus into your life today. By accepting Jesus, you become part of His kingdom family for all eternity!

Jesus, thank you for calling me into relationship with you and for the gift of family. Jesus, I am so thankful you gave me the opportunity to hang out with the Holy Spirit each day.

Thank you for spiritual Fathers, Mothers, Brothers and Sisters in Christ.

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

Held Tight in the Hands of Jesus

(Forget Allstate, You're in Good Hands with Jesus)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-16.mp3>

*“The sheep that are My own hear and are listening to My voice; and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never lose it or perish throughout the ages. [To all eternity they shall never by any means be destroyed.]
And no one is able to snatch them out of My hand.”*
(John 10: 27-28, AMP)

Here, Jesus tells us we have eternal life and that we are safe and protected. He goes on to say, “And no one is able to snatch them out of My hand.” His words comfort me. Not only are we held tight in the hands of Jesus, but no one including Satan can pull us away or take us from His grasp.

I am always impressed whenever I meet a man with a good strong handshake. In 2013, I met George, a 74-year-old Christian Marriage Counselor. I still remember our first session. He greeted me with a big smile and inviting, “Hello young man.” When he talked his eyes sparkled, and his demeanor was warm and inviting. I was moved by his gentle heart and humble spirit. He told me he comes into the office 5 days a week and spends 8-10 hours in counseling every day, and that he loves it. Even today, what I remember most about George was his firm strong handshake. It was steady and confident. As a Coach, I often teach clients about the importance and value of a good handshake. I advise them that major career decisions are often made in the lobby based on a greeting and a handshake.

As a Christian, this verse reminds me that I am held tight in the strong hands of Jesus. In His hands, I am reassured of His love for me. In His hands, I am safe, secure and protected. His Word promises that He will never release His grip on me or let me go, no matter what.

Do you know Jesus? Do you know the peace that comes from His grip? If not, I encourage you today to reach out to the open arms of Jesus. Forget Allstate, accept Jesus and allow Jesus to hold you in His hands.

Lord, thank you for your Son. In Jesus' hands, I have eternal life, protection, comfort, peace and joy regardless of my circumstances. Holy Spirit, teach me to hold onto others with a loving, gentle, but firm grip. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Running After Jesus

(Will You Run After Jesus and Into His Arms?)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-17.mp3>

“Then the Pharisees said among themselves, You see how futile your efforts are and how you accomplish nothing. See! The whole world is running after Him!”
(John 12:19, AMP)

What do you chase and pursue? Is it success, power, money, possessions, fame and public recognition? Here, the Pharisees complain that the whole world is running after Jesus. I envision great crowds of people running after Jesus. They are chasing salvation, healing, deliverance, righteousness, peace, and joy. Stop and look around today. You will see people running. As a Coach, I often see people who are running from their past, but I do not see many people running to take hold of their future.

Sadly, I don't see many people running after Jesus. I see people refusing to get up, walking slowly, pausing often, sitting down, and resting, taking one step forward and two steps back. When I stop to think about it, I get it. Running is demanding and hard. It takes energy and passion; requires focus, direction, and determination; extracts a price and takes a toll on you. Running can be exhausting and wear you out. It has inherent risks; you might trip and fall.

The Holy Spirit reminds me that running after Jesus is not a quick sprint or 100-yard dash, but a lifetime race, and is far more demanding than any marathon. Running after Jesus often takes place in the midst of storms and trials. It can lead to jeers and taunts from family, friends, and coworkers, as they try to get you to stop. It requires that you run through distractions and temptations. It requires you to block out the pain and the negative emotions when you don't "feel like running." Running after Jesus is different from any other race you will ever run in life. It has eternal rewards. Only Jesus can offer you the Grand Prize – eternal salvation.

I encourage you to decide today to set your eyes on Him and run after Jesus with all you have. When you get tired and want to quit, trust His grace, and run. Run into your divine destiny. You'll be glad you did!

*Lord, thank you for giving me a heart to run after Jesus. Holy Spirit, help me to keep my eyes fixed on Jesus and give me the grace to finish the race and seize the prize.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Not Just My Feet Then

(Washed and Ready for Heaven)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-18.mp3>

“He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, ‘Lord, are you going to wash my feet?’ Jesus replied, ‘You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.’ ‘No,’ said Peter, ‘you shall never wash my feet.’ Jesus answered, ‘Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.’ ‘Then, Lord,’ Simon Peter replied, ‘not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!’”
(John 13: 6-9, NIV)

I’m always drawn to Jesus’ and Simon Peter’s relationship. Initially, Peter resisted the idea that Jesus, His Lord, and Teacher, would wash his feet. He adamantly proclaims, “you shall never wash my feet.” Once Jesus explained that if He did not do this, Peter would be cast out, then Peter in his typical emotionally charged state, agreed, and even asked Jesus if He could also wash his hands and head. Scripture doesn’t say that Jesus laughed at this, but He must have found it amusing. Even though Peter didn’t fully understand what Jesus was doing for him, it seems that like Elisha years earlier, he wanted a double portion. Peter wanted to make sure he was connected to Jesus.

How often do we imitate Peter? God tries to do something that will draw us closer to Him, and we resist and say, “No never.” I confess that I’ve done this often. Thankfully, God is so loving and kind that He stands there waiting until I’m finally ready to trust Him and let Him have His way with me. Like Peter, once I come around, I always want a double portion – not just my feet but my hands and head as well.

Child of God, I encourage you to ask God to reveal what He has been trying to do in your life that will draw you closer to Him. When the Holy Spirit tells you to do something, submit and allow Him to have His way. Like Peter, don’t hold back. Embrace all that Jesus is willing to teach you. Follow Him with confidence, courage, and expectant hope. Like Peter, you will be glad you did!

Jesus, thank you for your loving patience whenever I resist you and reject your will for my life. Holy Spirit, teach me to trust you for every decision in my life. Bathe me in God’s grace and His anointing from my head to my feet. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Our Product Label Reads: “Made by God”

(What Does your Label Say?)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-19.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)*

The world of retail bombards us with tags and labels. They’re all over the packaging and sewn on our clothes, often in the most uncomfortable places. The labels often use phrases like “made in”, “made by” or “prepared by.” The packaging contains a User Guide translated in several languages that tells you how to use the product.

As a Child of God, it gives me comfort to know who made me and that I bear His label. I know my purpose. I was created to have an intimate relationship with God. I know that God anointed me with unique gifts, talents, and skills for the assignments I have — to teach His Word and encourage others in the marketplace how to integrate their faith at work. Anytime I have a question about my life, all I have to do is read my “Operations Manual” (the Bible) to find the answers. My Bible is filled with God’s truth and wisdom. It gives specific instructions for solving everyday problems. It tells me all I need to know. It explains how to live according to God’s “design specifications.”

Child of God, have you taken a close look at your label lately? Do you know God’s will and divine purpose for your life? When was the last time you studied and meditated on God’s Word to understand His instructions? Do you spend time daily in prayer to learn about God’s “Lifetime Warranty,” so you can operate in excellence? Have you thanked Him that He gave you the Holy Spirit and filled you with His grace, so you can operate smoothly and effectively? If your answer is, “No, I know I should, but it seems I get busy with life”, stop and push the pause button, and “Be still.” I encourage you to get on your knees today and talk to God. Seek Him for answers to your questions about life. After all, He made you!

Lord, thank you for designing and creating me in your image and likeness. I am your workmanship. Holy Spirit, teach me to live by faith that I might give God glory and honor in all I do. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

The Lamb and the Lion

(Jesus Offers Sacrifice and Protection)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-20.mp3>

*“The next day John was there again with two of his disciples.
When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, ‘Look, the Lamb of God!’”*
(John 1:35-36, NIV)

The day before, Scripture tells us that John baptized Jesus in the Jordan River. After this, John saw the Spirit of the Lord come down from heaven like a dove and rest on Jesus. God gave John the revelation that Jesus was His Son. In the verse above, John does not refer to Jesus as the Son of God, but rather the “Lamb of God.” We see John speaking prophetically about Jesus’ mission and divine purpose. This is very significant when you consider Old Testament references to unblemished and spotless lambs. They were used as instruments of sacrifice. God’s people would examine their flock and select a lamb without blemish and bring it to the priest. The lamb was killed, and their blood was poured upon the altar as a sacrifice to God.

This lamb was different. The Lamb of God went willingly to the cross. He came for the sole purpose of preaching the Gospel; healing the sick; casting out demons; training and equipping His disciples; dying on the cross and washing away the stains of man’s sin with His blood; going to hell so we would not have to; and rising from the tomb on the third day.

Child of God, we must always remember that the Lamb of God was transformed into a mighty Lion. The Lion overcame the chains of death, defeated Satan, and rose again. The Lion, our Christ, sits on the throne at the right hand of God and reigns with great power, and majesty. I encourage you to give thanks to Jesus today for who He is and for what He has done in your life. He is both the Lamb and the Lion of God.

Lord, thank you for the sacrifice of Jesus, the Lamb, on the cross. Jesus, after you were lifted up, God gave you a seat at His right hand and made your enemies your footstool. I kneel before you, Lamb, and Lion of God. Holy Spirit, teach me to trust you at all times. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Jesus Writes in the Dirt

(A Love Note from Jesus)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-21.mp3>

“They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground. But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, ‘He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.’”
(John 8:6-7, NASB)

I’m always drawn to this passage, “But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground.” Suddenly, my mind is filled with questions. I wonder, “What was He writing? I know he must have had a specific reason, since Jesus was very obedient and purposeful in His actions. Who was he writing to? Did he erase it and cover it with dirt after he finished talking to the crowd, or leave it as a written testimony of His actions? Did people come by later to read His writing and experience a divine revelation?

I’m eager to talk with Jesus about this when I see Him. Since I’m in a confessional mood, I’ll admit that I have always been a big proponent of writing in the dirt. I’ve written in the dirt often in my life. In 2009, Karen and I went on a business trip to Los Angeles. Before we came home, we had an opportunity to spend a week in Santa Barbara in a quaint little cottage a block off the beach. One day, as we walked on the beach, my sweetheart stopped to draw and write in the dirt. She drew a big heart with an arrow through it. She wrote “Karen and Gary” below the heart and the date, “September 09.” We took pictures. It is one of my favorite pictures of the trip and I smile every time I look at it. It gives me comfort to imagine Jesus wrote, “Children, I love you and will never leave you or forsake you. Call me anytime. I can’t wait to see you in heaven. Love always, Jesus.”

Child of God, that is a message and a picture worth keeping!

Lord, thank you for the beauty, wonder and mystery of your Word. Thank you that in time, all the mysteries in your Word will be revealed. Jesus, I pray that you will use the Holy Spirit to write your Word on the pages of my heart. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

I Said You Are Gods

(Your True Identity)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-22.mp3>

“The Jews replied, ‘We are not going to stone You for a good act, but for blasphemy, because You, a mere Man, make Yourself [out to be] God.’ Jesus answered, ‘Is it not written in your Law, I said, You are gods? [Ps 82:6] So men are called gods [by the Law], men to whom God’s message came--and the Scripture cannot be set aside or cancelled or broken or annulled—”
(John 10: 33-35, AMP)

Here, we see the Pharisees accuse Jesus of blasphemy for declaring he made himself out to be God. Jesus recalled the words in Psalms and replied, “Is it not written in your Law, I said, You are gods?” I’ve talked with many Christians who struggle to believe this profound truth. Many will readily accept the truth of Scripture that we are Sons of God. They are alright, comfortable and can identify with that. Yet, it is another matter to accept that here and the passage in Psalms, state clearly that men are gods.

In Genesis, we read that God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...” God went on to bless us and said, “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.” David writes in Psalms, “What is man that You take thought of him, And the son of man that You care for him? Yet You have made him a little lower than God, And You crown him with glory and majesty! You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet.”

Child of God, I encourage you to stand on the truth of God’s Word. Believe and receive your true identity; first, as Sons of God, and secondly, as gods made in His image and likeness with His power and authority to rule the earth. Decide today to become the man God intended you to be. Be like Him and be godly!

Lord, thank you for the truth and power of your Word. I believe and receive your Word that defines who I am. Holy Spirit, help me live according to God’s Word, that I may fulfill His perfect will for my life by living in faith. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

One Thing I Do Know

(I Am Certain about Jesus and His Promises)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-23.mp3>

“He then answered, ‘Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.’”

(John 9:25, NASB)

Here we see Jesus’ miraculous healing of a man blind since birth. The Pharisees are intent on charging Jesus with violating Jewish law by performing work on the Sabbath. At first, they interrogate the blind man’s parents. Then they question the man about Jesus’ actions. They say, “Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner.” He responds to them, “Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.” In truth, the blind man knew many things. He knew: the pain and suffering of blindness; a world void and empty of light; his mother’s face and smile by touch; a storehouse of information about the world in terms of shapes, sounds, temperature, and texture; and the bondage of begging daily just to survive.

Doors were closed to him because he was blind. The isolation of blindness kept the world locked out and kept him locked in. Others had what he did not. He experienced poverty, lack and insufficiency until he met Jesus. In Jesus, he found sight, new life, and the door to a world of abundance. Reading on, we see that he confidently and boldly confronted his interrogators over their lack of faith and belief. He went so far as to ask them if they wanted to become Jesus’ disciples too. This man may not have known many things, but one thing he knew, which the Pharisees did not. He knew Jesus. Jesus gave him not only sight, but also eternal life!

Child of God, what are you certain about? I encourage you to be certain about this: Jesus is who He said he is, and he can do all the things his Word says He can do. This one thing, I do know!

Lord, thank you for your Son Jesus. Jesus, I thank you for healing and restoration. Holy Spirit, remove every area of blindness in my life. I may not know many things, but this one thing I do know – I need you Jesus. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Talking to My Plants

(Using My Authority in My Garden)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-24.mp3>

“But I ask, Have they not heard? Indeed they have; [for the Scripture says] Their voice [that of nature bearing God's message] has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the far bounds of the world. [Ps. 19:4.]”
(Romans 10:18, AMP)

Paul suggests all of nature bears the voice of God. Webster’s defines “bears” as: hold up or support; bring forth or give birth to; produce; carry, transmit or spread; render or bear witness to. Nature gives witness to the glory, majesty and wonder of God. The spirit of God’s very presence is in every living thing. Just as God and Jesus spoke to the heavens and earth, we too can speak to His creation with power and authority.

Karen and I love gardening and watching things grow. My passion comes from my grandparents and my dad who farmed and ate from their gardens. Karen inherited her passion for gardening from her mother, Mama Esther, and her dad, Lane. Mama Esther and I both talk to our plants. We use our mouth to speak with authority and bless or curse plants in our garden. Every morning, I walk through my garden to touch and speak to my plants. I encourage them and tell them to grow, to be strong, and to produce good flowers and sweet fruit. Before a freeze, I encourage them to be strong and to endure the cold. Mama Esther says she once told a struggling plant, “I give you one more week.” Hearing that, I thought of Jesus speaking to the fig tree. The tree failed to produce fruit so Jesus might eat in a time of hunger. He cursed it and within 24 hours it had withered and died.

Child of God, do you hear God’s voice in nature all around you? Do you speak like God with power and authority to nature and expect things to respond to your commands? Put a smile on God’s face the next time you walk through a park or a field of flowers, by opening your mouth and speaking blessings. Start listening and speaking like God in your garden. Be prepared to be amazed at the results.

Lord, thank you for the wonder and beauty of your creation. Holy Spirit, help me hear God’s voice in all of nature. Holy Spirit, teach me to imitate God and to speak to the earth and expect it to hear and obey my voice. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

What Room Are You in God's House?

(Family Room, Kitchen, or Prayer Garden?)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-25.mp3>

"In Him [and in fellowship with one another] you yourselves also are being built up [into this structure] with the rest, to form a fixed abode (dwelling place) of God in (by, through) the Spirit." (Ephesians 2:22, AMP)

In college, I worked as an electrician and a carpenter building custom homes. I've never lost my love for building. I enjoy browsing websites and magazines featuring custom homes to see the latest design trends and advances in technology. Karen has used her creative skills remodeling and decorating homes and gardens for clients. We talk about building our dream house one day. What draws us to custom building is the freedom to design a space that fits your personality, needs, interests and lifestyle. Custom homes often feature theater-style entertainment rooms; game rooms filled with toys; wine cellars or cigar rooms; pools or fountains that come into the home; studies where work feels like play; exercise rooms modeled after health clubs; and kitchens that combine space and design with very expensive technology and gadgets.

Paul tells us Christians are built and joined with other Christians to form God's house. As part of God's house ask yourself, "What room am I?" Is my room inviting and pleasing to God? Does my room reflect God's character and His nature? Is my room filled with light, warmth and inviting; or is it cold and dark with a sign on the door that reads, "Keep Out?" Do I reflect excellence and fine workmanship? Am I a tiny closet or a huge walk-in with built-ins? Am I a prayer room that promotes stillness and invites others to kneel in reverence before God? Am I a game room where others can relax and play? Am I a family room where others come together to share, laugh and make memories? Am I a bedroom, a place of rest and restoration? Am I a kitchen where a great feast is prepared for those who hunger and thirst for righteousness?

Child of God, ask God what He desires for you in His house and trust His master plan!

Lord, thank you for your perfect will and design for my life. Holy Spirit, fill me with your presence and use me for God's divine purpose. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

We Belong to the Lord

(God Owns My Life)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-26.mp3>

“For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.”

(Romans 14:7-8, NIV)

This passage causes me to pause. I’m overwhelmed and convicted by Paul’s words, “we belong to the Lord.” Webster’s Dictionary defines “belong to” as: to accompany, follow, join with, go together, be connected, to be complete, owned as property or possession. In effect, we are not our own in life or death. We are property, slaves, and servants of the Lord. Over time, a slave or servant will begin to think and behave like his master.

As I grow spiritually, I become a slave to righteousness and a servant of others. I’m grateful to God that I’m developing a slave or servant mindset. When I get up, I ask God what He wants me to do. Given choices, I ask Him what choices to make. I’m learning to replace “I” with “We,” and to give God credit and praise for everything that happens. Every time I make an independent decision and act on my own, things do not turn out well. Even in moments of victory, without Him, there is no peace or joy and lots of blood, sweat and tears to clean up. I’m learning to “Be Still” and listen for His voice. God talks to me all the time and tells me what to do. I don’t have to think about the situation or the problem. My job is simple. I have to suit up, show up, and follow orders.

Child of God, have you surrendered every area of your life to Jesus? Have you called him Master and faithfully obeyed His last instruction? Have you realized that your body is not your own, but belongs to Him? I encourage you to ask God to speak to you about any area of your life where you are acting like a runaway slave who fled the Master’s house. Come back. There is peace, joy, and abundance in His house, and yes, you do belong to Him!

Lord, thank you for the power of your Word. Today I surrender all of me to you. Jesus, I call you Lord and Master. I commit to be a slave to righteousness and a faithful and obedient servant.

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

Christ Became a Curse for Us

(His Curse Was Our Blessing)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-27.mp3>

*“Christ purchased our freedom [redeeming us] from the curse (doom) of the Law [and its condemnation] by [Himself] becoming a curse for us, for it is written [in the Scriptures], Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree (is crucified);” [Deut. 21:23]
(Galatians 3:13, AMP)*

This verse stirs intense emotions in me. I’m drawn to the words, “by [Himself] becoming a curse for us.” Jesus who never sinned and was blameless before God, took on the sin and guilt of mankind and became a curse. Jesus never rebelled or disobeyed God, but He took on our disobedience. Jesus never walked in the darkness of sin, lies and deception, but confronted darkness and overcame it. Jesus never felt bitterness, resentment, envy, or jealousy, but took on our sins and endured the agony of crucifixion and separation from God on the cross. Jesus never committed lustful and immoral acts but took on our lusts and immorality.

Jesus never experienced sickness himself but took on our disease and affliction. Jesus never spoke or took action independent of God’s will, but bore the punishment for our stubborn willful nature. Jesus never walked in unforgiveness, lack or insufficiency, but took on God’s righteous judgement and our poverty. Jesus never abandoned His faith or trust in God or refused to give God honor and praise in all things, but took on our fears and doubts, and our dishonor. Jesus never walked in pride or exalted Himself or put Himself first, but took on our prideful arrogance. Jesus never acted in His own power and might, but took on our weakness. Jesus, the unblemished Lamb of God took on our sins, became a curse and shed His blood as a sacrifice for us. I give God praise that on the cross, Jesus who was without sin, took on my sins and became a curse that I might be free from the curse of sin and death.

Are you ready to be free from the curse? Invite Jesus to come into your life today. He has already paid the price for your freedom.

Lord, thank you for sending your Son Jesus to die on the cross at Calvary. Holy Spirit, help me to always remember the price that Jesus paid for my salvation and that His blood set me free from the curse of sin and death. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Sons and Daughters of the Owner

(Family Carries Rights and Privileges)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-28.mp3>

“because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship.

And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’”

(Romans 8:14-15, NIV)

Companies often allow sons and daughters of owners or senior executives to join the employee ranks. Sometimes, they’re treated like everybody else. In others, they always seem to get special treatment and privileges. I’ve found that the sooner you realize that sons and daughters get special benefits and privileges, the easier it is to accept it and move on. This passage gives me comfort. As Christians, we are Sons and Daughters of God and have the right to call Him, Dad.

I remember the day the Holy Spirit gave me the revelation truth of this passage. At once, all the heartache, disappointment and hurt I had experienced in life with my biological Dad went away. The hurt faded and I no longer felt abandoned. An over-whelming sensation of love, acceptance and wholeness swept over me. I felt loving arms enfold me and hold me close. A strong heartbeat echoed in my ear, as I laid my head against God’s chest and rested in His arms. I realized that my heavenly Dad is alive. I saw Him for who He is, a loving and caring Dad who would never hurt me. He is never too busy to spend time with me and is always willing to share His wisdom and guidance. Yes, God is firm at times, yet gentle in His correction and instruction. I know that Dad wants only the best for me. My heavenly Dad always protects me and teaches me about life. He always forgives me and gives me another chance. He loves me no matter what.

Child of God, are you feeling like no one loves or cares for you? Are you feeling alone? If so, I encourage you to turn to Your Heavenly Dad and fall into His arms. He is waiting with the unconditional love of a Father for His Child. Celebrate today! Decide that every day will be Father’s Day and spend time with Him.

Lord, thank you for calling me into relationship and adopting me as your Child. Holy Spirit, help me to know and understand the depth and breadth of God’s love for me. Teach me to be a loving and obedient child. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Chapter 3
The Holy Spirit Becomes Your Helper



My Teaching Is Not My Own

(Listening to the Holy Spirit)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-29.mp3>

“The Jews were amazed and asked, ‘How did this man get such learning without having studied?’ Jesus answered, ‘My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me.’”
(John 7:15-16, NIV)

Here, Jesus explains that God is the author and source of everything He teaches. I confess this truth as I write these words. I praise God that the Holy Spirit has helped me create a habit of spending time in prayer before I start. I plead the blood of Jesus over my hands. I stand on the truth of God’s Word that says, “God will bless you in all your harvest and in all the work of your hands, and your joy will be complete.” I invite the Holy Spirit to teach me, to think through my mind, type through my fingers, and tell me what to write. I pray that I will be a “vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.” I set my mind on the words that God spoke to Joshua about the benefits of meditating on and obeying His Word. I recall the deep wisdom of Proverbs that assures me that a faithful man will abound with blessings.

I never know what we, Holy Spirit, and I, are going to write, what verse will come alive or what revelation I will be given. The Holy Spirit leads me to the Book, chapter, and verse. Suddenly He reveals the title. The title dictates the story that is waiting to be told. I’m always surprised and fascinated at the end as I read what we have written. In the hours we spend writing, I’m richly blessed by His teachings. My mind is renewed, my body is strengthened, my spirit is restored, and my heart is made pure. Yes, I am encouraged by the messages in this book and my prayer is that you will be also. Like Jesus, my writing and teaching is not my own. It comes from Jesus, the One who sent me.

Child of God, I pray that you will. . . Get Understanding and Be Encouraged!

Lord, thank you for giving me an opportunity to be used as your vessel. Jesus may the work of my hands be pleasing in your sight and accomplish your divine will and purpose. May these words edify, teach, and encourage every mind, heart, and spirit they touch.

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

Our Intercessor

(Divine Intervention, Help and Comfort)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-30.mp3>

“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.”

(Romans 8:26-27, NIV)

Paul tells us the Holy Spirit intercedes for us when we pray. Webster's defines "intercede" as: cause to intervene on behalf of someone in trouble; advocate or attempt to reconcile differences. I didn't grow up experiencing people praying in tongues. As a result, I didn't know what to think when I first saw people praying in the Spirit. It made me uncomfortable. I felt, inadequate and incomplete. As I began to study God's Word on this subject, God gave me a desire for my own prayer language. At first, I found it awkward uttering incoherent sounds and had a hard time praying in tongues for more than a few minutes. Over time, I discovered praying in the Spirit led to a sense of calm and peace. I felt energized and experienced a new level of boldness and confidence in my prayers.

Praying in the Spirit will take your prayer life to another level. It requires you to submit and surrender more of yourself to God, to trust Him and His ways. The more I grow in my understanding of prayer and the power of prayer, the more I'm comforted to know the Holy Spirit is my personal Prayer Agent. I'm comforted to know he intercedes before God on my behalf. I have come to know that the Holy Spirit is my greatest asset. He is my Helper, Comforter, Guide, Teacher, Advocate, Defender, and Intermediary.

Child of God, have you surrendered your prayer life to God and allowed the Holy Spirit to pray for you? If not, I encourage you to commit today to step out in faith and allow the Holy Spirit to go before the Lord in prayer on your behalf!

Lord, thank you for sending the Holy Spirit to live inside me to comfort and guide me. Holy Spirit, teach me God's thoughts and His ways. Help me to humble myself, and surrender all of me to you, especially in my most intimate moments of prayer. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Speaker Notes from God

(Only What God Tells Me to Say)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-31.mp3>

“For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak. I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me.”

(John 12: 49-50, NASB)

I often spend 25-35 hours in preparation for a talk. Many of my talks are to Christian audiences who have a desire to grow stronger in their ability to integrate faith and work. Once my client has identified goals and objectives, we discuss the audience, the schedule and logistics. I spend time in prayer and ask the Holy Spirit to lead me the rest of the way. The Spirit gives me the title and the storyline (theme). Next, I go to my computer and find Scripture that relates to this subject. I plant these key verses in my heart by reading them out loud multiple times. I copy these key verses and begin my outline. Generally, within 10-12 hours I have finished the outline. Then, I draft my presentation and prepare my handouts. Now I am ready for the final stage. I spend the last 3-4 hours before my talk “Being Still.” I review my notes and go to the Lord in prayer. I pray God’s grace will anoint me to do what I must do. I ask God to use me as His vessel and pray that I will bring Him glory and honor. I pray the audience will have ears to hear and that God will grant each of them understanding minds and hearing hearts. Once I step to the stage, I allow the Spirit to lead me. He tells me what to say and do. I confess that I am often amazed at the end of my message.

Audiences often share this testimony, “It was not at all what I expected, but exactly what I needed.” I think to myself, that’s not a surprise to me. I was simply God’s vessel. I said what I was told to say. I wonder if they realize that I have been given personalized “Speaker Notes from God.”

Lord, thank you for using me as your vessel. Holy Spirit, continue to tell me what to say in every situation, that my Words may accomplish God’s perfect will and divine purpose.

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

The Holy Spirit's Prompting

(The Right Words Every Time)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-11.mp3>

“And when they bring you before the synagogues and the magistrates and the authorities, do not be anxious [beforehand] how you shall reply in defense or what you are to say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour and moment what [you] ought to say.”

(Luke 12:11-12, AMP)

In the media world, it's common for news anchors and politicians to use a tele-prompter that projects a prepared script, line-by-line, on a screen for the speaker. I'm comforted to know that as a Christian, this verse tells me that I do not have to rely on technology. I have my own "Prompter" or the Holy Spirit, to assist me. There are no cords or wires. There is no need to prepare in advance and rely on canned answers that don't quite fit the conversation. The Holy Spirit tells me in the very moment, in real time, what to say. I now use the Holy Spirit to prompt me and speak through me in my conversations and interactions with others (clients, family, and friends).

I confess that I felt uncomfortable with this gift and anointing at first. I was anxious and uncertain as to "whose voice I was hearing." I came to understand that the words and thoughts the Holy Spirit led me to speak were far more insightful, truthful, and beneficial than anything I could have come up with on my own. Often, I am directed to suddenly take discussions with my clients in directions that appear to have nothing to do with our stated topic. At the end of our talk, I stand in awe of what has been spoken, prayers that have been prayed, truths revealed, breakthroughs and destruction of generational curses and strongholds. I have learned to simply trust God and let His Spirit speak through me for His purpose, His glory and honor.

Child of God, are you struggling to find the right words to say? If so, I encourage you to ask the Holy Spirit to help you. He will tell you what to say. Be prepared to be amazed at the results!

*Lord, thank you for sending the Holy Spirit into my life. Holy Spirit, teach me to hear clearly and to be obedient to your voice. Whenever I need clarity, wisdom, and discernment, direction, or correction, speak to me, your servant is listening.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

The Blind Walk

(Take His Arm)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-32.mp3>

*“Let them alone and disregard them; they are blind guides and teachers.
And if a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a ditch.”
(Matthew 15:14, AMP)*

Reading this verse, I’m reminded of my senior year in college. I became friends with two blind students. Tom was born blind, while Bill lost his sight as a child. We would sit and talk for hours about life with and without sight. We would often have lunch together. I watched as they ate their lunch without being able to see a thing. We talked as we walked to class. I watched and listened as they shared details about how they created mental roadmaps of their pathways; calculated distance along the way using sound and echolocation; identified and selected their clothes by touch based on fabric, texture, size, and shape of buttons; got dressed; learned to read Braille and study. Once, we went horseback riding. I was amazed as they rode full gallop across fields and trusted the horse for safety. They often laughed and recounted times when they had missed a step, ran headfirst into doors and walls, or fell down and landed in a ditch.

Most of all, I remember the “Blind Walk,” a training exercise in my Psychotherapy class. I asked Tom and Bill if they would let me be their “Seeing-guide” and lead them around campus and finally across a busy 4-lane street. They agreed. I remember how nervous I was and how hard my heart was pounding. I felt the weight of their hand on my elbow as I led them into the street, giving them verbal cues every step of the way. I felt joy and relief when we stepped onto the far sidewalk safe and unharmed. I’ll never forget the day they took my arm and trusted me with their lives.

I’m thankful that I too, have learned to trust and place my life in the hands of another. Daily, I take the arm of Jesus and trust His Spirit to lead and guide me. I know He will never leave me, forsake me, or cause me to stumble and fall into a ditch!

*Lord, thank you for Your Word of Truth and Light. Holy Spirit, teach, lead,
guide me and hold me close to you at all times that I may not stumble or fall.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Section Two

What Happens When I Believe in Jesus?

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-X2.mp3>

“I assure you and most solemnly say to you, the person who hears My word [the one who heeds My message], and believes and trusts in Him who sent Me, has (possesses now) eternal life [that is, eternal life actually begins — the believer is transformed], and does not come into judgment and condemnation, but has passed [over] from death into life.”

(John 5:24, AMP)

“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavily burdened [by religious rituals that provide no peace], and I will give you rest [refreshing your souls with salvation].”

(Matthew 11:28, AMP)

“He answered, ‘Because of your little faith [your lack of trust and confidence in the power of God]; for I assure you and most solemnly say to you, if you have [living] faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there, ’ and [if it is God’s will] it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.’”

(Matthew 17:20, AMP)



Chapter 4
You Begin to Think Like God and His Word



Think Like a Farmer

(You Will Harvest What You Plant)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-34.mp3>

*“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly,
and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.”*

(2 Corinthians 9:6, NIV)

Why is it so many Christians walk in ignorance, fear, and unbelief in the area of giving? Many live with a “lack mentality” rather than an “abundance mentality.” In fear, they refuse to tithe or give to others thinking they will not have enough. Their view of God is that He is a “God of just enough” not a “God of more than enough.” If you fall into this category, I encourage you to change your beliefs about God today. He is Elohim, El Shaddai, a Mighty God, and a God of Abundance. To experience abundance, you must understand life and think like a farmer.

The Apostle Luke tells us that “the seed is the word of God.” God established the Kingdom “Law of Seedtime and Harvest” in the Book of Genesis and promised that this law would never cease. In simple terms, the law says you must plant seeds (God’s Word), nurture them, give them time to grow, and then in time you will always harvest whatever you have planted. Love seeds produce unconditional love and compassion. Forgiveness seeds produce willing forgiveness. Healing seeds produce healing, just as prosperity seeds produce prosperity. In the verse above, Paul reminds us of the Law of Seedtime and Harvest and how it applies to our giving. When we give a little, we can expect a little, and when we give much, we will have much.

Every farmer and gardener understand this principle. A single plant in good soil (a soft, clean, and pure heart) will produce in abundance. The seeds you plant will determine your harvest. If you have a need, trust God and His laws and plant seeds in someone else’s life. If you want or need “it,” you must first plant it or “give it” to God or others. If you have big needs, then give big and activate the Kingdom Law of Seedtime and Harvest.

I encourage you to think like a farmer and trust El Shaddai, our God of Abundance. Start planting His Word today and watch your harvest grow.

Lord, thank you for your Word seed. Holy Spirit, help me to trust you completely. Teach me to be a good farmer and to give to others in abundance, trusting you for provision and an abundant harvest. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Who Are You Listening To?

(You Will Have What You Think About)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-37.mp3>

“And He said to them, Be careful what you are hearing. The measure [of thought and study] you give [to the truth you hear] will be the measure [of virtue and knowledge] that comes back to you--and more [besides] will be given to you who hear.”

(Mark 4:24, AMP)

At the beginning of this Chapter, Jesus tells the disciples the parable of the sower of seeds to illustrate the Kingdom Principle of Seedtime and Harvest. At the end of His teaching, the disciples ask questions about the meaning of the parable. Jesus responds by saying, “The sower sows the Word.” He goes on to explain the seeds are the Word of God and when planted in an open, receptive, and believing heart they will produce much fruit – 30, 60, even 100 times what was planted. Are you hearing and planting God’s Word in your life daily?

As Christians, we must examine who and what we are listening to every day. Why is this important? Because, the amount of Word we hear, read and plant in our hearts determines our level of faith. Little Word in your life leads to little faith. In contrast, if you have abundant Word, then you will have abundant faith. Why does this matter? Because your faith will produce fruit (results) in your life. The fruits you can expect include love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, and self-control. No faith then no fruit, or much faith then much fruit. It seems the older I get the more my taste buds have come to prefer the sweetness of peace and joy. What kingdom fruit are you eating every day?

Child of God, do you like what is on your table? If not, I encourage you to listen and plant more Word seeds in your heart. Mediate on this Word, pray for the fruit that you desire and watch as the Words sprout and grow. Soon, you too will feast on the sweetness of peace and joy!

Lord, thank you for your Word and for the Kingdom Law of Seedtime and Harvest. Holy Spirit, help me develop the discipline to plant God’s Word in my heart daily that I may have a strong faith that produces rich, abundant, and sweet fruit. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Honor Your Vows to the Lord

(Faithfulness, Honor, and Integrity)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-35.mp3>

“When a man makes a vow to the LORD or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said.”

(Numbers 30:2, NIV)

I remember the conversation vividly. I had confided to a fellow Brother in Christ my struggle with the idea of honoring a \$250,000 Building Campaign Pledge that I made to the church I attended before Karen, and I were married. Since we joined another church, I had mixed feelings about paying the pledge. My friend advised me that it was not necessary, as people change churches and change their mind all the time. It was in essence, no big deal. As I drove home, I reflected on his comments. When I came in, I told Karen what my friend had said. Her reaction was like mine – shock and disbelief. We sat down together and pulled various verses on this subject.

The verse above stared me in the face. Suddenly the confusion vanished. It was clear what we had to do — honor the pledge to God. As I sorted out my feelings about this conversation with my friend, I realized I was hurt and angry and that he had given me advice that was contrary to God’s Word. Several weeks later over breakfast with my friend and his wife in a discussion about giving, I listened to comments that directly contradicted God’s Word. This time, I was able to control my emotions, no more anger or resentment. Now, I felt an even stronger desire to live according to God’s Word. More importantly, the Holy Spirit showed me we are all on a journey. I repented and prayed for grace for my friend and his wife. I remembered that on this journey of faith, sometimes we all succeed and sometimes we fail.

Child of God, it is our steadfast determination to continue to be obedient and faithful, to run the race of faith with expectant hope, courage, honor, and integrity that counts.

*Lord, thank you for giving me the desire to live according to your Word in everything I do.
Holy Spirit, teach me to be faithful in all things. Through the blood
of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Mustard Seed Faith

(Your Faith May Start Small but It Will Grow)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-40.mp3>

“He presented another parable to them, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; and this is smaller than all other seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that THE BIRDS OF THE AIR come and NEST IN ITS BRANCHES.’”
(Matthew 13:31-32, NASB)

Here, Jesus explains the Kingdom Principle (Law) of Seedtime and Harvest in the parable of the sower who throws seeds on the ground. Jesus makes the point that while you may start small, with faith you can make a big difference and change the world.

On January 25, 2011, in a State of the Union address, President Obama gave several examples that illustrate this point. He told the story of Brandon Fisher, a small business owner in Pennsylvania who saw the news report that 33 people were trapped in a mine in Chile and that no one knew how to save them. Brandon thought his company could help. After drilling a 2000 feet hole into the ground, their Plan B succeeded. In an interview, one of his employees said, “We proved that Center Rock is a little company, but we do big things.”

The President went on to share another story. “Take a school like Bruce Randolph in Denver. Three years ago, it was rated one of the worst schools in Colorado, located on turf between two rival gangs. But last May, 97% of the seniors received their diploma. Most will be the first in their family to go to college. After the first year of the school’s transformation, the principal who made it possible wiped away tears when a student said, “Thank you Mrs. Waters for showing us that we are smart, and we can make it.”

Child of God, how big is your faith? Are you willing to believe in God and His Word? I encourage you to ask God to give you faith like a mustard seed, simply believe, lean on His grace, reach out for the sky, and change the world.

Lord, thank you for giving me mustard seed faith that starts off small, but grows and will change the world. Holy Spirit, help me to grow strong in His strength. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Power That Radiates and Attracts

(The Anointing of Jesus Moves In)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-36.mp3>

“Immediately Jesus, perceiving in Himself that the power proceeding from Him had gone forth, turned around in the crowd and said, ‘Who touched My garments?’”

(Mark 5:30, NASB)

Science has established that both humans and animals radiate electrical impulses or currents. All living things possess a unique “power” or electrical signature. Marine biologists have determined that electro-reception is the biological ability to perceive electrical impulses. They have discovered that it is how sharks locate their prey in the vast oceans. The detection of electrical impulses is used for electro-location, the detection of objects, and for electro-communication which is common in whales and dolphins.

This verse shows that Jesus was highly sensitive to the level of anointing (power or energy) he carried. So much so that he became instantly aware that His power had gone forth as a response to a simple touch of his robe. When we accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior, the Word tells us that we were born again and became new creatures in Christ. God’s Word tells us that the Holy Spirit established a permanent residence within us. The anointing of Christ was poured into us. Just as our very body became His tabernacle; our anointing, our power or energy changed. Jesus became our power source, our strength, and our might. Our innate electrical impulse, energy or biological and spiritual signature changed. We are now a copy of Jesus’ power and might.

Child of God, is your anointing radiating and drawing others to you? If not, I suggest you start spending more time with the original power source – El Shaddai. I encourage you to ask Jehovah Jireh to fill you with His power and might so that you too can radiate His presence. Be a source of light, and like Jesus, attract others for His glory and honor!

Lord, thank you for your anointing, power and might. Holy Spirit, fill me with your divine presence that I may radiate and draw others near for God’s glory and honor. Give me a fresh supply of grace today so I can do all that God has called me to do.

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

Rites of Passage

(The Transformation Begins)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-365.mp3>

“a woman came to Him with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume, and she poured it on His head as He reclined at the table. But the disciples were indignant when they saw this, and said, ‘Why this waste? For this perfume might have been sold for a high price and the money given to the poor.’ But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, ‘Why do you bother the woman? For she has done a good deed to Me. For you always have the poor with you; but you do not always have Me. For when she poured this perfume on My body, she did it to prepare Me for burial.’”

(Matthew 26:7-12, NASB)

Rites of passage help us move from one stage of life to another. They are designed to prepare us for what comes next. In our personal lives these include getting a driver’s license; dating and your first love; playing on your first sport’s team; your first apartment; and going off to college. All of these are often life-changing events. In our business lives, rites of passage include: your first day on the job; a big promotion; a salary increase or first annual bonus; company sponsored transfer or relocation; and retirement. All of these events carry special meaning for us, our family, and friends.

In the scripture above, the Alabaster Box and the perfume were essential elements in a critical rite of passage in the life of Jesus. The woman poured the perfume over Jesus to prepare Him for His crucifixion, burial, and resurrection.

Child of God, are you ready for the next rite of passage in your journey with Christ? Be assured, it will probably be painful and come with a price. Ask God to prepare you for your next assignment as Mighty Man or Awesome Woman of God, leader or follower, husband or wife, father or mother, son or daughter, friend, or neighbor. Trust Jesus to pour His grace over you and anoint you and equip you with all you need to carry out His perfect will in your life!

Father, thank you for rites of passage and for your anointing. Holy Spirit, anoint me with God’s grace, strength and might, that I am able to do what He has called me to do.

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

Citizens of Heaven

(All of Heaven Welcomes You)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-38.mp3>

*“But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior
from there, the Lord Jesus Christ,”
(Philippians 3:20, NIV)*

Here, Paul says that Christians have citizenship in heaven. Webster’s defines “citizen” as: a native or naturalized member of a state or nation; an inhabitant of a city or town who owes allegiance to its government and is entitled to its protection and privileges. A resident is a person who resides or dwells in a place. Citizens have rights that aliens, residents, and visitors do not. While aliens or residents have some rights and privileges, they do not have the same rights and privileges of citizenship.

In recent years, Houston has become home to one of the largest illegal immigrant or alien populations in the U.S. I see local authorities wrestle with the issue of citizenship daily. As Christians, we are called to be both aliens and citizens. As Children of Light, we’re called to live as aliens among children of darkness and to separate ourselves from the world’s ways. While we reside or live in the world, we retain our citizenship in heaven. As a citizen of heaven, we must obey God’s Word, His laws, His ways, and His truth; knowing that when we do, we are entitled to His protection and provision. As citizens, we are entitled to the blessings and favor of God. We are protected and immune to worldly economics. We can expect supernatural breakthrough and abundance. We’re entitled to special treatment and favor from El Shaddai, knowing the angel of death and destruction will pass over our house because we are covered by the blood of Jesus. We operate under supernatural laws of heaven when we walk the streets with the love of God in our hearts. At night, we can sleep in perfect peace.

Child of God, I encourage you to ask God to speak to your heart today about your status. Are you an alien or citizen of heaven? If you are an alien, invite Jesus into your life, confess Him as Lord and Savior and become a citizen of heaven. The saints and angels will sing praises to God and welcome you.

*Lord, thank you for the gift of eternal salvation. I confess Jesus as my Lord and Savior
and claim all rights and privileges as a citizen of heaven. Through the blood
of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Wearing Blinders

(Take Off the Blinders and See the Light)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-39.mp3>

“For the god of this world has blinded the unbelievers' minds [that they should not discern the truth], preventing them from seeing the illuminating light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ (the Messiah), Who is the Image and Likeness of God.”

(2 Corinthians 4:4, AMP)

I remember my first long international flight. I recall when an attendant handed me slippers for my feet and eye mask to help me sleep. Reading this verse, I'm reminded of that experience. Paul warns us that Satan has appointed his attendants (children of darkness) to pass out free blinders on every street corner to all who will take them. Satan's blinders will cover your spiritual eyes and create darkness. In darkness, you will be unable to see the truth of God's Word or the light of Christ. They will blind you to the radiant and life-changing love, mercy, and grace of Christ all around you.

Satan's blinders are designed to ensure that you walk around in a sleep-like state and allow fear, selfishness, rebellion, disobedience, greed, anger and unforgiveness to serve as the signposts of your dark world. Even worse, once you put on Satan's blinders, it is difficult to remove them. To do so, you must spend time studying and meditating on God's Word and His ways. You must renew your mind daily to God's way of thinking and stand on the truth of His Word.

As Children of God and Children of Light, we must refuse to accept any thought, action, or feeling the world offers us and recognize their true purpose – to blind us to God and lead us on a path of darkness. What do you see when you look in the mirror? Do you see Christ, the Image and Likeness of God smiling back at you? As you look around, do you see light or darkness? I encourage you to ask God to reveal any area of your life where you have been wearing Satan's blinders. Decide today to take them off so that you can see clearly and walk as a Child of Light!

Lord, thank you for your Word which is Truth, Light, Life, and the Way. Holy Spirit, teach me to protect my eyes, mind, and heart from the darkness of Satan and refuse any offer of Satan's blinders. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Wise and Innocent

(Know Good and Run from Evil)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-41.mp3>

“Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I am full of joy over you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil.”

(Romans 16:19, NIV)

Earlier in Chapter 16, Paul names several brothers and sisters in Christ and recognizes their efforts in support of him and the church. Then he issues a warning, “keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned and turn away from them.” He goes on to commend the church in Rome and says the reports of their loyalty and obedience are known to all. He expresses his desire for them to be “wise about what is good and innocent about what is evil.”

Like Paul, I spend time teaching and encouraging my clients. I share Paul’s desire that they learn to be wise about good and innocent about evil. We all know experience is a great teacher and that most people learn from their mistakes. Like any loving parent, teacher, or leader, I desire that my clients learn from my words and are able to avoid all of the hardship, pain and suffering of evil.

While I’m growing in wisdom daily, I cannot claim innocence from evil. Like Paul, I had a life-changing Damascus Road experience. I’ve paid a deep price for my new life and my relationship with Christ. Looking back at the rebellious, prideful, stubborn, and selfish fool I was; I can see clearly that my life was on the road to destruction and death. I praise God that the blood of Jesus has reconciled and redeemed me, and that I am clothed in His robe of grace. Like each of you, my journey with Christ continues daily and I am not yet all that He is calling me to be. I praise God that I am not the man I used to be. I am no longer ignorant of God’s Word. I’m thankful that each day I grow in wisdom of what is good – His Word, Grace, Truth, Light and Peace. Today, I walk in righteousness and wisdom by faith, and innocent of evil!

Lord, thank you for your Word, love, mercy, wisdom, and grace. I believe that I have received through the blood of Jesus reconciliation, redemption, healing, and deliverance from my sins.

Holy Spirit, shine the light of God’s truth upon my life. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

When Your Wins Become Your Losses

(Less of Me and More of Jesus)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-42.mp3>

“But whatever former things I had that might have been gains to me, I have come to consider as [one combined] loss for Christ's sake.”

(Philippians 3:7, AMP)

The world exalts winning and losing. Sadly, winning and losing produces winners and losers. Competition, the desire to win and fear or shame of losing, is evident in many areas of our modern life. We record our wins and losses. Yes, we celebrate, honor, and applaud winners, and ridicule losers. Leadership books, business schools, coaches and bosses encourage us to think like winners. They tell us to hang out with winners and run from losers. Yet, Paul tells us that in the Kingdom or spiritual realm, personal gain is a loss for Christ. In the Kingdom, losing for Christ's sake should be our goal. In other words, in the Kingdom, less is more – less of me and more of Christ.

Over a five-year period, I experienced this principle in my life on a daily basis. As God used Karen and the Holy Spirit to prune me, I was forced to give up many of my former trophies, wins, successes, attitudes, and ways of thinking. I came to see them clearly as selfishness, rebellion, prideful exaltation, and separation from God.

I confess, it has taken intense and purposeful effort, study and meditation in the Word, prayer, and repentance to walk this out. Every time I feel myself walking in pride and arrogance, I know that I'm striving to win at Christ's expense. Every time I make my own plans and agenda, the Holy Spirit reminds me that Christ is no longer FIRST in my life. Every time I step out of love with my wife, friends, or clients, I have diminished the light of Christ and His presence in my life. Every time I use the word “I” multiple times in a sentence or conversation, I have failed to honor, glorify, and submit to God. I praise God that I'm growing more comfortable everyday thinking and acting like a loser. The more I lose myself for Christ's sake, the greater He is within me!

Lord, thank you for the life-changing power of your Word. Holy Spirit, I invite you to rule every part of my life. Be on the increase that I may be on the decrease.

Help me to lose myself for your sake. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Short and Sweet

(Be Slow to Speak, but Mean What You Say)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-43.mp3>

*“Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No’;
anything beyond this comes from the evil one.”*

(Matthew 5:37, NIV)

The message here is very clear. Our speech needs to be simple, decisive, to the point, and most of all truthful. Have you ever noticed that some people say “Yes,” when they really mean: “No, I can’t” or “No, I don’t want to” or “No, not right now?” How can you be sure what they really mean? It’s simple, sit back and watch what they do next. The world has an expression for this. We say, “Actions speak louder than words.”

Every parent, teacher, or leader knows by experience, there are some people who say “No,” but they really mean: “Yes, I did it, but I’m afraid to tell you” or “Yes, I will, but I am embarrassed to do it with you standing here” or “Yes, I intended to from the beginning, I just didn’t want to hurt your feelings.” Remember, Satan is the Father of lies and deceit. Webster defines “deceit” as: the act or practice of deceiving; concealment or distortion of the truth for the purpose of misleading; duplicity; fraud; cheating; falseness; trickery, and guile; hypocrisy. The world is full of habitual liars, cheats, scam artists and schemers, who are busy trying to deceive and take advantage of others. Lies and deception are intended to manipulate, control, and conceal darkness. They are driven by selfishness and fear. In contrast, the truth is intended to liberate, set free, reveal the light. The truth is built on love and compassion, integrity, and faithfulness. Truth comes from God and His Word. Lies come from Satan who is incapable of telling the truth.

Child of God, ask God to speak to you about your speech and the motives of your heart. Remember that truth is born from righteousness and lies are born from sin. Let your motives be clean and pure. Remember, let your speech be short and sweet!

*Lord, thank you for the truth of your Word. Holy Spirit, wash my heart clean
and fill me with God’s love, grace, and truth. Put a guard on my mouth so
my speech can be short, sweet, and pleasing in your sight.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Chapter 5
Love, Compassion, and Forgiveness Move In



Don't Forget Your Covering

(Put on Your Coat of Love and Compassion)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-44.mp3>

*"Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity."
(Colossians 3:14, NASB)*

I like to travel to places where it's cold – I just don't want to live there. Every once in a while, it's fun to dress in layers and wear my cashmere topcoat, hat, and scarf! Since I have fair skin and burn easily, whenever I'm out in the sun for more than a few minutes, I cover up to protect my skin. Whether it's cold or hot, when I'm suitably covered, I'm free to go about my day knowing I'm protected and prepared for my environment.

As Christians, we must go through a similar process every time we venture out into the world. We must first put on a protective covering of love and compassion. Notice Paul tells us to put on love. We are naturally selfish and self-centered. We (especially men) do not naturally put others first. Our innate nature is to focus on ourselves – our needs, wants and desires. Paul tells us to put on our coat of love, and allow it to protect, equip and prepare us for all of our interactions with others.

With our covering of love and compassion, we are empowered to give freely and bless others. We can be confident in our ability to withstand raging winds and the storms that blow into our lives. We are transformed and made new, anointed with God's grace, and nothing is impossible for us. We walk under the supernatural laws of the Kingdom of heaven, growing more Christ-like each day. We are empowered to walk in dominion, power, and authority over all the earth. We can conquer Satan and win every battle. We can overcome fear, doubt, and unbelief; find courage to never give up, cave in or quit. We are positioned to inherit every promise made by God in His Word and are willingly obedient and desire to please Him.

Child of God, before you go out into the world each day, put on love, and walk as a Mighty Man or Awesome Woman of God.

*Lord, I'm amazed that your love for me would lead you to send your Son to die on the cross for my sins. Holy Spirit, teach me to imitate Jesus and to walk in love at all times.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Love Is

(God is Love and He Teaches Me to be like Him)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-45.mp3>

*“If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love,
I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.”*

(1 Corinthians 13:1, NIV)

In the last verse of Chapter 12, Paul set the stage for the most eloquent and powerful treatise on love ever written. I find it helpful to recall the words of John when he said, “God is love,” while reading Paul’s definition of love in Chapter 13. Paul explains in very simple language what love is and what it is not. As Christians, Jesus commanded us to do one thing and one thing only — love God and love others. He goes on to say that love is the rod on which the prophets and the law hang.

Love is the greatest gift we have received from God. It is the foundation, root, or source of our power. Love is the fuel that the Kingdom of Heaven (God) runs on. Love draws us to God, defeats selfishness, endures all things, and never fails. Love is the greatest threat to Satan because perfect love knows no fear. Love grants forgiveness and reconciliation, transforms and enables you to become more Christ-like. Love is the motivator for servant leaders. Love is the divine source that energizes our anointing and conquers every test. Loving self-sacrifice is the highest display of character. Love is modeled for us in the very words and actions of Jesus. Love is the opposite of the world’s way of thinking, speaking, and behaving, and always requires self-sacrifice. Paul goes on to tell us that love even surpasses both faith and hope. Yes, true affection for God and others, growing out of God’s love, is our highest goal.

Child of God, how’s your heart and your love walk? Are you securely grounded in God’s love? Is your anointing working and producing results in your life? Have you taken the time to check your heart lately? Is your heart filled with love? If not, I encourage you to call on God today. Remember, God is love. He is all you need!

Lord, thank you for loving me unconditionally and for sending Jesus to die on the cross for my sins. Holy Spirit, teach me how to love others unconditionally with a clean and pure heart.

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

Love Is Poured into Our Hearts

(Filled with Type “G” Blood)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-46.mp3>

“And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.”

(Romans 5:5, NIV)

To understand the power and meaning of this verse, we must go to the teachings of John. John tells us that God is LOVE and that if we do not love we do not know God (1 John 4:8). Here, Paul tells us that God poured His LOVE into our hearts. God poured His essence or presence (love) into us. God instructed the Holy Spirit to personally conduct the divine ceremony — to fill our hearts with His love.

When you were saved, you received a “Spiritual Heart Transplant” complete with a blood transfusion. You no longer have Type “A”, “B” or “O” blood; now it is Type “G” blood. Your new, Type “G” blood is made up entirely of LOVE particles. These LOVE particles contain your new divine DNA (God). Our Type “G” blood transforms our spiritual immune system and enables us to move beyond the limitations and constraints of the physical realm and into the supernatural. It becomes the basis of our anointing, power, strength, wisdom, and discernment. It provides our spirit with rest, peace, and joy.

Type “G” blood ensures our victory and ability to overcome trials and tests, guarantees our healing, and provides deliverance. It generates hope, confidence, trust, and reliance on God. Our Type “G” blood sustains our relationships with others, ignites our thirst for righteousness and hatred of wickedness. It enables us to sacrifice self-centeredness and self-interests and fosters our willingness to serve others. Our new blood gives us victory over sin and death and is our admission ticket to eternal life. Celebrate God’s love today. God’s LOVE changes everything.

Child of God, are you feeling tired or weary today? If so, I encourage you to ask God to fill your heart with a fresh dose of Type “G” blood. Filled with Type G Blood, you can do all things.

*Lord, thank you for giving me a new heart filled with your love. Holy Spirit, pour God’s love into me each day. Remind me that God’s love changes everything and His love is all I need.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Rooted and Grounded in Love

(Love is Our Supernatural Enabler)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-47.mp3>

“that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 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 3:16-20, NASB)

Here, Paul tells us that we have the very essence or fullness of God in us. We know that the Holy Spirit moved in the day we accepted Christ as Lord and Savior. The Holy Spirit filled our spirit man with the very DNA, heart, spirit, love and compassion of God. We were filled to running over with the love and compassion of Jesus. Each morning, we have a fresh anointing of His grace and mercy on our lives to walk out what He has called us to do.

Where does your power, strength and might come from? Do you operate in the power and anointing of God? Remember, it is only when we connect with the root (Jesus Christ), that we are established and grounded in love, that we can access the anointing of God. When we fail to love God with our mind, heart, and strength; and to love and serve others; we are cut off from the transforming, life-changing power of God’s love. Yes, God is love.

Child of God, when you walk in love, you are walking in the power of God.

Lord, thank you for your unconditional love. Holy Spirit, give me a heart transplant today. Create in me a new, clean, and pure heart that is filled with God’s love. Teach me to walk in love at all times. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Is Your Heart Full of Evil?

(Check Your Heart Often)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-48.mp3>

“And He was saying, ‘That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries,’”
(Mark 7:20-21, NASB)

Jesus always looked past outward actions and judged the heart or motives behind the actions. Here, Jesus declares the heart is the place where we must look for evil. In our heart, we store the motives for our actions. Our motives are the stimulus, influence, cause, desires, incentives, or inner urge that sets us in motion and prompt us to act. Our motives are the fuel that drives our behavior. Our motives are born out of our emotions, values, sense of identity and self-worth.

We can trace the impact of negative emotions on our behavior back to the Garden of Eden. Following Satan’s suggestion, Adam and Eve questioned God and His Word. Their question produced thoughts and emotions of distrust, envy, lust, pleasure, and desire. Out of their hearts came the life-changing act of rebellion and disobedience.

As Christians, it is imperative that we examine our hearts daily, as our hearts are the storeroom for our motives and the incubator for our actions. What negative emotions are you carrying around in your heart?

Child of God, are you walking around in fear, hurt, anger, resentment, disappointment, hopelessness, envy, jealousy, or pride? Left unchecked these negative emotions will motivate you to: rebel and disobey God; retaliate and attempt to get even with others; act out selfishness, envy, and jealousy; and to walk in pride and arrogance. I encourage you to ask God to show you what you’ve been storing in your heart. If you are carrying anger, fear, envy, resentment, unforgiveness, then ask God to give you a new, clean, and pure heart. Ask Him to fill your heart with His love. Let His love for you and yours for Him be the only reason, influence, or motive for all you do and say!

Lord, thank you for your love and grace. Holy Spirit, prune and purge me and wash away all traces of evil from my heart. Give me a new, clean, and pure heart that longs for God and His ways. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Love Is All You Need

(Love is Greater)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-69.mp3>

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude it is not self-seeking; it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.”

(1 Corinthians 13:4-8, NIV)

It's helpful to recall Jesus' teachings in the Gospels to fully appreciate Paul's treatise on love. When we refuse to love God and others, we: refuse to do the one thing Jesus commanded us to do; we are disobedient to God's Word; we do not honor God, we honor Satan; we allow selfishness, doubt, and fear to rule our lives; we will cave in, give up and quit on ourselves and others; we close our hearts to forgiveness and reconciliation. Refusing to walk in love transforms you and you become a child of darkness.

Paul explains what love is and what it is not. Love is the motivator for serving others; the source that energizes our anointing; given unconditionally only with God; modeled for us in the words and actions of Jesus; the highest development of character. Love adds to and enhances; it never takes away. Love never fails. Love protects and never harms. Love surpasses sacrifice. In the closing verse of Chapter 13, Paul tells us just how important love is, that love is greater and surpasses both faith and hope. True affection for God and others growing out of God's love is our highest goal.

Child of God, how is your love walk? Are you rooted and grounded in love? Is your anointing working and producing results in your life? Have you checked the fuel gauge in your heart lately to make sure it is filled with love? If you are running on empty, I encourage you to call on God today. Remember, God is love. As I write these words, the Beatles lyric echoes in my ear, “Love is all you need!”

Lord, you loved us so much you sent your Son Jesus to die on the cross for us. His blood redeemed, reconciled, restored, and healed me. Holy Spirit, fill me with God's love until I am running over. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Love and Sacrifice

(What Sacrifices Will You Make for Love?)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-49.mp3>

“Now Joseph, a Levite and native of Cyprus who was surnamed Barnabas by the apostles, which interpreted means Son of Encouragement, Sold a field which belonged to him and brought the sum of money and laid it at the feet of the apostles.”

(Acts 4:36-37, AMP)

Here, we see Barnabas was a man of positive encouraging words and action. Reading on, we learn that Barnabas befriended Paul, introduced and defended him before the other disciples. Barnabas put his love for Jesus, the disciples, and the church into action. He sold a piece of land he owned and gave the money to the Apostles. Barnabas serves as a good role model for every Christian. He walked in faith, love, and faithfulness both in words and action. He sacrificed his reputation, his wealth, and possessions for the Gospel.

I’m encouraged and challenged by this example. It’s easy to profess our love for others, but our words must be backed up by our actions. When we are willing to sacrifice our time, money, talents, possessions, personal desires and agendas for God and others, then we see love in action. Love without sacrifice is only empty words meant to pacify, impress, manipulate and control.

Child of God, are you walking in love with God and men? Are you willing to make a real sacrifice to prove your love is genuine and authentic? When was the last time that you sacrificed yourself for those around you? I encourage you to ask God to speak to your heart and spirit and show you where He is calling you to make a sacrifice and then do it willingly and joyfully. God set the ultimate example for us. He gave us His only Son to die on the cross for our sins. Jesus loved God and mankind enough to walk out God’s divine plan and sacrificed His life for us. I encourage you to commit to walk in love. Follow the example set by Jesus and Barnabas. Make a sacrifice and put your love in action!

Lord, your Word shows us love in action. Holy Spirit, teach me to make the necessary sacrifices to walk in love and understand words without action are empty. Help me show my love to others. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Do Not Hold this Sin Against Them

(Love Leads to Forgiveness)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-50.mp3>

*“While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’
Then he fell on his knees and cried out, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’
When he had said this, he fell asleep.”*
(Acts 7:59-60, NIV)

Reading these verses, I am humbled and in awe of Stephen’s act of love and by his willingness to forgive those who accused and murdered him. I’m convicted by all the times I’ve reacted with anger, resentment, and unforgiveness over minor acts of offense or transgression. This verse shows me how far I have to grow in my journey as a Man of God. As I sit here writing this, I see how God is teaching me to walk in love and forgiveness with a fellow brother I’m working with who is very difficult and exhibits poor leadership skills. I have asked the Lord several times lately if I should just walk away. His answer is a resounding “No, you have much to learn from Stephen and my Son Jesus.”

I think back to the day the Holy Spirit prompted me to step out of Operations and into our Children’s Ministry to help grow this critical area in our church. While I’ve always loved and enjoyed children, I knew why God directed me to take this role. He wanted me to grow and mature in my love walk. What a perfect place to make the necessary adjustments in mind, heart, and spirit. God led me to this training ground with 25-30 innocent children who give love freely, who want and need to be loved in return. I praised God for this opportunity for spiritual growth and promotion. God told me to watch, listen and learn unconditional love at the very feet of experts on the subject, little children. I confess that the experience made me a more loving and compassionate man. I am comforted to know my current tests and trials are also part of my training.

Child of God, how is your love walk? How far do you need to grow to measure up to the mark that Stephen has set? Are you quick to forgive when others hurt you? The next time you face others “throwing stones” (insults or accusations) your way, decide to walk in love, compassion, and forgiveness. Like Stephen, speak these words, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.”

*Lord, thank you for this example of walking in love, compassion, and forgiveness at all times.
Holy Spirit, show me how to love others in times of persecution. Help me face others
who “throw stones” with a loving and forgiving heart. Through the blood
of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Your Love Walk Leads to Rewards or Punishment

(Heaven is Love's Reward)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-51.mp3>

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.' . . .

"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'"

(Matthew 25:34; 41, NIV)

As Jesus sits on His throne of glory, He instructs the sheep on his right to take their inheritance and then He tells the goats on the left to leave. Notice the fate of the two groups. Sheep, blessed ones of God, take their inheritance in the Kingdom. Goats, the cursed, are driven into the eternal fire with Satan. Jesus says of the sheep, "when I was hungry you fed me, when I was thirsty you gave me something to drink, when I appeared as a stranger you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, when I was sick you looked after me, I was in prison, and you visited me." Jesus says to them, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

This passage tells us what we can expect: rewards or punishment, Heaven, or Hell. Our reward for following Jesus and walking in love with God and man is Heaven. For those who choose to be independent, apart from God, focus on themselves, turn a blind eye, and walk past others in need, the end is eternal punishment in the fire of Hell.

Child of God, we all get either rewards or punishment. Our love walk not only impacts others here on earth, it determines our ultimate destiny. I encourage you to ask God to soften your heart today. Seek Him and His Word. Ask Him to fill your heart with His love and start sharing this love with others. Remember, all eternity rests on this simple choice. When you walk in love, you are heaven bound.

Lord, thank you for sending us a faithful Shepherd. Jesus, thank you for showing me that love starts with obedience and sacrifice. Holy Spirit, give me a heart transplant and fill me with God's love, that I may be worthy of my reward in Heaven.

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

Doubt, Unbelief and Betrayal

(Love Defeats Bitterness and Resentment)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-55.mp3>

“Now when John, while imprisoned, heard of the works of Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to Him, ‘Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?’”
(Matthew 11:2-3, NASB)

Can you imagine the hurt and disappointment that Jesus, the man, felt upon hearing this question from John’s disciples? After all, it was John who baptized Jesus, saw the Spirit of God descend upon him, and who had said earlier of Jesus, “He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.” Now suddenly, John is asking if Jesus is the One, the Messiah, the Savior, or whether they should search for another? During His ministry, Jesus would be deserted by many of His disciples. Peter would deny that he knew Jesus three times, and ultimately Judas would betray Him for thirty pieces of silver.

I know the bitter sting of betrayal from a close friend, co-workers, and employees. Most leaders I know have faced deeply painful moments of unbelief, resistance, and betrayal by their closest advisors and members of their executive team. Whenever this subject comes up, I remind my clients that if Jesus faced these challenges, can they expect it to be any different? To fully understand Jesus’ full response to John’s questioning, it is important to focus on verses 4-6, with a special emphasis on verse 6, “Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me.”

Child of God, when others fall away, yield to doubt and unbelief, abandon or betray you, will you respond like Jesus? Will the love of Christ guide your actions, or will you turn to bitterness and resentment? When it feels as if you are on the cross, I encourage you to ask God to give you His love and grace. Decide to copy and imitate Jesus. Accept others, for who they are, forgiving quickly and walk in love with God and man.

Lord, thank you for sending Jesus to show me how to respond to doubt, unbelief, and betrayal. Holy Spirit, teach me to walk in love, grace, and forgiveness at all times. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Jesus Chose to Love Judas

(Like Jesus, Choose Love)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-52.mp3>

“Jesus answered them, ‘Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?’”
(John 6:70, NASB)

This verse is difficult for most of us to comprehend. Jesus chose Judas, knowing he would betray Him. Like many of you, I know the sting of deceit and betrayal. The deep hurt and disappointment can last years before forgiveness comes. Some never find peace and die with the poison of bitterness and unforgiveness in their minds, hearts, and spirits. I’ve faced betrayal in both my personal and professional life. Betrayed by someone I trained and mentored, who later stabbed me in the back for a promotion and advancement hurt; but it paled in comparison to the pain and hurt of betrayal by an ex-wife and best friend.

It’s hard to imagine what Jesus felt sitting across from Judas, knowing what was to come. That Jesus chose Judas knowing who he was, and what he would ultimately do, illustrates His ability to walk in love at all times. It highlights the depth of Jesus’ commitment to fulfill God’s will and plans no matter what. Judas’ betrayal was a necessary part of God’s plan for mankind’s salvation and redemption.

Child of God, I encourage you to ask God to speak to you about any unresolved hurt, anger, bitterness, or resentment from a betrayal in your life. Pray first and ask God to forgive you for your sins, and to give you grace to forgive the person who betrayed you. Don’t drink the poison of anger and hurt hoping someone else will be affected. Ask God to tell you what He wants you to learn from your experience. Next, ask Him to give you wisdom and discernment, and to tell you what to do and say in all of your difficult and hurtful relationships. Decide today to imitate Jesus. Walk in love with everyone in spite of their actions. Trust God to use others, even their acts of deceit and betrayal, for His perfect will for your life.

Lord, thank you for forgiveness of my sins of anger, bitterness, and resentment in the face of betrayal. Jesus, your love walk with Judas encourages and challenges me. Holy Spirit, teach me to look at others through the lens of love and forgiveness. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Chapter 6
The New You Is Full of Grace and Truth



Christ is Here

(Jesus in Me)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-53.mp3>

“But what does it say? The Word (God's message in Christ) is near you, on your lips and in your heart; that is, the Word (the message, the basis and object) of faith which we preach, [Deut. 30:14]”
(Romans 10:8, AMP)

To understand this verse, it's helpful to start with John 1:1, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Reading on, it says, “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us (John 1:14). Above, Paul tells us that the Word (Jesus) is close to us, on our lips and in our heart. Later in verse 17, Paul tells us that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (teachings of Christ).

Let's trace the process. God's Word (Jesus) is preached aloud, we hear it with our ears, then welcome and receive it in our hearts. We believe in the Word (Jesus), confess our faith aloud with our mouths and we are saved. Next, the Holy Spirit comes to take up residence in our hearts, pouring the love of God into us.

We study and meditate on the Word. God's Word renews our minds. The Holy Spirit speaks to us and reveals the truth of the Word. We grow in wisdom and discernment. We talk with Jesus in prayer and learn to walk with Him and others in love. We speak like Jesus and confess the Word over our life and the lives of others. When we stumble or fall Jesus picks us up. When we ask for forgiveness, we encounter grace. Jesus gives us grace to overcome every test and temptation. We grow in faithfulness and holiness. We are transformed and become new creatures in Christ. Suddenly, one day as we look in the mirror, what started with our ears, heart and mouth is now complete. I praise God that I am learning to surrender all of me to Jesus. In Him, I live. He is no longer near, He is here!

Are you hurting and lost? Come, let me tell you the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Messiah, who lives in me. Everything changes for all eternity when He comes.

*Lord, thank you for sending us your Word in the form of your Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus, I receive your love, grace, and truth. Holy Spirit, come live in me and rule my life.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Too Blessed to be Stressed

(Public Testimony of God’s Blessings and Favor)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-54.mp3>

“Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.”

(James 1:12, NIV)

James’ details the characteristics of the Christian life. He addresses the hypocrisy of empty claims of faith without works and gives us practical real-world advice on how to put our faith into action. I remember the day this passage came to life. Sitting in the audience, I felt the anticipation and pride of a parent. Memories of band recitals, award ceremonies, football, and volleyball games; only this was very different. It was not my child, but a Sister in Christ whom God had graced me to disciple and teach. This was her “coming out party”— her first public testimony of the amazing things God had done in her life.

The room was a buzz with fellow Christians who wanted to hear her secret. Her title, “Too Blessed to Be Stressed,” drew them in. She spoke of the recent miracle in her life. Recounted that she had died in an accident in her pool and how God gave her a second chance at life! As she spoke, the crowd was silent and still as the Holy Spirit ministered to every person in the room. She went on to describe the growth in her faith walk and how she now felt God’s presence in her life every day. She shared her new outlook and how she saw life in a totally new way. She challenged the audience to celebrate life each day. She closed with, “Look for God’s presence in your life in the small things, then you too, will realize that you are too blessed to be stressed!”

Child of God, I encourage you to examine your life. Remember the times that God lifted you up and carried you when you were too tired to go on. Be joyful and thankful for God’s grace, mercy, and favor. In the face of trials and challenges, I pray that you will declare, “I am too blessed to be stressed!”

Lord, thank you for your blessings and favor. Holy Spirit, help me remember the fullness of Jesus’ mercy and grace each day and may peace and joy rein in my life. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

The Body of Christ Meets Reality TV

(Christ Started “Makeovers”)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-56.mp3>

“Strip yourselves of your former nature [put off and discard your old unrenewed self] which characterized your previous manner of life and becomes corrupt through lusts and desires that spring from delusion;”
(Ephesians 4:22, AMP)

Reality TV has made “makeovers” the latest fad. We have TV shows that feature guests who get a physical makeover; home remodels; financial overhauls and learn to live on a budget; diet and cooking transformations. Some people put their marriage and family relationships on full display and attempt to learn functional relationship skills in front of a vast TV audience. Looking at the state of the Body of Christ, I am convicted that we must change our look, thinking and behavior and submit to a complete “spiritual makeover” in our daily lives.

Why do we need a spiritual makeover? A quick read of Barna data and review of the current state of affairs in the church reveals rampant failure to teach the Word of God and live according to God’s Word. Homosexuality and same-sex marriage have invaded the pulpit and are promoted as an acceptable way of life. Divorce rates among Christians equals that of the world. Barna stats show that Church membership, attendance and offerings are on a decline, with only 20% of Christians tithing regularly. Sadly, a large number of Christians say that messages and programs are not relevant and do not address their needs. There has been an increase in scandals involving sexual abuse, immorality, and misuse of funds among pastors and church leaders. Thirty percent of pastors regularly engage in Internet pornography. Every day, Christians are on display before a vast audience that includes God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, saints, angels of heaven, friends, and family, plus Satan and all the powers of darkness.

Child of God, is it time for you to invite God to perform a “spiritual makeover” in your life? Ask God to speak to you about any area of your life that is not pleasing to Him. Allow the Holy Spirit and his crew of divine assistants (Love, Mercy, Grace, Forgiveness, Wisdom, Discernment, Truth, Light, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, and Faithfulness) to take charge. Trust God, He created makeovers!

*Lord, thank you for the life-changing power of your love, mercy, and grace. Holy Spirit, do a spiritual makeover in my life and remove anything that is not pleasing to you.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Spring of Living Water

(Drink and Be Satisfied for Eternity)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-57.mp3>

“Jesus answered, ‘Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.’”

(John 4:13-14, NIV)

Here, we see Jesus asking the Samaritan woman at the well for a drink of water. As they talk, the woman comes to realize the man she is talking to is Christ the Messiah. After leaving the well, she goes back and tells friends and neighbors about her conversation with Jesus. Soon, they come out to hear Jesus preach the Gospel. Jesus and His disciples stay there for two days, and many are saved.

In this passage, Jesus makes the comparison between natural water and spiritual or “living water.” Natural water flowed from the well that had been dug centuries earlier by Jacob. Jesus points out that everyone who drinks natural water will soon become thirsty and forced to return and drink again. Jesus offers the woman and her neighbors, the Samaritans, “living water.” Jesus explains the “living water” that He offers them will provide nourishment and quench their thirst for all eternity.

The world, driven by a spirit of darkness, attempts to satisfy our soul’s deepest thirst by supplying us with power, money, possessions, sex, fame, and recognition. None of these satisfy us for long. Soon, the hunger and thirst return, and we crave for more. As a Christian, I am comforted to know that I have lifted His cup to my lips. I have tasted the “living water” that comes only from the Spirit of God and His Word. I have access to a free-flowing spring that never runs dry. The water is sweet, and it nourishes and soothes my soul. Best of all, I can dip into this spring and fill my cup to overflowing for myself and my entire house for all eternity.

Are you thirsty? If so, I encourage you to drink from Jesus’ cup and taste the “living water” that comes from Him. It is all you will ever need!

Lord, thank you for giving me “living water” that flows freely like a spring from your Son Jesus Christ. Your “living water” nourishes and sustains me with eternal life. Holy Spirit, teach me to share my cup gladly with others so they may also drink. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Justified by Grace

(Grace Changes Everything)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-58.mp3>

“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”

(Romans 3:23-24, NIV)

Paul’s indictment of mankind is very clear when he says, “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Grace (Jesus) enters in and changes everything. It is by God’s grace, (His unmerited favor and good will) that we are justified, declared innocent, acquitted, and absolved from our guilt of sin. The Bible has much to say about God’s grace and favor. These words are used 448 times in the Amplified translation. Webster’s defines the word “favor” as: something done or granted out of goodwill, rather than from justice or for remuneration; an act of kindness; goodwill or the state of being approved or held in high esteem; to hold or possess favor.

I confess that I am overwhelmed by God’s grace. I find it hard to understand why some Christians see God as an angry and stern Heavenly Father who sits watching and waiting to punish us for even the slightest mistake? God showed us His ultimate unconditional love and grace by sending Jesus to die on the cross that we might be redeemed and freed from sin. Jesus chose to die for us to show us His love and obedience to God. He took on our guilt, sins, and the punishment that we deserved. He died and went to Hell, so we don’t have to go.

Child of God, the next time you are feeling upset with God, disappointed that a prayer has not been answered, or upset that you are facing challenges; I suggest that you stop and remember one word, “Grace.” By faith in Jesus, we were saved by grace and became righteous. Jesus died on the cross that we might have life and salvation for all eternity. We were declared innocent, acquitted, and absolved from sin, and washed clean by the blood of Jesus. Remember, you have freedom, victory, and eternal salvation because of His grace. Let this truth sink in, feel the joy rise up in your heart and give God praise for His grace.

Lord, thank you for your love, mercy, and grace. Jesus, the depths of your grace are hard to comprehend. I thank you for your sacrifice on the cross. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Grace Increased All the More

(New Levels of Grace Every Day)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-59.mp3>

“The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

(Romans 5:20-21, NIV)

Paul shows us that the law came to identify, add to, or expand the list of sin; thereby making sin more powerful and present in our lives. He goes on to say that sin ruled to the point of destruction and death. Then God’s grace (Jesus Christ) showed up. I’m comforted to know God’s Word says when sin increased, grace and righteousness increased even more. When guilt, condemnation and shame increased; grace and forgiveness and reconciliation increased even more. When bitterness, resentment, hurt, and anger increased; grace, peace and joy increased even more. When hatred, and conflict increased; grace, love and compassion increased even more. When doubt, fear and unbelief increased; grace, expectant hope and faith increased even more.

When sickness and disease increased; grace, healing and deliverance increased even more. When hunger, poverty and lack increased; abundance and provision increased even more; when despair and hopelessness increased; grace, courage and confidence increased even more. When death and destruction increased; grace and eternal life increased even more. I give praise to God that His grace is new every day. I am comforted to know that Jesus lives within me, and His grace increases even more than any need or test I will ever face!

*Lord, thank you for your unconditional love, mercy, and grace. Jesus, your blood provides the grace I need to endure and overcome every test and gives me eternal life.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Greet Your Troubles with Joy

(Joy Is My Welcome Mat)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-60.mp3>

“My brothers and sisters, you will face all kinds of trouble. When you do, think of it as pure joy. Your faith will be put to the test. You know that when that happens it will produce in you the strength to continue. The strength to keep going must be allowed to finish its work. Then you will be all you should be. You will have everything you need.”
(James 1:2-4, NIV)

James uses strong language to address the hypocrisy he saw in the daily life of fellow Christians. His letter serves as a primer on Christian living. His words are very confrontational and challenging as he calls us to put our faith into action. Sadly, many Christians are good at talking the talk, but stumble and fall when it comes to walking it out. As James points out, the proof of our faith is in our actions, and in the fruit that we bear.

As Christians, we must reject worldly thinking and actions and greet our trials and tests with joy. To the world, this advice sounds crazy. When trials come, the world reacts with worry, anxiety, fear, and agitation. I praise God that others who have known me for years say they see the difference in how I respond to everyday situations. I have more joy and peace in my life than ever before. Yes, I have days where I get angry or frustrated for a few minutes, but the Holy Spirit steps in and quickly helps restore my peace. Often, I find myself welcoming challenges as an opportunity for spiritual growth, and promotion. God’s grace has made joy my welcome mat.

Child of God, ask God to speak to you today about your joy. Are you walking in joy and peace in spite of your circumstances? Do you trust God’s grace to continue in the midst of every trial? Do you have faith that God will use your trials to develop you into the person that He wants you to be? Commit today, to live by faith. By His grace, make joy your welcome mat and walk into your divine destiny!

Lord, thank you for this lesson on living by faith. Holy Spirit, help me greet every trial and test with joy and peace, knowing that God’s grace is all I need. Finish the work in me that you have started. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

The Word Became Flesh

(Jesus, the Man Understands all I Go Through)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-61.mp3>

“And the Word (Christ) became flesh (human, incarnate) and tabernacled (fixed His tent of flesh, lived awhile) among us; and we [actually] saw His glory (His honor, His majesty), such glory as an only begotten son receives from his father, full of grace (favor, loving-kindness) and truth. [Isa. 40:5]” (John 1:14, AMP)

John, Chapter One is one of my favorites in the entire Bible. John’s words are spellbinding and have captured the heart, mind, and spirit of Christians for over 2,000 years with this verse, “In the beginning [before all time] was the Word (Christ), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God Himself.” John tells us the Word (Christ) came to earth to live with us. This one sentence forces every Christian to radically examine their beliefs, concepts, understanding, opinions, and emotions about Jesus Christ.

Jesus, Son of God, came and lived on earth. He ate and slept, worked with his hands as a carpenter, played with other children, went to church, studied, and learned, laughed, and cried, felt disappointment and hurt, like all of us. Jesus was both man and God. This very fact should override and cancel every lie that Satan will ever tell you; that Jesus does not understand what you are going through and cannot relate to your situation.

I find great joy and comfort in this verse. I’m reassured and find confidence knowing that Jesus Christ, my Lord, and Savior, knows what I am going through. Jesus knows the hurt of betrayal and rejection by family and friends. Jesus knows the joy of love and deep connection with friends who have shared challenges and celebrated victory. Jesus knows we often desire to do what is right because our spirit is willing, but we fail because we’re tired and give up. Jesus knows that we can believe in Him enough to step out of the boat one minute and sink into doubt and fear the next. I confess, I’m comforted because Jesus knows me. Most of all, I find peace and joy that I know Him.

Do you know Him? If not, I encourage you to invite Jesus Christ, the Living Word, to become flesh and live in you too!

*Lord, thank you for sending your Son Jesus Christ to live within me. Jesus, you gave me the Holy Spirit so that I am never alone. With your grace, I have everything I will ever need.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

In Weakness, I Am Strong

(Jesus and His Divine Strength Show Up)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-62.mp3>

“So for the sake of Christ, I am well pleased and take pleasure in infirmities, insults, hardships, persecutions, perplexities and distresses; for when I am weak [in human strength], then am I [truly] strong (able, powerful in divine strength).”

(2 Corinthians 12:10, AMP)

In this verse, God’s kingdom thinking, and Satan’s worldly thinking collide. Paul’s words in this verse defy the world’s thinking and turn it upside down. In other words, what the world sees as strength is weakness, and what is weakness to the world is our strength. Notice, Paul goes so far as to say he is “well pleased and even take pleasure” in times of trouble. Another translation states that “he is content and finds delight in weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions and difficulties.” Why? Because Paul learned that when he is weak in human strength, he is strong, able, powerful in divine strength! Paul has discovered that when we are at the point of giving up, caving in and quitting, God’s grace (His divine strength) shows up and carries us to the finish line.

Whenever we feel weak and impotent and are on the verge of saying, “I can’t” His divine strength (grace) interrupts and reminds me, “With Christ, I can do this and will not fail.” When we cannot see a way out, His grace shows us a way and leads our escape. When we are insulted or harassed and persecuted, His grace steps in and enables us to walk in humility, love and compassion, even Christ-like forgiveness. When we feel afraid or insecure, hurt or confused, His grace infuses us with God’s love and enables us to walk in His divine wisdom and discernment, confidence and hope, courage, and boldness.

Child of God, ask God to show you the areas of your life where you are weak, feeling helpless and on the verge of giving up. In the moment, surrender your weakness to God. Allow Him to show up in His divine strength and walk in His grace!

Lord, thank you for the strength and power of your grace and your Word. Holy Spirit, teach me that when I surrender my life to you, I move from human weakness to divine strength and grace. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Understanding Mind and a Hearing Heart

(Pray for the Wisdom of Solomon)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-63.mp3>

“Now, O Lord my God, You have made Your servant king instead of David my father, and I am but a lad [in wisdom and experience]; I know not how to go out (begin) or come in (finish). Your servant is in the midst of Your people whom You have chosen, a great people who cannot be counted for multitude. So give Your servant an understanding mind and a hearing heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and bad. For who is able to judge and rule this Your great people? [James 1:5.] It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this.”

(1 Kings 3:7-10, AMP)

God first spoke to me about this verse in late 2009. I was struck by the humility of Solomon’s request. His first thought was to ask for God’s help, so he could effectively judge and rule God’s people. The next verse reveals that because he honored God with his request, God not only answered his prayer by anointing him with great wisdom and discernment, but also blessed him with great riches and wealth. From that day forward, I began to pray and ask God to grant me an understanding mind and hearing heart before every call and meeting.

I praise God that I have witnessed God answer my prayer as He peels away multiple layers of complexity and distraction and reveals hidden truths that lead to solutions, personal breakthroughs and destruction of generational curses and strongholds.

Child of God, are you judging the world, others, and your challenges with your own mind and heart, or a mind and heart from God? Are you operating outside the limits of your own understanding? Can your spiritual ears hear the cries of others’ pain, sadness, hurt and disappointment? Do you feel their despair with a heart that has been fine-tuned by God’s love? Are you able to perceive answers and solutions that have been hidden but are suddenly revealed? Are you able to discriminate between truth, lies and deception? Do you see the inner intentions, motives, and desires of others? If you’re still operating in your own strength, then I encourage you to get on your knees in prayer. Like Solomon, ask God to grant you an understanding mind and a hearing heart!

Lord, thank you for this powerful lesson on humility, honor, wisdom, and discernment. Like Solomon, I am unable to face the world and its problems in my own strength. Holy Spirit, grant me an understanding mind and a hearing heart at all times. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Scripture Is Fulfilled

(Trust Jesus to Lead You into Your Divine Destiny)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-64.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 later we see Jesus proclaim to all his boyhood friends, family, and neighbors; “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” Reading on, we see that the crowd was initially amazed at His words. Yet soon their amazement passed, and they became angry. Surrounding Him, they 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.

The confidence and boldness of Jesus’ message captures my attention. Jesus understood the historical and cultural significance of His time on earth. He understood that His power and anointing came from God. Jesus knew both “Why” and “What” God sent Him to do. Jesus was (still is) God’s messenger to the lost, sick, poor, and oppressed. Jesus came for one reason, to share the “Good News of the Gospel” and share God’s love, mercy, and grace for His chosen people.

As a Christian, 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 obedience and submit to His grace (anointing, power and might). Like Jesus, we must act in faith with confidence and boldness. Like Jesus, we must trust God to make a way through every crowd of protest or rejection even when it comes from our closest friends and family.

Child of God, I encourage you to ask God for grace that His perfect will is fulfilled in your life!

Lord, thank you for your Son Jesus. Holy Spirit, reveal God’s perfect will for my life and help me to be clear about my divine calling, mission, and purpose. Teach me to walk in faith by grace, and to act with confidence and boldness. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Showered with Grace

(Start Each Day with Grace)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-65.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’m amazed and overwhelmed by their meaning. The fullness or abundance of Jesus rains and pours over us over and over. It’s difficult for most of us to comprehend the measure of God’s grace for us. As humans, our minds think small with limits and constraints. As a Christian, a Child of the Almighty God, we must renew our minds daily to ensure that our thinking reflects the mind of God – His fullness, abundance, and love for us. Remember, once God’s “Faucet of Grace” is turned on in our lives, it delivers an endless shower of love, grace, favor, spiritual blessings, and gifts that never turn off or run out.

All the love, grace, favor, blessings, and gifts, that I received yesterday have been replaced with today’s endless supply. I don’t need to store them up, or save them or use them sparingly in an effort to make them last. Today, once again, my storehouse is running over with all I need. God’s Word tells me that His “Faucet of Grace” with its endless supply only stops flowing or turns off whenever I turn it off. You and I turn the faucet off when we abandon our faith and trust in God and walk in unbelief and disobedience.

Examine your life today, Child of God. I encourage you to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any area of your life where you are not believing God and walking in faith. Then, quickly repent and commit to love God with all your mind, heart, soul, and strength and to love others. Get ready for a refreshing shower and bathe under God’s “Faucet of Grace.” Be prepared to start every day under His never-ending “Faucet of Grace.”

Lord, thank you for your love and grace. Holy Spirit, help me renew my mind daily and realize that God’s grace is all I need for every situation, and that His grace never runs out.

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

Take Nothing for the Journey

(All You Need is in the Name of Jesus)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-66.mp3>

“He told them: ‘Take nothing for the journey -- no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra tunic. Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. If people do not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave their town, as a testimony against them.’” (Luke 9:3-5, NIV)

I’m drawn to the simplicity of Jesus’ instructions to the disciples as He sent them off to preach the Gospel. I’m struck by the contrast when I compare the disciples’ preparations with the process Karen, and I go through when we travel. My wife is the ultimate planner and organizer. She spends days researching our destination on the Internet and engaging me in conversation about our trip. We set goals and plan our itinerary. We create a budget and discuss what to take. We spend time packing and rechecking our bags to make sure we didn’t forget key items (cell phone charger). We prepare for emergencies and create contingencies. We even evaluate and critique the trip afterwards and discuss what worked and what did not work, and whether or not we would ever go back or recommend the destination to friends and family.

I think I would struggle with Jesus’ commandment to the disciples, “take nothing for the journey.” As I reflect on my potential hesitation and resistance, the Holy Spirit revealed the truth of Jesus’ teaching. He was trying to equip and prepare the disciples for their ultimate journey. He encouraged and motivated them to trust God for their provision and welfare. He prepared them to walk by faith and showed them how to trust Him in the moment. He taught them the need to always press on and to forget the past.

Jesus was preparing the disciples for the most important journey the world has ever known. I am humbled by the life lessons in this passage. I praise God, that I’m learning to face each day like the disciples. In fact, I am praying someday Karen and I will boldly and confidently go on a trip equipped only with the name of Jesus. As I write this, the Holy Spirit reminds me, what more do we need?

Lord, thank you for your provision. Holy Spirit, teach me to trust in and rely on you at all times. Remind me that when I take nothing, I am forced to rely on you, and you are all I need. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Knowing vs. Walking in the Truth

(Trust Jesus and Put the Truth to the Test)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-67.mp3>

“As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him. So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, ‘If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.’”

(John 8:30-32, NASB)

We don't have to look too far to see the importance of “truth” in the marketplace. Most Employment Application Forms include a statement that informs the applicant, “Any untruth or misrepresentation is grounds for dismissal.” Employee Orientations focus on the importance of truthful reporting on employee expense accounts, use of company credit cards, cell phones, computers, and company vehicles.

Sadly, we're bombarded daily by evidence in the media and the press that “Truth” as a virtue has almost vanished and is out of style in our society. I read an article recently about a college student caught lying and cheating on exams. He expressed his dismay over his punishment by claiming, “What is the big deal. Everybody does it!” It seems that the world in general and especially Christians have bought the lie; the lie that says, “The truth will set you free.” While this sounds good on the surface, this is a lie from Satan to deceive us into sin and death.

Let's take a look at some common and simple truths: cigarettes (tobacco) cause cancer; unprotected sex increases the risks for HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases; drinking alcohol and driving is dangerous and against the law; and over-eating and lack of exercise are bad for your health. All of these are true, yet smoking, unprotected sex, drunk driving and obesity are all on the rise. Sadly, the truth alone NEVER sets anyone free. The truth we fail to focus on is the need to walk in faith and obedience to the truth of God's Word.

Child of God, I encourage you to decide today that you will make the Bible the final authority in your life. Read it, study and meditate on it. Continue walking in faith on the road to righteousness. The simple truth is, when you obey God and resist Satan, he will flee from you, and you will be set free!

Lord, thank you for the eternal, unchanging truth of your Word. I thank you for the Light of Jesus that enables me to see through the darkness and to recognize Satan's lies. Holy Spirit, draw me to the Light and Truth of God's Word. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Clark Kent or Mighty Man of God?

(Put on Your “G-Suit” and Walk in Boldness)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-68.mp3>

*“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 12:9, NIV)*

As a kid, I loved to read Superman comic books. On Saturday mornings, I sat glued to the TV and was amazed and entertained. I watched with anticipation and excitement as mild-mannered Clark Kent ducked into a phone booth, came out as Superman, and flew off to confront and overcome evil.

Paul’s message on God’s grace should excite every Christian, young and old. Forget Superman’s form-fitting suit with the red cape. Child of God, put on your “G-Suit” (God’s grace) and go out and wage battle with evil. Come out of the closet. Leave your quiet, reserved, timid and politically correct self behind and go boldly into the world to confront and defeat evil. Walk in confidence and courage knowing that your “G-Suit” is made with the strongest, most durable, and reliable material that is known to heaven and man – God’s love.

Your “G-Suit” is strong enough to withstand any sin or temptation. With it, nothing is impossible for you as it transforms your natural into God’s divine power. Your “G-Suit” allows you to operate in supernatural strength and power, enables you to go anywhere and do anything, and guarantees that you win in every situation. It will never wear out, tear or rip, tarnish or go out of style. It will grow with you and become even stronger as you grow spiritually. Your “G-Suit” is perfect for every situation. It even lights up in the dark and will illuminate your path.

Child of God, the next time you’re confronted by Satan and his forces of darkness (fear, doubt, unbelief, and temptation) or see someone in need, I encourage you to remember you’re wearing a special gift from God, designed just for you. Your “G-Suit” really is all you need!

Lord, thank you for your unmerited and boundless grace. Jesus, I receive your grace and with it, I can do all things. Holy Spirit transform me for God’s glory. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Section Three

Your New Life with Jesus

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-X3.mp3>

“Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me [following Me as My disciple], for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST (renewal, blessed quiet) FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy [to bear] and My burden is light.”
(Matthew 11:29-30, AMP)

“Peace I leave with you; My [perfect] 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 afraid. [Let My perfect peace calm you in every circumstance and give you courage and strength for every challenge.]”
(John 14:27, AMP)

“I assure you and most solemnly say to you, anyone who believes in Me [as Savior] will also do the things that I do; and he will do even greater things than these [in extent and outreach], because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in My name [as My representative], this I will do, so that the Father may be glorified and celebrated in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name [as My representative], I will do it.”
(John 14:12-14, AMP)



Chapter 7
Surrender, Submission and Obedience



We Have Heard for Ourselves

(Share Your Faith that Others May Hear)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-71.mp3>

“And because of his words many more became believers. They said to the woman, ‘We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.’”

(John 4:41-42, NIV)

This verse illustrates the contrast between worldly and kingdom thinking. In the natural, we believe things because our senses tell us what is real and true. In the supernatural, our faith in God and His Word is the basis of what is real and true. Preceding verses, tell us the woman went and told her friends and neighbors about her experience with Jesus. Because of her testimony, many came to hear Jesus preach the Gospel. They came back and told her, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.”

Their experience bears witness to the truth that we must all hear His voice as Jesus calls out to us. We must hear and be willing to open the door to our hearts and invite Him into our lives. We cannot be saved by proxy. No one can repent, confess believe and receive salvation for us. We must be willing to believe and invite Jesus to be our Lord and Savior. We must be willing to surrender our life to Jesus.

Yes, as a Christian, we all have the responsibility of sharing our testimony, faith, trials, and victories with others. We are called to pray for lost souls that they will turn their hearts to Jesus. Like the woman and her neighbors, they must be willing to believe because they have heard for themselves.

Child of God, do you have a friend, co-worker or family member who is lost and does not know Jesus? Be like the woman at the well. Be a witness and share your personal testimony of all that God’s grace and mercy have done for you. Share God’s Word and invite others to join you at church, so they too may hear for themselves and believe!

Lord, thank you for sending Your Word to a lost world. Jesus, thank you for calling me and for softening my heart that I might hear Your Word. Holy Spirit, teach me to share the Word with others and to pray that they might also hear. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

He Asked for Permission

(Humility Leads to Favor)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-72.mp3>

“But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way.”

(Daniel 1:8, NIV)

This verse gives us our first glimpse of Daniel’s character, humility, and his understanding of the need for obedience to authority. At a young age, rather than defile his body and disobey God’s laws by eating the king’s food, Daniel asked permission to eat a special diet of vegetables and water. He showed obedience and faithfulness to God and man. Later, we see that Daniel was known for his willingness to be true to his faith in God. Daniel’s faithfulness came from His understanding of the importance of obedience. Reading on, we see the results of his obedience and faithfulness, “Now God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel.”

True servant leaders walk in the favor and blessings of the Lord. God’s grace (unmerited favor and blessings) is a reward for our obedience and faithfulness. At the end of the first chapter, we read, “the king talked with them and found none equal to Daniel in every matter of wisdom and understanding.” There are many lessons about God’s favor in the life of Daniel. God’s favor will result in: special abilities, talents, and gifts that we can use to honor and glorify God; outcomes that exceed the norm; special recognition and appreciation by others; promotion, as God elevates you and gives you preferential treatment, rewards and privileges; divine strength, courage, confidence and boldness; dreams, visions and revelations; and divine protection and intervention as angels go to work on your behalf.

Child of God, are you walking in the favor of the Lord? I pray that you will pray and ask the Holy Spirit to help you walk in obedience and faithfulness. Trust God, His Word, and his grace. He will reward your obedience and faithfulness. Walk in His grace and favor. Like Daniel, hungry lions will not harm you!

Lord, thank you for the model of an obedient and faithful servant leader. Jesus, you set the ultimate example for every Child of God. Holy Spirit, help me to imitate Jesus in all I do and say. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Post-it Notes from God

(God Knows We Need Reminders)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-73.mp3>

“These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.”

(Deuteronomy 6:6-9, NIV)

We have all done it. We have plastered “Post It” notes everywhere. We paste them on our walls, refrigerator door, bathroom mirror, desk, computer, and dashboard of our car. Why? The notes serve to remind us of important facts, events, dates, addresses and phone numbers. We use them to signify the things we want to remember and are afraid that we might forget. God knows how forgetful and absent-minded we are. That’s why he told the Israelites to put “Post It” notes with His Word everywhere.

The legendary Arthur Fry, the inventor of Post-it Notes, tells us that he was in church when he came up with the idea. Fry sang in his church choir on weekends and used slips of paper to mark the pages of his hymnal. He found that when he opened the book, the makeshift bookmarks moved around or fell out altogether. On a Sunday morning in 1973, it occurred to him that an adhesive developed by a peer at 3-M (Spencer Silver) could be used to create a better bookmark. He tried it and the rest is history. I wonder if Fry was an avid reader of the Bible and the Book of Deuteronomy? It’s clear to me, that God’s notes to him worked. We are all blessed because they did.

Child of God, I encourage you to ask God today what it is He wants you to remember. Then write it down and Post It!

*Lord, thank you for showing me the need to read, study and meditate on your Word.
Holy Spirit, post God’s Word into the corners of my mind and heart. Through the blood
of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Lessons on Obedience and Faithfulness

(Listen and Obey)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-74.mp3>

“And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife, but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.”
(Matthew 1:24-25, NASB)

Employment Applications, Confidentiality & Non-Compete Agreements, New Hire & OJT Forms, Policy & Procedures, Standard Operating Procedures, and Safety Manuals outline company rules, guidelines, expectations, and requirements. They even spell out penalties and consequences for failure to comply with these rules and guidelines. Compliance or obedience is critical for your success in the business world and in life.

This passage shows the importance of following God’s instructions for His will to be fulfilled in our life. Mary showed obedience to Gabriel’s instructions and allowed the Holy Spirit to come upon her, she conceived and bore the child Jesus. Joseph showed obedience and married Mary, despite his desire to put her away privately. He obeyed and did not sleep with Mary until after Jesus was born. Joseph was faithful and obedient to the instructions about the naming of his son and called him Jesus.

The Gospels reveal that Jesus was obedient and faithful to all of God’s instructions even to death on the cross. Mary, Joseph, and Jesus all walked in humble obedience and faithfulness to God’s commandments. As I meditate on these verses, I am reminded of the times in my life where I have been stubborn, rebellious, and disobedient. I am thankful that I’m now in a place where I’m learning the importance of obedience and faithfulness. I praise God that I look forward to every opportunity to show God how much I love Him by willingly and joyfully obeying Him quickly and completely.

Child of God, are you walking in obedience and faithfulness in every area of your life? If not, I suggest you learn from the life of Mary, Joseph, and Jesus? I encourage you to listen and obey. Allow God to use you for His purpose and plans. When you do, be prepared to be amazed!

Lord, thank you for Your Word and for lessons on obedience and faithfulness. Holy Spirit, teach me and help me to obey and be faithful in all I do and say. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Choose the BLUE Setting

(Set Your Mind on Jesus, Spirit, and Life)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-75.mp3>

“The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.”

(Romans 8:6-7, NIV)

Growing up, we had box fans and window coolers. I remember our first window AC unit. I loved to set the dials on Cold (BLUE) as far from Hot (RED) as possible. Here, Paul tells us the sinful mind is hostile to God, sees Him as the enemy and does not submit to God's ways. Scripture tells us that as Christians, we are friends of God and friends of truth because we obey God's Word. As a Christian, I encourage you to imagine a thermostat in your mind. Settings include Spirit and Life (BLUE) or Sin and Death (RED). BLUE (God) leads to faith, love, joy, peace, and abundant life. RED (Satan) leads to doubt, fear, hurt, selfishness, agitation, despair, and death. You get to choose the setting. You decide how you want to live.

Once you decide on God (BLUE), I encourage you to set your mind on Him and keep it there. Spend your time in prayer and meditating on God's Word until it shapes the way you think and act. Surrender every area of your life to God and trust Him to lead and guide you. Throughout the day, ask God what He wants you to do. Speak His Word and His promises over your life. When you are experiencing doubt, fear, worry and unbelief; recognize that you are under spiritual attack. Submit to God, resist Satan, and watch as he runs the other way. Create the habit of “Being Still” and listening to the voice of God. When He speaks to you, be quick to obey. When you're feeling tired and weary, praise Him and rest in His presence. Set your mind on Him and feel the cool breeze of God's perfect peace come over you.

Child of God, I encourage you to set your mind on Spirit and Life (BLUE) and trust God to change the atmosphere in your life. You will be glad you did!

*Jesus, thank you calling me into relationship with you and for calling me your friend. Holy Spirit, teach me God's ways, until they become automatic. Jesus may your perfect peace blow upon me and refresh my tired body, my weary mind and spirit.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Playing ‘Hide-N-Seek’ with God

(Stop Playing Childish Games)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-76.mp3>

“Woe to those who deeply hide their plans from the LORD, and whose deeds are done in a dark place, And they say, ‘Who sees us?’ or ‘Who knows us?’”

(Isaiah 29:15, NASB)

Remember when you played “Hide-N-Seek’ as a child? Talking to my friends, I know that many of us tried to play a version of this game with our parents as teenagers when we wanted to do something, they told us not to do. What happened? They always seemed to find out what we were doing. Yes, busted! Now you were in trouble for two things — the thing you did, and the fact that you attempted to hide it or cover it up. Usually after a correction (spanking in my house, “Being Grounded” or some other painful loss of privilege) there was a stern warning, “Don’t you ever try to hide things from me!”

This verse suggests it is the same with God. Ever since Adam and Eve tried to hide from God in the garden, we try to hide when we choose to disobey God. Just as parents seem to have eyes in the back of their head, God sees everything we do. When will we come to realize this and accept the fact that it is impossible to hide from God? We don’t ever get away with bad behavior or disobedience. Stop walking around in denial. Sooner or later, we will have to face the consequences. Stop playing games with God today. “Hide-N- Seek” is a child’s game, not for adults who want a real and intimate relationship with God!

Child of God, heed Pauls’ words when he says in 1 Corinthians 13:11, “When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. Isn’t it time you put away childish things and quit trying to hide from God?

Lord, thank you for your patience and for putting up with me when I am childish and play silly games with you. Holy Spirit, teach me to trust in God’s love for me and to never doubt His perfect will for my life. Father, I commit today to never attempt to hide from you again. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

The Look

(Jesus' Smile Is the Only Look I Seek)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-77.mp3>

“Peter replied, ‘Man, I don't know what you're talking about!’ Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: ‘Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times.’”
(Luke 22:60-61, NIV)

Here, we see the words, “The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter.” Jesus simply looked at Peter and he was reminded of Jesus’ prophetic words earlier in the day. This verse reminds me of the times in my life that my mother, or grandmother gave me “the look.” Their look said it all. They knew, and I knew that they knew. Like Peter, without hearing a word, I knew I was caught in the act. Their stern warnings and predictions had suddenly come true. They didn’t need to remind me of all the times we had talked about this or point out that I refused to heed their warning. A single straight-on silent look was enough.

The look caused me to question how I could have been so foolish, naïve, or just plain stubborn. How did I fail to see what they saw in my future? How could they be so right while I was so wrong? In those moments, “the look” always made me feel shame, and I wanted to find a place to hide. Thinking back on my childhood, I’m fascinated that years later, I can still remember the moments when I received “the look” or disapproval and the lessons I learned.

As with Peter, God uses moments where “the look” is a defining moment in our lives. We are never the same again. As a Christian, I am comforted and long to see the face of Jesus, as he welcomes me into His Father’s house. I long to see His open arms and His smiling face that means I am pleasing in His sight. Now that is “the look” I long to see. What about you?

*Jesus, thank you for looking at me with love and compassion and with a tender heart.
Holy Spirit, teach me to be faithful and obedient at all times. My desire is to see
your smiling face when I greet you in heaven. Through the blood
of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

The Lord Needs It

(Do Whatever Jesus Asks You to Do)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-78.mp3>

“Jesus sent two of his disciples, saying to them, ‘Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ tell him, ‘The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.’”

(Mark 11:2-3, NIV)

I’m fascinated by the instructions Jesus gave His disciples in this passage. He left nothing out. His instructions were complete to the smallest detail. Notice, Jesus tells them where to go and what to look for. Next, He tells them to untie and take the colt. Finally, He tells them what to say if anyone asks why they are taking it. They are to respond, “The Lord needs it and will send it back shortly.”

This passage speaks directly to our life as Christians on many levels. As Christians, we often say, “Jesus is Lord of my life.” But do our actions match our words? As His servants, aren’t we obliged to obey Him at all times? As His stewards, do we truly understand and accept that we own nothing and that everything belongs to Him? As His messengers and ambassadors, do we stop and listen to His instructions before we go off on grand missions to foreign lands? As His workers (arms and legs), do we execute His instructions to the letter with enthusiasm and excellence? As His anointed ones, do we realize that Jesus has given us grace to accomplish every detail of His purpose and plan for our life? As His disciples, are we clear about His divine purpose, calling and perfect will for our lives? As His faithful children, can we give a simple and clear answer to the question, “Why are you doing this?” Jesus himself, gave us the answer.

Like the disciples before us, let us be prepared to obey, and if asked, simply respond, “The Lord needs it!”

*Jesus, thank you for this instruction on faithful stewardship. Holy Spirit, help me to hear your instructions, to trust you completely, and to execute your plans according to God’s perfect will for my life. When questioned, may I simply say, “The Lord needs it.”
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Fed by Ravens

(Transformation Starts with Trust)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-79.mp3>

“The word of the LORD came to him, saying, ‘Go away from here and turn eastward, and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. It shall be that you will drink of the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to provide for you there.’”

(1 Kings 17:2-4, NASB)

Traits of a faithful Servant Leader include trust in God and a willingness to be used by God; complete obedience to God’s instructions; and courage and boldness to defy cultural norms, habits, and expectations. We see these traits in Elijah as we read, “The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he would drink from the brook.” Time passes and the brook runs dry. The Lord tells Elijah, “Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and stay there. Behold, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you.” Arriving in the city, Elijah asks the widow for food and water. She replies, “As the Lord your God lives, I have no bread, only a handful of flour in the bowl and a little oil in the jar; and behold, I am gathering a few sticks that I may go in and prepare for me and my son, that we may eat it and die.” God used ravens to provide food for Elijah by the brook. Now, God will use Elijah to provide for the widow and her son. The widow trusts Elijah and God uses him to perform a miracle in her life, as He fills her bowl of flour and jar of oil supernaturally day after day. A brook, ravens, a prophet, and a widow — all were tools of transformation used by God.

Child of God, are you willing to be used by God to transform the lives of others? Are you willing to do whatever God asks you to do, despite how foolish or ridiculous it may seem? Trust in God to provide all you need. Like Elijah, allow God to use you as a “Change Agent” in the lives of others for His glory and honor.

Lord, thank you for this powerful lesson on faithful servant leadership. Holy Spirit, shape me and mold me into an obedient and faithful servant and use me as a tool for God’s glory and honor. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Servant Leaders Give Up Their Seats

(Self-Sacrifice Is Lesson One)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-80.mp3>

“When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John.”
(Mark 10:41, NIV)

James and John had just asked Jesus for special treatment — for the “best seats” in all of heaven. Jesus explained that the seats on the throne of God were “reserved” and not His to give away. The remaining disciples overheard the conversation and became upset. They were offended and insulted over this selfish request. Instead of becoming angry with James and John or the disciples’ indignant response, Jesus used the moment to teach a lesson on self-sacrifice and Servant Leadership. Jesus ended His lesson with the words, “and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.”

Suddenly, the revelation truth and power of Jesus’ words hit me hard. The Holy Spirit revived a painful memory. I recalled that years earlier at my daughter’s wedding, my ex-wife refused to allow me to sit with the family. I was forced to sit in the back with the guests and excluded from the photo session. I was deeply hurt and carried this hurt for many years. In fact, I carried it up to the very moment I sat at the keyboard writing this devotional.

Over the last few years, I have prayed that God would give me a heart transplant and give me a “Servant Leader’s” heart. As I typed these words, I realized, I can now say that I have finally moved beyond the anger, hurt and resentment to a place of complete forgiveness. I’m able to see the small sacrifice, and my refusal to protest, as part of my training. My actions spared Kinsey, my sweet and beautiful daughter, discomfort, and potential embarrassment on her wedding day. What a small price to pay for her happiness. I pray the next time I find myself in a similar situation where I can bring happiness, peace, joy, and comfort to others, that I quickly, willingly and joyfully offer my seat.

Child of God, what about you? Remembering Jesus on the cross, what sacrifice will you make for others in your life?

Jesus, thank you for your Servant Leader’s heart and for your sacrifice on the cross. Holy Spirit, transform my heart and spirit, and renew my mind daily, that I may become more like Jesus in all I do and say. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Obedience in the Workplace

(Be Humble and Submit)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-81.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 walking out God’s Word. We do not know what the Word tells us to do, or we are simply choosing to be rebellious and disobedient.

I confess that I struggled with the issue of obedience for decades. As I began to study God’s instructions on this topic, I was shocked when the Holy Spirit revealed the startling truth and power of this stronghold in my life. I had spent four decades of my life as the Prodigal Son — living apart from God, His Word, and His ways. Looking back on my life, I was struck by the fact that every important mentor in my life had struggled with the same issue. They were all fiercely independent, prideful, and rebellious. Without realizing it, I had copied and mimicked their behavior, never giving a second thought to the consequences of my actions.

As a result, I forced the Lord to intervene — to produce a Damascus Road experience in my life to get my attention. This was followed by years of intense pruning and purging as I had to learn to surrender many areas of my life to the Lord. I praise God that by His grace, I now find it easy to obey. I am eager to submit to God’s Word and His ways. I’m finally at a place where I obey willingly and joyfully to please the Lord.

Child of God, ask God to show you any area of your life where you need to learn humility, submission, and obedience. God loves you, and if necessary, He will orchestrate a life-changing “Damascus Road” encounter in your life to get your attention. Don’t force God’s hand. Willingly obey and submit. You will be glad you did.

Lord, thank you for the season of pruning and purging in my life. Holy Spirit, teach me about joyful and willing submission and obedience. Help me to be faithful in all I do and say. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

The Ring and the Pig

(Don't Force God to Put a Ring on You)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-82.mp3>

“But I know where you stay and when you come and go and how you rage against me. Because you rage against me and because your insolence has reached my ears, I will put my hook in your nose and my bit in your mouth, and I will make you return by the way you came.”

(Isaiah 37:28-29, NIV)

My grandparents lived on a farm. I spent many childhood summers there and was accustomed to seeing livestock tied or tethered while they grazed. Walking out the front door of my father's house, which was a stone's throw from my grandparents, I stopped and fixed my eyes on the scene. It had elements of the familiar, but it was also very different.

Nila, my stepmother, who grew up in the Philippines, had staked a pig to feed. She had inserted a ring through a hole in the pig's ear and fastened a rope on one end to the ring, and the other end to a metal stake in the ground. She was working in her garden and observed my reaction. Coming over to me, she took me over to the pig. She explained that she had learned to do this as a child on her family farm. I asked her if the pig ever got loose. Grabbing the rope, she gave it a sudden pull and the pig squealed. She shook her head and said, “Never, he will only go as far as the rope because his ear is very tender!”

The power of that image stayed with me ever since. Sometimes God has to put a ring in our ear to get our attention, in order to teach us obedience. We, like the pig, are often stubborn and insist on wandering off. Yet, God desires to keep us close to Him.

Child of God, ask God to speak to you and reveal any area of your life that is not pleasing to Him. Examine your heart and identify the behaviors that have caused you to wander away from His presence. Trust the Holy Spirit to rein you in with a gentle encouraging word. Don't force God to put a ring in your ear to teach you obedience. Remember, it will be painful!

Jesus, thank you for a soft and tender ear and a receptive heart that is open to instruction.

Holy Spirit, rein me in and keep me close to you at all times, so that I do not wander off.

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

Chapter 8
Abundance and Stewardship



My Words Are Spirit and Life

(Speak Blessings and Life Not Curses and Death)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-83.mp3>

“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.”

(John 6:63, NASB)

In this verse, Jesus directs our attention to the spiritual realm and states that the Spirit gives life. He goes on to state that the very words He speaks are spirit and life. As a spirit being, created in the very likeness and image of God, we must use our mouth and speak like God speaks. As Christians, we must be aware of the power of our spoken words. Words are spiritual containers. We use our mouth as a divine instrument to activate our power and authority in the spiritual realm. We speak words to express blessings or curses, life, or death over our lives. We use words like building blocks to pave the roads that lead to our destiny.

In order to live an abundant life where we are walking in the favor and blessings of God, we must speak like Jesus. Speak what we want and believe what we speak. Refuse to speak what we see, what our senses tell us. Speak a thing before we ever have a thing. Call things that do not exist as though they were. Refuse to speak words of fear, doubt, and unbelief.

Child of God, I encourage you to be bold in your speech. Speak the Word of God over your situations and expect your words to come to pass. With your words, you become the final or establishing witness. Either you agree with God, or you agree with Satan. In the Kingdom (spirit realm), once we stand on one accord in agreement with God’s Word, the issue is settled. I encourage you to follow God’s advice. Choose blessings over curses and life over death. Remember, it starts and ends with the words you speak.

Lord, thank you for giving us your Word because your Word is spirit and life. Holy Spirit, teach me to use my mouth as a divine instrument for good. Help me to speak blessings not curses over my life and the lives of others. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

I Am Willing

(Healing and Miracles Start with Willingness)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-84.mp3>

“A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, ‘If you are willing, you can make me clean.’ Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. ‘I am willing,’ he said. ‘Be clean!’ Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cured.”
(Mark 1:40-42, NIV)

Reading about the man with leprosy, we can learn vital lessons about faith in action. The leper believed in Jesus’ ability to heal him and approached Jesus without fear of rejection. He stated that he knew Jesus could heal him if Jesus was willing to do so. Jesus was moved by His deep love and compassion for the man. He had no fear or hesitation and violated strong social inhibitions in touching the unclean leper. Jesus was willing to release His anointing and power to heal. Both the leper and Jesus acted in faith and expected results. Immediately the leper’s faith in Jesus, and Jesus’ faith in His anointing and ability to heal, produced a miracle. Willingness always precedes miracles. The leper was willing to risk rejection and ridicule to be healed. Jesus, filled with compassion, was willing to stop and attend to the leper’s needs.

Child of God, what is your level of willingness? Are you willing to surrender every area of your life to God? Are you willing to step out of the boat and walk on water? Are you willing to trust God in the face of every test and trial? Are you willing to obey God in spite of your feelings? Are you willing to honor God with your time and your money? God was willing to prove His love for us, by sending Jesus to die at Calvary. Jesus was willing to give His life for us. I encourage you to be open, willing to believe, trust in God, and remember miracles come when we have a broken spirit and a willing heart!

Lord, thank you for your willingness to love me and to sacrifice your Son Jesus for my sins. Holy Spirit, teach me to always be loving and willing, that I might be a source of comfort to a hurting world. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Jesus Understands Work

(Ask Jesus to Teach You About Work)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-85.mp3>

“After three days they found Him [came upon Him] in the [court of the] temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished and overwhelmed with bewildered wonder at His intelligence and understanding and His replies. And when they [Joseph and Mary] saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, Child, why have You treated us like this? Here Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You [distressed and tormented]. And He said to them, How is it that you had to look for Me? Did you not see and know that it is necessary [as a duty] for Me to be in My Father's house and [occupied] about My Father's business?”
(Luke 2:46-49, AMP)

As life expectancy grows for both men and women, the years spent at work increases. Today, many people are working well into their 60's and 70's. The average person spends more time with his work family, than he does with his spouse and children. As an Executive Coach, I often have to teach clients about the merits and benefits of time off, taking vacations, unplugging, and taking time to rest. Many of them struggle when it comes to turning off laptops and cell phones.

I understand the ignorance of unbelievers who've never read or studied God's Word, but I wonder why many Christians fail to understand that Jesus is an expert on work? He was reciting and discussing Scripture in the temple at age twelve, and spent his adult life working as a carpenter. He chose 12 common workers as disciples and trained them to save others and build the church. He preached most often in the market and shared 45 parables dealing with work.

Jesus spent 3 years preaching the Gospel, healing the sick, casting out demons, and performing great miracles. He introduced and modeled revolutionary ideas and concepts of "Servant Leadership." Yes, Jesus understands work. He always did His Father's work, even to the end as He was hanging on the cross. His final words declared, "It is finished."

Child of God, isn't it time that you ask Jesus to teach you about work? After all, He's an expert on the subject!

*Jesus, thank you for teaching us about the meaning and importance of work. Holy Spirit, show me God's perfect will for my life so that I may glorify and honor Him in the work of my hands.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus pray, amen.*

No More Excuses

(Quit Making Excuses and Walk into Your Destiny)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-86.mp3>

“One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, ‘Do you want to get well?’ ‘Sir,’ the invalid replied, ‘I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.’”
(John 5:5-8, NIV)

I find the interaction between Jesus and the lame man typical of the way many people act in times of need. Scripture says he had suffered for 38 years – a lifetime on a mat begging. One would think he would be sick and tired of being sick and tired. Yet, when Jesus asked if he wanted to get well, he responds by making excuses for why he’s in this situation. Why is it, I wonder, he didn’t scream loudly for all to hear, “Yes Lord, I want to be healed!” Instead, he made excuses that delayed his healing. Jesus ignored the excuses, took immediate action, and told the man, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.”

How many times do we imitate the man on the mat? We allow our past or our problems to cripple us and rob us of a full and rich life. Sadly, like the lame man, we accept our condition and resign ourselves to a life of lack. We become victims, accustomed to a life of helplessness. We make excuses for ourselves and try to explain why nothing is working in our life. I confess that I have imitated the man on the mat. I made excuses, not realizing that Jesus wants us to simply believe in Him. Once we believe in Him, we must walk in faith. In faith, we are to get up, pick up our mats, and pursue God’s perfect will for our lives.

Child of God, I encourage you to commit today to get up. Step up and over all that is holding you back. Speak to your mind, body and spirit and declare, “No more excuses!”

Jesus, thank you for this lesson on believing instead of making excuses for my situation. Holy Spirit, help me to simply believe, get up, and walk in faith with my eyes, heart, mind, and spirit fixed on Jesus. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Pressed Down, Shaken Together, Running Over

(What You Give Is What You Will Get)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-87.mp3>

“Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure — pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.”

(Luke 6:38, NASB)

I’m drawn to the visual imagery in this verse – “pressed down, shaken together, and running over.” I get excited whenever I see this kingdom principle at work. Every Christian should be able to see it play out on a daily basis, if you look closely.

My Godsend and wife, Karen, is the best example I know of the truth of this verse. She gets up every morning confessing and expecting God’s favor throughout the day. No matter where she is, at the auto repair shop talking to our mechanic or Office Depot buying supplies, God’s favor is always on her mind. Everywhere she goes, she expects and gets God’s favor. It may be: an open parking spot at Sam’s right in front of the door, especially on rainy days; discounts and sale prices even without a coupon or after the sale date; the first appointment on the Xfinity service schedule; accommodations when she has to return an item without a receipt; special offers, exceptions, and upgrades from travel agents and hotel managers when we travel; and (6) special and immediate attention from Juan, Victor and their crews for all of our irrigation, gardening and landscaping needs.

When we were first married, I was amazed as I watched the level of God’s favor on her life. We talked about it and she explained that she and God have a very secure and long-standing agreement. She knows she is His Beloved and that He has promised she will always receive His best and His favor.

I confess, I am no longer surprised by her daily praise reports. I have come to expect it and know that she will get it. Why? She loves God. She is kind, giving, and walks in love and compassion everywhere she goes. People are happy whenever they see her and feel blessed to have her in their lives. I know I do!

Lord, thank you for your love and favor in my life. Holy Spirit, continue to teach me through my sweetheart to walk in love everywhere I go. I know that love activates favor with you and man. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Transformation Follows Obedience

(Start by Believing)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-88.mp3>

“Jesus said to the servants, ‘Fill the jars with water’; so they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, ‘Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.’ They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, ‘Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now.’”

(John 2:7-9, NIV)

In this passage, Jesus tells the servants to fill the jars with water. Their willing obedience led to transformation – water was turned into wine. Not just good wine, but the very best wine. The steps to supernatural transformation (miracles) are in the text. Verses leading up to this passage, tell us Mary, Jesus’ mother, noticed the supply of wine was low. She told Jesus so He could use His power and meet their need. While Jesus initially resisted and told her that it was not the right time, he went ahead and intervened. Jesus took action to solve the problem. He examined the available resources and told the servants what to do. The servants obeyed Him and filled the jars with water. Jesus turned the water into wine. The Banquet Master tastes it and declares it as the “best wine!”

These simple steps of obedience led to the first of many miracles. As Christians, we have been given power and authority to perform miracles, to use our anointing to change the world and meet the needs of others. Are you willing to be obedient and used by God for His glory and honor? Are you a Miracle Worker or Agent of Change and doing your part to make the world a better place?

Child of God, needs are all around you. Ask God to help you have faith to believe in Him, and to perform miracles through you on a daily basis. Be prepared to get busy and to be amazed!

Father, thank you for transforming me through the power of your love and Jesus’ blood sacrifice on the cross. Holy Spirit, teach me to be willing and obedient, that I too may be a miracle worker in the name of Jesus. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

You Give Them Something to Eat

(Use the Name of Jesus and Perform Miracles)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-89.mp3>

“He replied, ‘You give them something to eat.’ They answered, ‘We have only five loaves of bread and two fish -- unless we go and buy food for all this crowd.’”

(Luke 9:13, NIV)

Jesus was always very purposeful and intentional. We all know the story of Jesus’ miracle, and how He used the five loaves of bread and two fish to feed over 5,000 men, women, and children. I’m drawn to Jesus’ initial response to His disciples, “You give them something to eat.” Just a few verses earlier, Jesus had given them power and authority, and sent them forth to preach the Gospel. They had finished their mission trips and returned to report their experiences. They left with Jesus and were off preaching in another village. Suddenly, they saw a great need.

Sadly, the disciples did not understand that they possessed the ability to meet the needs of the crowd. They saw limits to their power and authority, and yet Jesus’ response shows that He understood the power He possessed and had given the disciples. He had given them all they needed, but they did not know how to use it. In fact, the greater miracle had already happened. The disciples had been given all the power and authority they would ever need – the Name of Jesus.

Child of God, why are we so ignorant of our power and authority as Sons and Daughters of God? Why is it that even though God says we are higher than angels and demonic spirits, we walk around with a helpless mindset similar to that of the disciples? Why do we fail to understand that as Children of God, created in His image, we have all the power and authority we will ever need to overcome sickness, lack, insufficiency, strongholds, and demonic attack? We have power and might in the name of Jesus. Are you sitting back waiting on God for His solutions, answers, or miracles? If so, I encourage you to seize the moment. Trust God and do what Jesus told His disciples. YOU perform the miracles!

Father, thank you for anointing me to be a blessing to others. I accept your gifts and abundant grace. Holy Spirit, I commit to trust in your instruction and to walk in faith believing that I can do all things in Jesus’ name. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

God Sends a Talking Donkey to Save a Life

(Look for God in Unexpected Places)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-90.mp3>

“The donkey said to Balaam, ‘Am I not your own donkey, which you have always ridden, to this day? Have I been in the habit of doing this to you?’ ‘No,’ he said. Then the LORD opened Balaam’s eyes, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road with his sword drawn. So he bowed low and fell facedown. The angel of the LORD asked him, ‘Why have you beaten your donkey these three times? I have come here to oppose you because your path is a reckless one before me. The donkey saw me and turned away from me these three times. If she had not turned away, I would certainly have killed you by now, but I would have spared her.’”
(Numbers 22:30-33, NIV)

Picture the scene. Balaam is riding his donkey, and twice the donkey refuses to go in the direction Balaam desires. Seeing an angel with a sword blocking his path, the donkey lays down and will not go forward. In anger, Balaam beats his donkey.

This passage shows the extremes God will take to honor His covenant with us. God anointed Balaam’s donkey with spiritual eyes to see the angel and enabled the donkey to talk so he could warn Balaam. I find comfort knowing God loves us so much that He will use a burning bush (as in Exo 3:2-3) and a talking donkey to get our attention. He will use circumstances: a ram stuck in a thicket, to meet our needs (as in Gen 22:13) or clouds by day, and fire by night, to show us His presence and power (as in Exo 13:21-22).

As a Child of God, are you seeing with spiritual eyes, hearing with spiritual ears, and walking in the Spirit? God said he will never leave us or forsake us. He is at work all the time. Be open to His ways and allow His angels to minister to you, help you, and fight for you. God is still in the miracle business and honors His everlasting covenant. I encourage you to look for Him and expect Him at all times. Watch Him at work and be prepared to be amazed!

Father, thank you for spiritual eyes to see and ears to hear. Holy Spirit, I stand in awe of you at work in my life and know God’s thoughts and ways are always bigger than I can ever imagine. Holy Spirit, help me to trust you at all times. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Spiritual Blessings Activate Material Blessings

(The Blessing Exchange)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-91.mp3>

“For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings.”

(Romans 15:26-27, NIV)

Paul makes it very clear. If you have received a spiritual blessing, you are obligated to share your material blessings. This verse provides the foundation and explains why many churches have changed the order of worship activities and collect the offering after the worship service. This practice allows for the spiritual and material exchange to be complete. The Holy Spirit can now minister to and lead the congregation in their giving. They're no longer stuck in the routine or ritual practice of giving. I can personally attest to the impact of this approach on our giving.

Karen and I are faithful in our tithing. We always write out our tithe as soon as a check comes in. Many times, I've been led to give more to supplement my tithe as the Holy Spirit prompts my heart during the offering. At times, I have been called to give everything I had, to literally empty my pockets. I praise God that I was cheerfully and joyfully obedient. Paul illustrates a critical element in giving when he says, “they were pleased to give.”

Child of God, do you give with a joyful and willing heart? If you give grudgingly, or reluctantly, keep your money. I encourage you to look at your normal thoughts and habits regarding tithes and offerings. Has it become simply a religious ritual? Is your heart and spirit fully engaged when you give? If you aren't tithing regularly, I suggest you start today. If you don't give offerings above your tithes, pray today, and ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you and lead you. Decide today to get engaged in the spiritual and material blessings exchange.

*Jesus, thank you for blessing me with a joyful and willing heart to give. I know that I can never
out give you. Holy Spirit, help me to always remember that when I give, I honor God.*

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

From Famine to Abundant Life

(Life in Goshen)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-92.mp3>

“Joseph settled his father and brethren and gave them a possession in Egypt in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses (Goshen), as Pharaoh commanded. And Joseph supplied his father and his brethren and all his father's household with food, according to [the needs of] their families.”
(Genesis 47:11-12, AMP)

Imagine Jacob and his sons' thoughts and emotions as they leave Canaan for their reunion with Joseph, and the new life in Egypt. In Canaan, there was famine, poverty, misery, and death. In Goshen, there is abundance, wealth, joy, and life. Joseph, who had been sold into slavery by his brothers because of their jealousy, forgave them and used his position and relationship with Pharaoh to bless them with land, food, and possessions. A son that had been lost and presumed dead was now found. A father that had grieved for a lost son was filled with relief and joy. Brothers who had carried the guilt and shame of their betrayal, were reconciled, and forgiven. A family splintered and broken was now whole and complete. God not only restored Joseph to his family, He made things better than before. Because of Joseph, Jacob and his sons were granted favor and protection. They were given the best of the land on which to build houses and graze their flocks. All their needs were met. Years of faithful obedience and life in the presence of God paid off for Joseph and his family.

Child of God, in the midst of lack and insufficiency, remain faithful to God. Like Joseph, continue to trust God even in the face of persecution and trial. In the midst of crisis and lack, trust God. In the face of lies and betrayal, trust God. When the world is falling apart around you, trust God. Trust God to provide a way out when it looks like there is no escape. Like Joseph, hold onto your confidence and hope. In the midst of famine, poverty, misery and death, God will provide protection, provision, and abundant life. With God, there is life in the land of Goshen, even in the midst of famine and lack.

Father, thank you for this powerful lesson on the rewards of faithfulness and trust. I refuse to walk in fear and unbelief. Holy Spirit, I know you will lead and guide me into a life of promise, protection, and abundance (my Goshen). Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Call Things that Are Not as Though They Are

(Confess God's Word over Your Life)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-93.mp3>

"As it is written: 'I have made you a father of many nations.' He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed--the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were."

(Romans 4:17, NIV)

Here, we read that God referred to Abraham as the "father of many nations." God spoke life, children, generations and even nations into Abraham's life. Abraham chose to believe God's Word through faith. As Children of God, we must learn to imitate God and speak like God. Our mouth is a divine instrument that we use to speak blessings or curses, life, or death into our lives. Just as God spoke the world into existence, we must develop the habit of calling things that are not as though they are. We can either speak, "I never have any money and will never get out of debt," or "God has blessed with me with abundance, I have all the money I need, all my bills are paid, and I am out of debt." The world calls it speaking positive affirmations, but as Christians, we know it is more than that, we are speaking confessions of our faith.

As Christians, we must speak what we need and want, not what we see. We must confess life, not death; faith, not fear; love and compassion, not self-interest and selfishness; deliverance and freedom, not slavery and bondage; health and wellness, not sickness and disease; abundance, prosperity, and success, not lack insufficiency, failure, and ruin; hope and confidence, not worry and anxiety; wholeness, not brokenness; grace and forgiveness, not condemnation and judgment; gratitude and thankfulness, not discontentment and dissatisfaction. We must learn how to control our thoughts and our mouth and refuse to speak curses over our life. The more I grow spiritually, the more I pause before I open my mouth to speak. Whenever I hear a negative thought or (curse) come out of my mouth, I immediately repent and cancel out my words with a confession of faith.

Child of God, I encourage you to ask God to show you any area of your life where you need to change your words, and call the things that are not, as though they are!

Father, thank you for your Word which is Spirit, Life, Truth, and Light. Holy Spirit, help me use my mouth as an instrument of my faith and to copy Jesus in the words I speak. Teach me to call the things that are not, as though they are. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Job Offer Letter from God

(God Made the First Hiring Decision)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-94.mp3>

“The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.”
(Genesis 2:15, NIV)

Headlines read, “Archaeologists Announce Amazing Discovery - Job Offer Letter from God.” Breaking news reports archaeologists working in a remote cave on the summit of Mount Ararat, discovered what is believed to be the first written Job Offer Letter. Imagine the buzz on social media and the Internet. Historians, theologians, biblical scholars, church officials, authors, business leaders, even HR professionals across the globe, are gathering to carefully examine and debate the artifact’s authenticity. One expert proclaims, “This is absolutely amazing - world changing! We must now reframe our thinking and rewrite all the books about business and the role of God and faith in the marketplace. The perfectly preserved manuscript is quoted below.

Dear Adam,

It is with great pleasure and excitement, that I write this letter to you. On behalf of Holy Trinity Enterprises, we are pleased to offer you the position of Master Gardener, Manager and Steward with immediate promotion to Husband and Father of Mankind. We created you just for this unique role and have every confidence in your ability to do the job. We will provide you with all you need, including an amazing compensation package and great benefits. We provide a groundbreaking one-on-one coaching and mentoring program. You can work from home, no commute necessary. You do not even have to wear clothes. I know you will like that. We have decided it is not good for you to be alone, so we have immediate plans to give you a companion and wife (Eve) to help you. We do need you to start later today. We have great plans for you, Adam. Our Master Plan for Mankind and Planet Earth will rest on your shoulders. I know you can do it. We want to welcome you aboard. I will see you later today in the Garden.

Always Yours,

Jehovah, Jehovah Nissi, Jehovah Shalom, Jehovah Rophe, Jehovah Tsabaoth, Jehovah Elohay, El Shaddai, Elohim, El Elyon, Adonai, Chairman, Holy Trinity Enterprises, I AM, Lord Your God, Creator and Heavenly Father, (Dad)

Father, thank for your Word and for teaching me about work. Jesus, you created the model and set the standard for work that honors God. Holy Spirit, help me honor and glorify God in my daily work life. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Tap into Your Power Source

(Plug in and Get Charged)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-95.mp3>

“that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 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 3:16-20, NASB)

In the business world, power is important. Power is defined by organization charts, titles and positions, job duties and responsibilities, perks and privileges, office location, access to data and information, annual bonuses, and promotion opportunities. Executives, mid-level manager, supervisors, foremen and team leads have power. Yes, individuals have power. It’s all a matter of degree. As a Christian, you must ask yourself: What power do I have? Where does my power come from? Does my power come from man or God? If God has anointed me with power, how will I know if I have it, and how am I supposed to use it? Am I using my power according to His will or my own?

In the spiritual realm, we were filled with the fullness of God (His love and grace) when we connected with Jesus Christ, the root source of our power. We have spiritual power when we walk in love and obey God’s commandments to love others. When we stand and operate in God’s “Circle of Love,” we access the anointing and power of God through His grace. When we fail to love God and others, we are cut off from our power source.

Child of God, remember that God is love. He anointed us with His grace because He loved us. I encourage you to tap into your power source, the grace and love of God. Be empowered, model Jesus and connect with everyone you meet, by being loving, kind and compassionate!

Father, thank you for your love and for the sacrifice of your Son on the cross. Holy Spirit, give me a heart transplant today with a heart that is clean, pure, and filled with God’s love and compassion and teach me to walk in love at all times. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Section Four

Jesus Teaches You How to Live with Others

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-X4.mp3>

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

(John 13:34-35, NASB)

“But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. . . Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. ‘Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned.

Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. . . For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

(Luke 6:35-38, NIV)



Chapter 9
Live in Peace and Harmony



Do You Admonish, Counsel, and Instruct?

(Help Others Grow in Their Faith)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-97.mp3>

“Personally I am satisfied about you, my brethren, that you yourselves are rich in goodness, amply filled with all [spiritual] knowledge and competent to admonish and counsel and instruct one another also.”

(Romans 15:14, AMP)

The life of a mature Christian includes some basic responsibilities. Paul addresses them and says you must be rich in goodness and amply filled with spiritual knowledge; and competent in your ability to admonish, counsel and instruct others in the ways of righteousness. Looking around at the Body of Christ, it seems there are few Christians who are carrying out these duties. It is mostly due to a lack of knowledge of God’s Word, lack of skill and ability, and lack of character. Why is that? One reason is because many churches fail to adequately teach God’s Word, resulting in many Christians who are biblically illiterate. They spend time reading the newspaper but fail to pick up God’s Word to study and meditate. To become a mature Christian, you must have an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, know the voice of the Holy Spirit, be obedient to His voice, and walk in love. You must refuse to let offense take you out of relationship with others, especially other Christians. You must accept the assignment to admonish, counsel and instruct others; and learn to speak the truth in love at all times. Recognize that God will use you to build others up and encourage them.

God uses me to speak truth into the lives of others, both in my work and my personal life. He has called me to a higher standard of boldness in all I do and say. While I don’t always trust my ability to do it well, I do trust the Holy Spirit to speak through me and use me.

Child of God, are you watching a Brother or Sister in Christ struggle, stumble, and fall? Even worse, are you judging them, yet taking no action to help them? If so, I urge you to pray for them and ask God what He wants you to do. Let God use you as an instrument for His purpose and glory to admonish, counsel and instruct.

Father, thank you for giving me a hunger and thirst for your Word and for righteousness, that I may be a source of light and truth. Holy Spirit, I commit to respond to your call and to act in boldness as your chosen instrument, to assist others in their walk with you.

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

Love Is Greater

(Love is All You Need)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-98.mp3>

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.”

(1 Corinthians 13:4-8, NIV)

When we read Paul’s treatise on love, it is helpful to recall the words of John when he said, “God is love.” Here, Paul explains in simple language what love is and what it is not. Verse 13, says, “But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.” Without faith, we are alone in this world and will live in fear, doubt, and unbelief. Without hope, we are prone to give up, cave in and quit on ourselves and others. Without love, we will be consumed with selfishness and be incapable of living in harmony, peace, and joy. In fear, hurt, and anger, we will attempt to control and manipulate others. Yet, over time, when we follow Jesus’ instructions to love God and man, we will be transformed and become more Christ-like. Walking in His love positions us to receive God’s grace, blessings, and favor. Walking in His love helps us become eager and willing to help and serve others. Walking in His love transforms not only our lives, but the lives of others around us.

Child of God, have you checked the condition of your heart lately? Is it filled with love? If not, I encourage you to pray and ask the Holy Spirit to help you. Remember, God is love. His love is stronger and greater than all of your problems, and challenges. His love is all you need!

Father, thank you for loving me enough to send Jesus to die on the cross. Holy Spirit, teach me how to love like Jesus and to be loving to others in all I do and say. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Peace in Times of Turmoil

(Hang on to Your Peace)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-99.mp3>

“Peace I leave with you; My [own] peace I now give and bequeath to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. [Stop allowing yourselves to be agitated and disturbed; and do not permit yourselves to be fearful and intimidated and cowardly and unsettled.]”

(John 14:27, AMP)

Why is it that so many people run around today acting like “Chicken Little,” in a state of panic with their arms up in the air crying out, “The sky is falling! The sky is falling!” The internet, radio, TV, social media and newspapers broadcast endless messages in bold headlines announcing doom and destruction. TV talk shows are filled with experts who tell us how bad it is, and that we can only expect it to get worse. On every front, we are bombarded with endless bad news.

In this verse, we find Jesus speaking to His disciples just before the crucifixion. He tells them that when He leaves, the Holy Spirit will come to them and will serve as their Comforter, Counselor, Helper, Advisor, Advocate, Strengthener, Guide, and Teacher. Jesus gives them a very precious gift, His answer to staying strong and succeeding in difficult times. Jesus gives His disciples the gift of peace. Some translations use the Hebrew word “Shalom” for peace, prosperity, and wholeness. Jesus gave us peace that: transcends your circumstances; defies understanding; cannot be taken away from you; calms a troubled heart; conquers worry, doubt and fear; refuses to be swayed by our emotions; is not easily intimidated; is brave and courageous; refuses to flinch or waver; enables us to stare death in the face knowing that in the end, victory is ours; comes with prosperity and wholeness in every area of our life; and was given freely to all men by the Prince of Peace.

Child of God, I encourage you to celebrate and wrap yourself in the priceless robe of peace that was bought with a price, the blood of Jesus. Live in His peace today!

Father, I thank you leading me to a place of green pastures and still waters. Thank you for restoring my soul. Holy Spirit, help me remember who I am in Christ, and that with Jesus, I can have perfect peace in the midst of every storm. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Peace with God

(The Price of Peace)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-100.mp3>

*“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith,
we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,”*

(Romans 5:1, NIV)

The older I get, the more I value my peace and have come to realize that peace always comes at a price. I have decided that I will not sacrifice or pay my peace for somebody else’s drama.

As a nation founded on the belief that we have a right to be free and live peacefully, we must always remember that countless men and women chose to pay the ultimate price to ensure our freedom, our peace and way of life. As children, we pay the price of innocence to grow up and find our way in the world. As students, we pay the price of humility and ignorance to acquire knowledge and understanding. As young adults, we pay the price of loss and separation from family and friends as we go off and find our own way. As husbands and wives, we pay the price of personal sacrifice and compromise to ensure our marriage endures and prospers. As parents, we pay the price of hard work and perseverance to give our children a better life than the one we had. As employees, we pay the price of loyalty, and discipline to pursue a vision bigger than ourselves. As team members, we pay the price of collaboration and endure conflict for the success and welfare of the team. As managers, we pay the price of achievement as we help others strive for excellence. As servant leaders, we pay the price of selfless love and compassion to serve and lead others. As Christians, we pay the price of faith and belief in Jesus Christ to escape a life of sin and death and achieve eternal salvation.

Child of God, are you willing to pay the price of humility, surrender and obedience to be all that God has called you to be? I encourage you to ask God today for perfect peace in your life. Remember that peace always comes with a price — death of self, fear, and doubt. Trust and rely on God minute by minute, day by day, and walk in His peace. It is worth the price!

*Lord, thank you for perfect peace. Jesus, keep me in your perfect peace at all times. Give me a soft and humble heart, and a desire for peace that only comes from you and your grace.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Sibling Jealousy and Rivalry

(Choose the Better)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-101.mp3>

“But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, ‘Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!’ ‘Martha, Martha,’ the Lord answered, ‘you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.’”
(Luke 10:40-42, NIV)

Here, we see sibling jealousy and rivalry between two sisters – Martha and Mary. Every parent with several children has witnessed similar conflict and heard the complaining, blaming, and protests of impartial or unfair treatment. Frustrated and angry with Mary’s behavior, Martha turns to Jesus and asks, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself?” She goes on to demand that Jesus tell Mary to help her with her chores.

We see a glimpse of Jesus’ frustration with Martha when he repeats her name twice. He goes on to tell her that only one thing is important, and that Mary has made the right choice! Can you imagine the look on Martha’s face as she hears Jesus tell her that she worries too much, has failed to recognize what really matters, and that her sister made the better choice? Jesus continues by telling her that He will not punish Mary for sitting at His feet and listening to His teaching!

As Christians, we must not give in to jealousy and envy or complain whenever we see fellow Christians experience the Lord’s favor and blessing. Instead, we must examine ourselves, our motives, decisions, and actions, and determine if they stand in agreement with God’s Word and His promises.

Child of God, have you put God first in your life or have you allowed work, family, leisure, or something else to edge God out? Like Mary, we must choose wisely. I encourage you to choose the better – choose to sit at the feet of Jesus. He is what you need most. When you choose to put Him first, know that He will meet all your other needs!

Father, thank you for your love and patience, even when I doubt and question you. Holy Spirit, teach me to focus on God’s Word, His Way, Truth and Light at all times. Help me to always choose the better. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Get Some Rest

(Jesus Knew When and How to Rest)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-102.mp3>

“Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, ‘Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.’”

(Mark 6:31, NIV)

Looking at the behavior of Jesus in the Gospels, we see that He was never too busy or in a hurry to stop, teach, heal, and care for people in need. Everywhere He went, the crowds surrounded Him. They listened and pressed in to touch Him. They reached for His healing hands in hopes of being freed from sickness and disease, brokenness and oppression, demonic spirits, and spiritual torment. Jesus was constantly at work doing His Father’s business – teaching the disciples, preaching the Gospel, and performing great miracles all for the glory of God. Jesus never said “No.” He never refused to pour out His love and compassion on others. Yet, Jesus also took time and knew how to rest.

As a caring Christian, who strives to make this world a better place every day, I confess that I often struggle to find the energy to keep going. I’m comforted when I read this verse. Jesus showed us how to keep going – by taking time to rest. He often stopped to be alone with God in prayer. He returned to His source for a fresh supply of divine love and compassion, wisdom and truth, purpose and direction, power, and strength. He found rest, restoration, and comfort in God. In God, Jesus found renewal, confidence, and the resolve to finish His work even to the cross. He found an endless supply of grace, love, and mercy. He found the strength to keep going no matter what.

Child of God, are you tired, weary and in need of renewed energy and strength? If so, I suggest you stop and rest in God. Cry out to him in prayer. Forget “Eveready.” Plug in to God today. He is the only “Energizer” you will ever need.

*Father, thank you for your never-ending supply of love, mercy, grace, strength, and power.
Holy Spirit, help me to remember to stop often and find rest in Jesus’ loving arms when I feel
tired or weary and on the verge of giving up. Through the blood
of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Peace and a Furnace of Blazing Fire

(Can You Withstand the Heat?)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-103.mp3>

“Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego replied to the king, ‘O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.’”

(Daniel 3:16-18, NASB)

My grandparents were very poor. They were simple people who farmed and lived off the land with periods of employment. My earliest childhood memory of them includes a large wood-burning stove on a dirt floor in a small one-room cabin. Later, gas space heaters replaced the stove in their new house that my father and uncles built. My father preserved childhood memories, by installing a modern energy efficient wood-burning stove in his house many years later, and used it until his death. I have vivid memories of standing next to the stove and gas heaters gazing into the flames. I was determined to see how close I could stand there, until the heat forced me to back up. I confess that my affinity for dancing fires in campsites and log cabins continues to this day.

Reading this passage, I’m reminded of the times I stood next to the fire and felt peace and joy in my heart. Even now, whenever conflict burns like a fire in my life and the flames threaten to consume me, I’m reminded of my childhood peace and joy. I give God praise that I know that the world’s fires will not touch me or cause me harm. I know God and His grace will always deliver me unscathed.

Child of God, how about you? Can you withstand the fiery heat in your life? Like Daniel and his friends, will you emerge untouched? In the midst of raging fires, will you have peace and joy in your heart? I encourage you to walk in faith and, like Daniel, trust God. Know that He is able to deliver you from every fire!

Lord, thank you for the peace that comes from trusting you. Holy Spirit, help me learn to fix my eyes, mind, and heart on you, even when the world around me is on fire. Teach me to withstand the heat, knowing that you will deliver me safe and unharmed. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Brothers

(Learning to Listen)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-104.mp3>

"If you consent and obey, You will eat the best of the land; But if you refuse and rebel, You will be devoured by the sword." Truly, the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

(Isaiah 1:19-20, NASB)

As the firstborn son, with younger brothers and sisters, I watched my siblings grow and develop in the shadow of "their Big Brother." I watched as my two brothers entered the turbulent teenage years. Like many teens, they challenged every authority figure in their path. Rebellion led the oldest one to the Texas Prison System and the youngest to the local US Marine Corps Recruiting Office. One was stripped of his freedom and spent years locked away. The younger one ran away from family, entered the military, and spent time overseas.

Life in prison and life in the military share some common ground. Both impose order and use rigidly defined systems and rules to break the spirit of rebellion and disobedience, and to get people to follow the rules. Life in prison and the military proved to be good training grounds for life in the world.

My brothers are older and wiser now. The older one came out of prison with a strong resolve and commitment to never use drugs or do anything that would put him back behind bars. He married, started a family, built a painting business, and surrendered his life to Christ. Now, his faith and relationship with Jesus Christ is the driving force in his life. The younger one served honorably with distinction in the Marine Corps Honor Guard. We have pictures of him standing at attention before Presidents of nations. He now lives on the family farm with his wife and family, and works hard to support them.

As the "Big Brother" occasionally I still give advice and counsel. More often, I simply listen. Daily, I pray for them and ask God to bless them and protect them. I praise God that they have decided to listen and have given up their rebellious ways.

Lord, thank you for brothers in the flesh and in the spirit. Holy Spirit, teach me to be a good brother, to always offer unconditional love and support, and to serve as a role model for faithfulness and obedience. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Shake the Dust Off and Move On

(What Do You Need to Leave Behind?)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-105.mp3>

“But the Jews incited the God-fearing women of high standing and the leading men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. So they shook the dust from their feet in protest against them and went to Iconium.”
(Acts 13:50-51, NIV)

I remember the call vividly. The voice belonged to a man I met several days before at a Men’s Ministry event. He went on to say that he heard I would be speaking at their upcoming meeting. I said, “Yes” and told him my talk was entitled, “The Power of Words.” I could tell he was very nervous. Finally, he came out and said that he had spoken to the Director of the Speaker Committee. He went on to say he had researched my church (World Changers Church International / World Changers Church Houston) and my Pastor (Dr. Creflo Dollar). He was calling to tell me Pastor Dollar’s teachings are contrary to the views of his Pastor and were not sound doctrine. Further, he stated that he saw me as an instrument of spiritual welfare and that I was now “officially released from my obligation to speak.” He continued to tell me what he felt was wrong with Pastor Dollar’s teaching and my intended message. He justified his conclusions based on a brief comparison of my outline, and remarks on a Christian website he used to determine the accuracy and appropriateness of various doctrines and teachings.

I confess, I was stunned. I’ve been a speaker for many years and heard varied reactions after my talks, but I had never encountered this before. At first, I was offended. Then, I silently prayed and asked the Lord to speak to me about the situation. His message was clear, “Son, close this door, shake the dust off and move on. I will lead you to rooms that are overflowing with people who are open and willing and eager to hear the message I have given you.”

Child of God, are you encountering resistance and rejection in your life as you try to share God’s Word and the Good News of Jesus Christ? If so, I encourage you to ask God if it is time for you to shake the dust off and move on.

Father, thank you for both opening and closing doors. Holy Spirit, teach me to accept rejection and persecution in your name with an open heart. Give me the grace to be strong and persevere as I pursue your perfect will for my life. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Go and Preach the Gospel

(Many Ways to Share Jesus, Some with Words)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-106.mp3>

“And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.’”
(Mark 16:15, NASB).

The more I grow in my faith walk, the more this verse resonates in my mind, heart, and spirit. It serves as the motivation for my life now – the talks I give, my coaching sessions, the books, blogs, and devotionals I write. I’m often approached by strangers who ask, “Are you a Pastor?” Initially, I couldn’t understand what was going on and why people kept asking me that. Over time, I’ve come to understand and accept the truth of this verse. It compels me and drives me. Now, I usually greet my audience, regardless of the setting, with these words: “Welcome to church. I’m delighted to be here and to have this opportunity to share God’s Word with you and talk about living life and doing business God’s way.”

In this verse, the call to action to every Christians is clear. We are to share the Gospel of Christ to the world – the lost, sick, needy, captive and the broken hearted. Whenever we: share God’s Word; confess our testimony and witness to a stranger; pray for others in the face of a crisis; proclaim Jesus as Lord and Savior; feed the hungry and give shelter to the homeless; spend time with someone who is gripped with despair; hold a bedside vigil and share love and compassion with the sick; encourage the fearful; give counsel to a friend based on God’s Word; and teach and model righteousness – we are sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I praise God that I have come to realize that preaching is more about what I do with my gifts, talents, time, and money, than what I call myself.

Child of God, I encourage you to ask God how to share the Gospel in your world today, regardless of what you do for a living or what the world calls you. Share the Good News about Jesus. Yes, go and preach the Gospel in all you do, and occasionally use words.

Father, thank you for your Son’s example. Holy Spirit, help me look for ways to share the Good News about Jesus. Give me boldness and confidence to speak the truth of your Word every day to all who will listen. Help me to be a beacon of light in a dark and lost world. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Give No Thought to Your Own Interests

(Replace Every “I” with “We”)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-107.mp3>

“For Christ did not please Himself [gave no thought to His own interests]; but, as it is written, The reproaches and abuses of those who reproached and abused you fell on Me.”

(Romans 15:3, AMPC)

Paul tells us Jesus gave no thought to His own interests, but kept His focus on God’s will and His divine purpose. Reading this verse, I confess that I am stunned by the selfless nature of Jesus. This verse mirrors what Jesus said about Himself, that He did exactly what He was told to do and say by God. For Jesus, “I” always meant “We” – Heavenly Father and Son. Webster’s defines the word “interest” as: feeling of a person whose attention, concern, or curiosity is particularly engaged by something. Jesus never let personal interests, concerns or feelings get in the way and deter Him. Jesus focused on one thing and one thing only – God’s will.

For most of us, it’s difficult to focus on one thought or idea for an extended period of time. Our mind wanders, gets distracted, bored, makes up and creates things to think about. Reading this verse, I’m reminded of the first commandment Jesus gave us. He said that we are to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. In other words, we are to copy or imitate Jesus and have no thoughts, feelings, speech, or behavior that is apart from or did not come from God. I confess that this has been a hard lesson for me to learn. Karen and I have committed to listen closely to our conversation and sound the alarm anytime we use the word “I” several times in a sentence. The Holy Spirit alerts me whenever my interests, plans, desires, or concerns begin to surface. I suddenly realize that it’s time to repent and refocus on God and Him alone.

Child of God, I encourage you to pray and ask God to speak to you about the “Me-Man,” the “I” in your life. Make a sacrifice on the altar of faith by giving up every thought or interest and desire to please your selfish nature. Imitate Jesus and replace every “I” with “We.”

Father, thank you for the selflessness of your Son Jesus Christ. Holy Spirit, teach me faithfulness and willingness to sacrifice every thought, word, and action to God for His glory. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Is the Truth Your Native Language?

(Know Who You're Talking To)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-108.mp3>

“Jesus said to them, ‘If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me. Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.’”

(John 8:42-44, NIV)

Miscommunication often results from differences in spoken or written language. Experts suggest there were 7,106 living languages used across the world in 2018. Add cultural norms and differences on top of language, and it is little wonder why it is so difficult to communicate clearly with others. Often, when we experience difficulty communicating and interacting with others, we say, “I couldn’t understand a word they said. I don’t speak their language and they sure don’t speak mine.” Communication challenges have existed for centuries.

Here, we see Jesus experiencing this very problem. He identified this as the core issue underlying the Pharisees’ inability to hear and understand His message. Jesus explained that they were each speaking their own native language. Jesus’ native language was and is always God’s Word, the living TRUTH. The native language of all unbelievers’ is Satan’s LIES. Jesus went further and called the Pharisees the children of the Devil. He referred to Satan as a murderer, the father of all lies and declared, “there is no truth in him.” With this fundamental distinction in our makeup, it is impossible to communicate with someone who has no inherent grasp or understanding of the truth. Sadly, miscommunication, arguments and tension are inevitable.

Child of God, when you find yourself in situations similar to the one in this passage, don’t be deterred or frustrated. I encourage you to simply copy Jesus’ behavior. Don’t be afraid to speak the TRUTH in love, confidence, and boldness. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you by revealing the other person’s native language. Is their language, Godly TRUTH, or Satan’s LIES? It is always helpful to know who you are talking to!

Lord, thank you for giving me your unchanging and eternal Word. Your Word is truth and light in a dark world, and always reveals the lies of Satan. Holy Spirit, teach me to speak the truth in love, in confidence and boldness at all times. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Striving to Please

(Play to an Audience of One)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-109.mp3>

*“On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel.
We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts.”
(1 Thessalonians 2:4, NIV)*

For twenty years, God has blessed me with the opportunity to coach, mentor, and disciple many corporate executives and business owners. In a recent call, I encouraged my client to share her powerful testimony of her miraculous healing. As a newborn Christian, she was very uncomfortable with the idea and afraid of what people would think of her. She was afraid of being rejected and labeled a “crackpot.” Her comments reminded me of a former client who shared a similar fear. Any public act of faith made him extremely uncomfortable and embarrassed. In one call, he openly shared his embarrassment about a mutual friend’s habit of praying for waiters in restaurants as they served the meal. As we talked, he shared that at one time he too was bold in his faith, but had been attacked and ridiculed by friends and peers. As a result, he decided to temper his speech and his actions to make them more “socially acceptable.” At we closed the call, he said, “I wish I was more like you — confident, bold, courageous — unafraid of what people think of me.” We prayed that God would restore his confidence and boldness and give him the courage to be a bright light in a dark world. I praise God that over the last seven years, God answered our prayer. Recently, my friend shared several testimonies. Once again, he is on fire for Christ.

Child of God, have you toned down your faith? Are you walking in fear of rejection and worried about what people will say or think about you? If so, I encourage you to ask the Holy Spirit to give you grace and boldness to walk in faith and to count it all joy whenever the world makes fun of you. Decide today to be zealous, a “fanatic” who is in love with Jesus. Pursue Jesus and strive to please Him and only Him!

Lord, thank you for granting me courage and boldness to share your message of grace. Holy Spirit, strengthen my heart and help me to never be ashamed of you or worry what others will think or say of me. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Bless Not Curse

(Imitate Jesus and Speak Blessings)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-109.mp3>

“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.”
(Romans 12:14, NIV)

God’s Word often contradicts what we desire and are tempted to do, in our flesh when we are attacked or offended. We get hurt, our guard goes up and we want to go on the attack, retaliate in anger or worse, self-righteous indignation.

I confess that I have struggled with this over the years. Even this morning, I felt betrayed and abandoned by a close friend in a time of need. My worldly man desired to strike back and express my hurt and anger. I had to immediately check myself and remember Jesus. My mind posed the question, “What would Jesus do?” Suddenly, I saw the image of Christ on the cross crying out, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” When most men would have cried out in anger and spoken a curse over those responsible for their pain and suffering, Jesus prayed for His tormentors. He asked for forgiveness on their behalf, not eternal damnation, and torment, but loving and compassionate forgiveness. I was convicted by this image and humbled by Jesus’ grace and mercy.

As a Man of God, I’m drawn to Jesus’ strength of character, His depth of unconditional love and compassion, patient acceptance of others, willing forgiveness, and resolve to obey God’s will at all times. As I reflected on my friend’s actions, I had to repent of my selfish thoughts and confess the blood of Jesus over my situation. I prayed for my friend. I forced myself to take Paul’s advice and copy Jesus. I spoke blessings over his life. As soon as I did this, I felt a huge weight lift from my heart. I heard a quiet voice say, “Well done son. Now you’re learning to walk like me.” In that moment, I knew Jesus was truly alive in me, and that it was Him speaking the words of forgiveness. His grace and mercy spoke through me and for me in that moment.

Child of God, I pray that the next time you are offended, hurt, or angry and want to get even, that you remember Jesus and take Paul’s advice, bless, and do not curse!

Father, thank you for your love and compassion which is hard to even comprehend at times. Jesus, your grace, and mercy serve to remind me and encourage me that love bears, hopes, endures all things, and never fails. Holy Spirit, help me endure every insult and attack and speak blessings not curses. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Is Your Dimmer Switch Reducing Your Light?

(An Attitude of Gratitude)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-111.mp3>

“Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe.”

(Philippians 2:14-15, NIV)

In this passage, Paul urges us to resist “complaining and arguing, so that we may become blameless and pure without fault.” Complaining is offensive to God. While God often tolerates bad behavior, He always looks at our heart and our motives. He is pleased whenever we come to Him with reverence, honor, worship, thankfulness, and praise. Ungrateful hearts murmur, complain and eventually breed gossip, envy, jealousy, lust, greed, and other sinful behavior.

Paul goes on to say that we are to “shine like stars.” As a visual thinker, my mind imagines a bright star in the heavens or a bright light in a room. It shines brightly with a pure and intense light. Now imagine that you put a dimmer switch on the light. A dimmer switch is designed to serve a practical purpose – it reduces the level of illumination. Turn the dimmer down and as the light dims or decreases, darkness increases.

As Christians, we must realize we carry a built-in dimmer switch. God has told us to love Him with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength; and to walk in love with our fellow man. Whenever we step out of love with God or man; murmur, complain, argue, or take offense, the light of Christ within us automatically dims. Our attitude has a direct effect on the brightness of our light. An attitude of thankfulness, gratitude, love, and compassion turns the dimmer switch off. Once again, our light is pure and bright. A heart that is filled with selfishness, envy, jealousy, bitterness, discontent, sadness, and despair turns on our dimmer switch. It reduces our light, and we begin to fade and blend into darkness.

Child of God, I encourage you to pray and ask God to speak to you about your dimmer switch. Turn your dimmer switch off by walking in love, joy and peace with a pure and clean heart. Watch as your light shines brightly like a star that illuminates the heavens.

Father, thank you the penetrating power and light of your Word. Holy Spirit, teach me to be like Jesus in all I do and say. Seal my lips to complaining and give me an attitude of gratitude with a clean and pure heart, that my light might shine brightly at all times.

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

Robust Faith

(Can You Carry the Load for Others?)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-112.mp3>

“WE WHO are strong [in our convictions and of robust faith] ought to bear with the failings and the frailties and the tender scruples of the weak; [we ought to help carry the doubts and qualms of others] and not to please ourselves. Let each one of us make it a practice to please (make happy) his neighbor for his good and for his true welfare, to edify him [to strengthen him and build him up spiritually].”

(Romans 15:1-2, AMP)

I’m drawn to the words, “robust faith.” Webster’s defines “robust” as: powerful; strong and healthy; hardy and vigorous. Paul urges us to be strong and to carry the weaknesses, failings, doubts, and qualms of others. Sadly, it seems Christians have learned to be polite, reserved, and “politically correct.” Even worse we are often timid, weak and fail to walk in robust faith. Yet, Paul encourages us to be powerful, strong, and willing to carry others’ baggage (weakness, failings, and doubts). He implores us to make a habit of helping others, of strengthening them and building them up.

I’ve prayed and asked the Lord to give me robust faith coupled with a servant leader’s heart, that is willing to put others first and sacrifice myself for their needs. I asked God to change my thinking from: “What about me?” to “I will put your needs first.”; “What can you do for me?” to “I want to serve and minister to you.”; “Why did you hurt me?” to “I forgive you and will help you overcome your hurts, fears, anger and resentment.”; “Why are you feeling so depressed and hopeless?” to “I am here to give you hope, confidence and encouragement to go on.” I asked God to teach me to live and operate in His “Circle of Love.” In God’s Circle of Love, there is no fear, hurt, offense, or selfishness, no “me.” In God’s Circle of Love, I have robust faith, I am strong, and nothing is impossible for me.

Child of God, I encourage you to pray and ask God to draw you into His Circle of Love and give you robust faith. Be strong for those around you, give them hope and build them up.

Father, thank you for the strength and power of your Word. Holy Spirit, teach me to have robust faith that I may be strong enough to carry the load for others. Help me encourage them, give them hope, and build them up. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Seize the Opportunity

(In the Moment, Be a Sign in a Dark World)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-113.mp3>

“Behave yourselves wisely [living prudently and with discretion] in your relations with those of the outside world (the non-Christians), making the very most of the time and seizing (buying up) the opportunity.”
(Colossians 4:5, AMP)

Now, I’m drawn to the last phrase of this verse. At the beginning, Paul says we should behave wisely with non-Christians and follow this directive, “making the very most of the time and seizing (buying up) the opportunity.” Webster’s defines “seize” as: to take hold of suddenly or forcibly; grasp; to take possession of by force or at will. As a Christian, are you making the most of every moment? Are you seizing moments of opportunity when you interact with non-Christians?

As Children of Light, we are urged to be a source of light in a dark and lost world. Are you grasping the opportunity to shine your light into the darkness of an unbeliever’s life? I often say that as a group, Christians, are known for the symbols that we use (cross, fish, dove, and lion) to identify ourselves. We wear bracelets, necklaces, and pins with the cross to assert our faith. We even put bumper stickers on our cars. It appears to me that we’re often more focused on wearing symbols or carrying signs than we are with being a sign. Paul tells us to be a sign. Our lives should serve as a model for: walking in love with others; sacrificing self-interests and serving others; quickly and willingly expressing forgiveness and acceptance in the face of attack and betrayal; walking in humility and integrity at all times; and expressing joy, contentment, and peace regardless of our circumstances. Whenever we behave badly and imitate the world, we turn out the light in our lives and join the darkness.

Child of God, I encourage you to pray and ask God to speak to you about any area of your life where you are wearing symbols or carrying signs instead of being a sign. Quickly repent for the times you have fallen. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you seize the moments of opportunity in your life. Be a sign of love, compassion, and light in a dark world!

Father, thank you for the truth and power of your Word. Jesus, you are the Light and the Way. Holy Spirit, help me seize every moment and be Christ-like in all I do and say. Shape and mold me that I may be a sign of love and compassion to a hurting world. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

You Are a Letter from Christ

(Written by the Spirit on Your Heart)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-114.mp3>

“You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not With Ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.”

(2 Corinthians 3:3, NIV)

Paul says we are not written with ink, but with the Spirit of the Living God. Imagine Jesus Christ reaching out from His throne and using His finger to write a letter on the hearts of all the saints. My spiritual eyes can see the letter. I am astonished and in awe as I read His words:

“To Gary, My Beloved Son,

You are a Mighty Man of Valor, Firstborn Son, and Priest of the Selman House. Yes, you ran away and spent many years in the world, but like all the Prodigal Sons before you, you came to your senses and came home. I am personally inviting you to join me and all the saints in a joyous celebration to commemorate your return. As the Living Word, I’ve bathed you in my blood. As a result, you are fully reconciled, redeemed, restored, healed, and delivered from all sin, destruction, and death. I’ve laid out a choice robe for you and a gold ring that bears My seal, the Dove of Peace. I’ve blessed you with a new heart and a renewed mind. I gave you a deep hunger and thirst for My Word and My ways.

As a Spiritual Son of Abraham, you’re an heir to every promise I made in My Word. I’ve enabled you to receive My Word, so that you can live by faith and not by sight. I’ve even promised you abundance in every area of your life. Because of My blood, there is nothing broken, missing, or needed in your life. I’ve blessed you with My anointing that you might be a blessing to others. I’ve anointed and called you to walk in humility, love, compassion, self-sacrifice, and service to others. Lastly, I’ve given you my perfect peace and even promised that I will never leave you or forsake you. We will talk again soon. Peace and blessings to you and yours, I love you.”

Faithfully Yours,

Jesus Christ, Your Lord and Savior, Prince of Peace, and Co-Heir

Father, thank you for your Son, Jesus Christ. Holy Spirit, help me to be Christ-like in all I do and say. May the words written on my heart transform me and be evident to the world.

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

Live by Faith in the Moment

(One Day, One Step at a Time)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-115.mp3>

“For in the Gospel a righteousness which God ascribes is revealed, both springing from faith and leading to faith [disclosed through the way of faith that arouses to more faith]. As it is written, The man who through faith is just and upright shall live and shall live by faith.”

[Hab 2:4] (Romans 1:17, AMP)

In this passage, Paul tells us to live a life of righteousness, “from faith to faith.” In the moment, I am to walk out my faith, forgetting the trials, tests, temptations, victories, and breakthroughs of yesterday. I must live by faith this minute, this hour, this day. I can only do this by walking in the Spirit and allowing God’s power to operate through me. I realize that I must learn to be Spirit-led and directed, not driven.

I confess that living by faith in the moment was a hard lesson for me. For decades, I was a man of action. I had a plan and worked my plan. I was driven by my own emotions, desires, dreams, goals, and objectives. I learned this mindset and behavior from my mentors who were intensely driven, accomplishment-oriented men. I praise God that the “Me-Man” has died and that I no longer live a “driven life.” By God’s grace over the last decade, I’ve learned to look at Jesus and in faith follow Him, minute by minute, hour by hour, day by day. I’ve learned that this moment, is all I have and that is enough.

Child of God, are you looking at Jesus? Are your actions an imitation of Jesus? Forgetting what is behind, do you press on in the moment and run the race for the prize? In the battlefield of the mind which side are you on? In the moment, what choice do you make? Will you choose: God’s Kingdom over the world; love over selfishness; faith over fear; blessings over curses; love and compassion over hatred; what is right over what is easy; serving others over being served? In the moment, I urge you to pray and ask God to help you. Listen to the Holy Spirit, trust, and obey God’s Word, and live by faith moment by moment!

Father, thank you for calling me into a relationship with your Son Jesus Christ. Holy Spirit, help me grow in my faith and to walk it out moment by moment. Give me the grace and courage to always choose God’s way over the world. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

The Goal of Our Instruction

(Mind, Heart and Action)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-116.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 Speaker, I know how important it is to identify your goals before you ever step in front of a crowd. A simple way to do this is to answer this question: “What do you want people to think (thoughts / mind), feel (heart), and do (action/body) after your presentation? By addressing all three realms, (mind / heart / body), as a “Change Agent” you make it easier for your audience to learn, grow and change.

Jesus’ disciples were revolutionary “Change Agents” with specific goals in mind. Beyond eternal salvation, Paul tells us they longed to see every believer change and demonstrate love from a pure heart; a good conscience; and sincere faith. The disciples were anointed with the power of the Holy Spirit and obedient to Jesus’ instructions. They poured out their lives so sinners might believe and accept Christ as Lord and Savior and walk in faith (action / body). They focused on the believer’s need to renew the mind and obey Jesus’ commandment to walk in love with God and man (thoughts or mind). They taught that the Holy Spirit brought peace, joy, contentment, patience and freedom from guilt and condemnation (heart). By addressing the needs of the whole man (thoughts, feelings, and actions) the Gospel is alive 2,000 years after Jesus died on the cross. The Gospel of Grace is still saving souls and changing lives.

Have you accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior and allowed the Gospel to change the way you think, feel and act? God sent Jesus to die for our sins, to redeem us and restore us to Him. Jesus, His disciples, and the Holy Spirit did their part by introducing God’s divine plan for mankind. Salvation and heaven on earth wait for all who will by faith simply believe. I encourage you to decide today to do your part. Believe and accept Jesus as Lord. Allow the Living Word, God’s grace, and the Holy Spirit to change you. Then you can become a “Change Agent” and share what you’ve learned with others. Lives depend on it and eternity is waiting!

Father, thank you for the life-changing power of your Living Word. Holy Spirit, teach me each day to renew my mind, walk in love at all times, be at peace, and boldly share your Word and my testimony with others. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Section Five

What Does Jesus Expect of Me Now?

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-9169.mp3>

“He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.’”

(Mark 16:15-16, NIV)

“Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.”

(Matthew 10:8, NIV)

“So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, ‘If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.’”

(John 8:31-32, NASB)



Chapter 10

Walk in Faith, Trust in Jesus, and Resist Satan

Forty Days of Tests

(Satan's Temptation Comes in Our Weak Moments)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-117.mp3>

“Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.”

(Luke 4:1-2, NIV)

Earlier this year, I completed a month-long fast refraining from coffee, all meat, breads, and sweets. I confess, I had some rough times, but I grew spiritually as God's grace equipped me to deal with the hunger and desire. When I read these verses, I am reminded of my fast. We see that Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, was led by the Spirit into the desert where he fasted for forty days and was tested by Satan. The battle lines had already been drawn generations before His birth. The eternal fight between God and Satan, good and evil, righteousness and sin, Heaven and Hell, faith, and fear, was on again. Satan, the supreme opportunist, showed up and offered food to a fasting and hungry Jesus. God's grace and power ruled, and once again Satan was defeated.

In our daily lives, Satan (Father of Lies, Enemy, Tempter, Accuser, Adversary, Deceiver, Thief, Roaring Lion, Murderer, Power of Darkness, Prince of the Air, Ruler of the World, Ruler of Demons, and Wicked One) Satan will test us. As a Christian, I am comforted by the fact that the issue was settled on the cross once and for all. The blood of Jesus handed Satan and every demonic spirit eternal defeat. The blood of Jesus protects me, anoints me and assures me victory in every battle. Like Jesus, I have to walk it out one day at a time, as long as I live.

Child of God, are you being tested today? Is your favorite food (dessert), sex, porn, alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, power, money, or greed testing you? Remember, Jesus knows the pain of hunger and temptation. He knows it is real. I encourage you to pray and ask Him to help you. I bear witness that His grace will enable you to win every battle and pass every test!

Father, thank you for loving us and sending Jesus to live, suffer, and die as a man on the cross for our sins. Jesus, your example in the face of tests, temptation and suffering gives me courage and confidence. I receive your grace to face every battle and test. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

No Trespassing

(Tell Satan You Are Not Welcome Here, You Must Leave)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-118.mp3>

“Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve.”

(Luke 22:3, NIV)

Here, we see the phrase, “Then Satan entered Judas . . .” Notice Satan had to come into, penetrate, join, or share, to be admitted. Yes, Satan (Deceiver, Murderer, Accuser of the Brethren, Liar, and Prince of Darkness) must be admitted. I find these words encouraging. Without our consent, Satan has no power. Flip Wilson’s comedy routines in the 60’s and 70’s with his portrayal of Geraldine Jones were funny. Geraldine’s line, “The Devil made me do it,” became a slogan, an excuse whenever we failed. Yes, he was funny, but Flip was wrong! Satan cannot make me do anything. Without my consent or agreement, he is powerless. I’m comforted because God’s Word tells me that God is love, light, and truth. As His Child, I am a Child of Light.

When I accepted Christ as my Savior, I invited God’s Love, Light and Truth to enter and live in me. As I grow in righteousness, I surrender more living space to Christ. My body becomes His home. The Holy Spirit serves as my doorman and concierge. He has placed a “No Trespassing” sign on the door to every room. The first floor has: Light & Truth; Love & Compassion; Faith & Salvation; Healing & Deliverance; Victory & Strength; (6) Hope & Expectation; and (7) Confidence & Trust. Second floor has: Wisdom & Discernment; Obedience & Self-Sacrifice; Breakthrough & Miracles; Anointing & Power; and Grace & Favor. Top floor has Blessings & Abundance; and Joy & Peace. My house is full of Spirit and Life.

Child of God, the next time Satan knocks, I encourage you to go boldly to the door. Open it quickly, without hesitation or fear, and confess the blood of Jesus over your life, home, and family. Tell Satan, “I have a ‘No Trespassing Policy’ here. It reads, “No fear, unbelief, selfishness, disobedience or sin allowed.” Satan, you, every demonic spirit or principality, and child of darkness are not welcome here. I refuse to let you in. In the name of Jesus, I command you to leave now!”

Father, thank you for the blood of Jesus and what His blood has purchased for my life. May every room in my house be filled with Your presence and gifts of the Spirit. Holy Spirit, be fully alive within me. Teach me to never be afraid to answer a knock at my door. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Refuse to Give Up, Cave In, or Quit

(Don't Walk Away from Your Divine Destiny)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-119.mp3>

“And He came to Bethsaida. And they brought a blind man to Him and begged Him to touch him. And He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town. And when He had spat on his eyes and had put His hands on him, He asked Him if he saw anything. And he looked up and said, I see men as trees, walking. And after that He put His hands again on his eyes and made him look up. And he was restored and saw all clearly. And He sent him away to his house, saying, “Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.”

(Mark 8:22-26, MKJV)

I'm drawn to the persistence of the blind man's faith. He did not lose faith in Jesus' ability to heal him, even though the first touch only produced partial results. He chose to believe and trust Jesus until he experienced full healing and restoration.

Sadly, many Christians cave in, give up and quit before healing, restoration, and deliverance is fully manifested in their lives. They, like the blind man, do not see clearly at first. Full of despair they say, “I tried to believe and trust God, but it didn't work. God let me down. I guess God didn't hear my prayers, or maybe He just didn't care.” Once, they felt hopeful. They wanted to believe, but seeing only partial results, they quit trusting God. Now, disappointed, upset, and angry with God, they walk away from their divine destiny.

Child of God, I encourage you to ask God to show you the times that you have given up, caved in or quit. What miracles have you walked away from before they had time to fully manifest? When did you let go because you could not see clearly? I encourage you to have the faith of the blind man. Refuse to quit. Keep walking in faith. If you need a miracle in your life, come back to Him, to your place of healing and restoration as many times as it takes until you get all you need. Keep believing and trusting God, until you, like the blind man, are healed and all is well!

*Father, thank you this lesson on the need to be determined and persistent in my faith and trust in Jesus. Holy Spirit, help me to believe and trust in God no matter how long it takes before my miracle shows up. Help me to remember that God will never give up, cave in or quit on me.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

The Dangers of Roadside Faith

(Beware Spiritual Road Rage)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-120.mp3>

“When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart.

This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road.”

(Matthew 13:19, NASB)

In this passage, Jesus explains the Kingdom Principle of Seedtime and Harvest using the parable of the sower who throws seeds beside the road. We have worldly expressions for the point Jesus was making here. We hear: “If it is important, you have to repeat it several times and come back to see if they got it;” “It just went in one ear and out the other;” “I feel like I have to start over with her every day;” “I am so frustrated; it seems like he forgot everything we talked about yesterday.”

As leaders, managers, supervisors, and parents, we have all faced this situation and wondered what happened. In this verse, Jesus gives us the answer. God’s Word (seed) was spoken, and eternal truth was shared. Sadly, Satan grabs the words, twists the truth, and introduces a lie. Over time, the lie (twisted seed) takes root in the person’s heart. God’s Word and godly truth never made it from the heart to the mind. Truth seeds failed to take root. We see this play out often in the church. The person hears the message and even expresses agreement with a hearty “Amen.” Before the Word can take root in their heart, renew their mind, and lead them to a new way of thinking and behaving, Satan grabs the truth and replaces it with a lie. Faith, renewal, and spiritual growth are dependent on God’s Word seeds. No seed, no faith, no growth.

Child of God, are you planting God’s Word (seed) deep in your heart? Do you ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you and reveal the hidden mysteries behind the Word? Do you confront Satan and rebuke him with the Word every time you feel confused, anxious, or troubled? I encourage you to pray and ask for wisdom and discernment today. Ask God to anoint you with His grace, to protect and equip you, so you can overcome every danger on the road of faith.

Father, thank you for planting your Word (seed) deep in my heart. Holy Spirit, help me to receive God’s truth and renew my mind daily that my faith will grow strong and healthy. Protect me from all of Satan’s attacks as I walk on the road of faith. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

The Dangers of Rocky Faith

(Finish the Race and Win the Prize)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-121.mp3>

“The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away.”
(Matthew 13:20-21, NASB)

Here, Jesus shares the parable of the sower who throws seeds on rocky ground. Sadly, even in the church, we have experiences that support the point Jesus was making here. We hear: “John was on board with the ministry vision and totally supportive last month, but now all he can talk about are the problems.”; “Diane started strong six weeks ago, but got frustrated and failed to finish her assignment.”; “Sue seemed so excited and eager at first, but today she resigned from the Praise Team.”; “Alex was so supportive of the new building campaign, but at the first sign of trouble he is ready to throw in the towel.”; “Cathy has always been a fair-weather friend.”; “Bill was saying ‘Amen’ and ‘Hallelujah’ during the service, but he was cursing and yelling at the Vision Keepers pulling out of the church parking lot!”

Are you planting God’s Word deep in your heart and continuing to believe His Word? Have you turned believing, trusting God, and walking in faith into a daily habit? Do you renew your mind daily with the Word of God? Do you spend time daily in worship and prayer? Do you praise God and practice thankfulness in spite of your circumstances?

Child of God, do you resemble a set of windshield wipers set on “intermittent” where your faith is constantly on and then off again? I encourage you to pray and ask God to reveal situations at work, home or at church where you started the race of faith, but never finished because you encountered tests and trials. Commit today to turn away from your self-effort and turn instead to Jesus. Pray and ask Jesus for a fresh anointing of His abundant grace. In His grace, you will find the strength to endure the pain or every test, resist the urge to quit, and finish the race with joy!

Lord, thank you for planting your Word deep in my heart and for giving me the desire to continue in your Word. Jesus give me your grace, strength, and determination to run the race with confidence and boldness. Help me set my eyes on you Jesus and finish the race. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

The Dangers of Thorny Faith

(Get Rid of Distractions and Excuses)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-122.mp3>

“And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.”

(Matthew 13:22, NASB)

Here Jesus explains the parable of the sower who throws seeds on thorny ground. In Genesis, God spoke a curse over the ground following Adam’s disobedience and declared that thorns and thistles would result. Thorns became the symbol of the curse. In this verse, we see what happens when faith seeds are planted in a heart that is full of thorns (worry and deception). In this heart, faith is unable to grow or produce fruit.

We have expressions for the point Jesus was making here. We hear: “I want to believe, but I just can’t see how God would allow all this misery and suffering in the world.”; “I prayed and asked God to help me. Nothing happened, so I quit believing.”; “I worship God my own way. I don’t think you need to go to church and give your money to some preacher.”; “I’ve considered tithing, but I never seem to have enough money to do so.” A person with “thorny faith” claims they want to believe, but every “Yes” is followed by a “But.” Thorns of fear, doubt and unbelief choke and kill their faith before it can mature.

Child of God, do you treat God like a vending machine, expressing frustration when you don’t get the things you want when you want them? Have wealth and possessions cursed the soil of your heart and choked your faith seeds? Do you have a love affair with expensive toys, or spend more time pursuing hobbies than you do with God? If so, I encourage you to pray and ask God to give you a hunger and thirst for His Word and for His righteousness. He promises that your desire will be satisfied. Spend time daily in God’s Word and trust the Holy Spirit to help you mature in your faith. Find your strength in Jesus. Trust Jesus to soften your heart, remove the thorns and give you a rich harvest!

Lord, thank you for removing all the thorns from my life, and giving me a clean and pure heart that my faith might grow strong. I will plant the incorruptible seed of your Word in my heart.

Rain your grace upon me Jesus, and help me to produce rich and abundant fruit.

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

The Purpose of Tests

(Tests Are Kingdom Tools to Draw You Closer to God)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-123.mp3>

“At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert, and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.”

(Mark 1:12-13, NIV)

The first few words of this verse capture my attention. It says, “At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert. . .” To grasp its meaning, you must understand the fundamental laws and principles of the Kingdom of God. God is a Spirit being and He created us in His image and likeness as spirit beings. God rules His Kingdom. It is not a democracy. His Kingdom operates according to basic spiritual laws and principles. It is built on love and operates according to the Law of Faith. Faith relies on belief in God’s Word (Jesus incarnate) and the Holy Spirit to accomplish God’s will. In God’s Kingdom, obedience leads to protection, favor, promotion, and increase. Self-sacrifice and service to others rule over selfishness. Humility rules over pride. Faithful obedience to Kingdom laws generates confidence and hope. Life in the Kingdom is filled with grace, blessings, and favor.

Referring back to this passage, we see Jesus, the Son of God, anointed with the Spirit of God being led into the desert to be tempted by Satan. Jesus’ anointing, trust in God, obedience and faithfulness are about to be tested. All of heaven watched as Jesus was tested and battled Satan. We read that angels attended to Him after the tests.

Never think that God and His angels are not watching, aware of or interested in your tests. Never think that you are exempt from the tests or that God doesn’t care if you pass the tests. You must understand that new levels of anointing and Kingdom promotions will always lead to new tests. Understand that passing each test will build your character and help your faith grow stronger.

Child of God, I encourage you to pray and ask God to give you a new attitude about trials and tests. In these moments, remember Jesus’ example. See tests as a Kingdom tool to draw you closer to God. Celebrate and praise God when you pass the test. Know that God is leading you into your divine destiny!

Father, thank you for Jesus’ example of walking out your perfect will and calling on my life.

Holy Spirit, lead me like you led Jesus and help me pass every test with Satan.

Jesus, I need your grace to pass every test. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

They Were Caused to Stumble and Fall

(Who Will You Believe?)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-124.mp3>

“Is not this the Carpenter, the son of Mary and the brother of James and Joseph and Judas and Simon? And are not His sisters here among us? And they took offense at Him and were hurt [that is, they disapproved of Him, and it hindered them from acknowledging His authority] and they were caused to stumble and fall.”

(Mark 6:3, AMP)

This scene is very disturbing and grieves my spirit. Jesus did not get a hero’s welcome from His family, friends, and neighbors. There were no parades or parties in His honor. While the crowds were initially astonished by His teaching and miracles, soon they became resistant, even offended, and refused to believe. They refused to accept that Jesus the Carpenter, son of Mary and Joseph, was the Son of God, Christ the Messiah, source of great wisdom and miracles. Here, Jesus would always simply be the carpenter, a man like them. In His hometown, they were unable to acknowledge His identity, divine power, and purpose.

The last part of this verse says, “they were caused to stumble and fall.” As I get to the word “caused”, my mind wonders, “Who caused them to stumble and fall?” Suddenly, the Holy Spirit reveals the answer. Satan, the Liar, Accuser and Deceiver of the Brethren, appeared on the scene and hardened their hearts. He caused them to reject Jesus. Accepting Satan’s lies, they rejected Jesus, and in turn rejected salvation, deliverance, healing, and restoration. Satan caused them to stumble and fall deeper into darkness. That day in Nazareth, Satan exercised his power of persuasion and won the battle. People that Jesus knew from childhood, made a grave and eternal choice. In the raging battle for their minds and souls, they chose to reject Jesus (Grace, Truth, Light, Spirit, and Life). Instead they chose lies, sin, darkness, and eternal damnation.

Child of God, as Christians we must realize this scene plays out daily in our lives. We too must choose whom we are going to believe and follow. I encourage you to choose wisely so you do not stumble and fall. Remember, your eternal salvation is at stake!

*Father, thank you for Jesus’ victory on the cross. Today, I commit to turn my heart to Jesus.
I choose to accept Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior and walk in His Grace, Truth and Light.
I reject Satan’s lies and a life of sin and darkness. Through the blood
of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

The Arena of Faith

(Step into the Arena with Confidence and Boldness)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-125.mp3>

“For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 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.”
(2 Corinthians 10:3-5, NIV)

Every Sunday football stadiums across the country are filled with loyal screaming fans cheering for their favorite team. Like gladiators of old in the Coliseum of Rome, the players walk onto the field and wage a battle of skill, strength, and endurance. They show us the power of the human will. In a similar fashion, each day Christians walk onto the battlefield, the “Arena of Faith,” and wage spiritual war with Satan for control of our minds. Paul tells us our weapons of warfare have divine power to demolish strongholds, and overcome every argument or claim that sets itself against God. As Christians, we must decide “WHOM” we believe and “WHERE” we will live each day. Will we believe the eternal unchanging truth of God’s Word? Will we trust God and His Word, set our eyes on Jesus, and follow the prompting of the Holy Spirit and live as citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven? Will we believe Satan’s lies and live as citizens of the world? Will we challenge every thought, feeling, and action that contradicts God’s Word? Will we allow fear, doubt, and unbelief to cause us to turn away from God?

When compared to sports, our daily life as a Christian entails a far more significant and eternal struggle in the “Arena of Faith.” Understand this, it is not a game, but a brutal and bloody spiritual war with Satan and demonic forces. We are no longer spectators watching from the safety of our seats. We must engage our enemy. The prize is no longer a shiny trophy, but our very lives and eternal salvation.

Child of God, I encourage you to walk boldly into the arena. We have a faithful champion named Jesus. Trust Him and fight the good fight knowing that, in Christ, the victory is yours!

Father, thank you for giving me a faithful champion in Jesus. Jesus, I will follow you and walk boldly into the Arena of Faith and fight the good fight. Holy Spirit remind me that the eternal victory is mine. Satan is defeated for all time. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Step into the Ring and Fight!

(Don't Be Afraid to Fight)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-126.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)

Reading this verse, I'm prompted to ask fellow Christians: Why do we seem to think that our life will be easy and trouble-free? Why are we surprised whenever we are under attack? Why are we lazy and have such little understanding of God's Word and the need for spiritual training? Why are we so weak and ready to cave in, give up or quit when the world makes fun of us, and spiritual warfare begins? Why are we afraid to fight?

I say to fellow Christians, “You may have been a peaceful and easy-going person your whole life, but now it is time to fight!” It is 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 with God's Word, change your thinking and behavior. If you ever hope to win the fight of faith, you must subject your body to a rigid routine of holiness and learn to say “No” to selfish desires. You must walk in love with God and man at all times. You must refuse to give in to fear, doubt, unbelief, selfishness, and the impulse to go along with the world. You must control your emotions and do what is right, even when you don't feel like it. You must fight and win over every temptation, test, and trial. You must come to realize that God wants you to prosper in every area of your life (John 10:10 and 3 John 2). You must resist the temptation to believe the facts of your situation over God's Word (2 Co 5:7).

Child of God, walk in your divine power and authority (Luke 10:19). Quit waiting on God to solve every problem. I encourage you to confess every day, “I will fight today and every day. I will not be afraid. Jesus, you won the ultimate battle on the cross. Satan is defeated. Jesus, you are in me and through your grace, I win, all the time no matter what!”

Father, thank you for Jesus' victory on the cross and for the redeeming power of His blood. Holy Spirit, today I receive your gift of grace, peace, courage, boldness, and supernatural strength to fight and win every fight. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Irreconcilable Differences

(Choose Your Relationships Carefully)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-127.mp3>

“Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?”

(2 Corinthians 6:14, NASB)

Daily, we see headlines about a famous couple announcing they are getting divorced. The reason they give is “irreconcilable differences.” Truth is, this is old news. In this verse written almost 2,000 years ago, Paul warned us about this. He told us to be on guard for irreconcilable differences. Webster’s Dictionary defines “irreconcilable” as: incapable of being brought into harmony, adjustment, or compromise; the parties involved are incompatible or contrary, opposed in character and cannot coexist. “Contrary” parties will never live in peace and harmony.

As Christians, we must ask ourselves, “What irreconcilable differences exist in important relationships in my life professionally, personally, and spiritually?” We must accept the truth that Children of God (Light) are contrary to children of Satan (Darkness). Likewise, the Kingdom of God is at odds and contrary to the world. Faith and belief are contrary to doubt and unbelief. Love and compassion are contrary to selfishness and indifference. Life in the Spirit is contrary to life in the flesh. Righteousness and holiness are contrary to sin. God’s truth is contrary to the lies of Satan. Peace and contentment are contrary to worry and discontent. Servant leadership and self-sacrifice are contrary to selfishness and the desire to be served. Reconciliation is contrary to separation. Health and vitality are contrary to sickness and disease. Humility, obedience, and submission are contrary to pride, disobedience, and rebellion. Surrender to God’s will is contrary to self-reliance. Hope and confidence are contrary to hopelessness and despair. Blessings are contrary to curses. Life and victory are contrary to defeat and death.

Child of God, are you living in a state of peace and harmony with others or experiencing contrary or irreconcilable differences? Invite Jesus, our Prince of Peace, to shine His light on all the important relationships in your life. Walk in His love, peace, and truth at all times. I encourage you to ask the Holy Spirit to help you separate yourself from everything that is contrary to God and His Word!

Father, thank you sending Your Son Jesus Christ into the world so that by faith in Him, I was separated from darkness, and became a Child of Light. May the Truth and Light of your Word penetrate every area of darkness in my life. Help me live in peace and harmony with others. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

The Mildew of Sin

(Even a Little Sin Can Be Dangerous)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-128.mp3>

*“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 7:19, NIV)

Paul warns us about sin and suggests it has a mind of its own. Sin desires to rule our lives, and find expression in our actions regardless of our good intentions or desires. Sin seeks to multiply and take over your life. Like mildew it quietly grows, and left unchecked it spreads rapidly. It starts in our thinking, moves to our heart, and then makes its way into our actions. Soon it has become a habit, we just do it. Satan uses the mildew of sin to separate us from God. To treat mildew in the world, you must take the following steps: turn up the heat and dry the air to remove moisture; seal all openings to prevent future exposure and moisture; clean the contaminated area with strong chemicals to kill the mildew; and remove items that have decayed because of the mildew.

In the spiritual realm, pleading the blood of Jesus works in every situation to destroy and prevent the mildew of sin. Trusting the blood of Jesus will enable you to: turn up the heat by meditating on the Word of God and spending time in prayer; protect your mind and heart by sealing all gates of access (eyes, ears, and mouth); apply God’s Word to help you cleanse your mind and heart from all doubt, fear, worry and unbelief; rely on the Holy Spirit to help you regulate the atmosphere by removing people and situations that thrive on darkness and defy God.

Child of God, are you a good custodian of your mind and heart? I encourage you to ask the Holy Spirit to show you any area where the mildew if sin exists in your life. Once you discover it, go to work immediately! Ask the Holy Spirit to help you do a thorough cleaning. Trust the blood of Jesus and get your spiritual house in order. Kill the mildew of sin in your life and live in the Light of God!

*Father, thank you for the life-changing power of your Word. Holy Spirit, help me
to establish God’s Word in my mind and heart. Give me a desire for faithful obedience,
that I might keep my spiritual house clean and free from any mildew of sin.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

I Am Still Standing

(Standing on God's Word and His Grace)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-129.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)

People who are experiencing challenging and difficult times will often speak a curse over their life and say, "I've been down so long, I don't think I'll ever get up." As a Christian, I find comfort in Paul's words. They encourage me. Paul tells us that we may be: pressed, but we will not be crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned by God; and struck down, but not destroyed.

In sessions with my clients, I teach them to speak God's Word over themselves and their family. I stress that when we talk about spiritual warfare, trials, or challenges, they need to say: "I have been bruised and wounded, but by God's grace, I am still standing." I emphasize the importance of turning to God whenever they face trials and difficulties. I remind them to walk in the Spirit and fight the good fight of faith. Together, we read the Scriptures that tell us the victory has already been won. I recount the fact that Satan is a stubborn loser and refuses to accept that he has already lost. I remind them that on the cross Jesus won, and in Christ, we win every time!

Child of God, in the midst of trials, speak boldly to Satan and tell him, "In the name of Jesus, I will not be afraid!" Stand on God's Word and confront Satan with the Word of God and he will flee from you. Before the trial is over, praise God for the victory that is yours and walk it out. See your problems as just another opportunity to develop your faith and to grow spiritually. Whenever you hear someone say they feel overwhelmed, depressed and beaten down, share this verse or this devotional. Be an encourager. Share your testimony with others. Remind them to speak the truth of God's Word over their life. Teach them that in the midst of trials, to say with a thankful heart, "I have been bruised and wounded, but by God's grace, I am still standing."

Father, thank you the truth of Your Word that promises me that I am covered by the blood of Jesus. His blood guarantees me victory and the power to overcome any test or trial. Holy Spirit, in the midst of trials, help me remember that I win every battle. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Forget DEET, Put on God's Armor of Light

(Jesus, Protects Us from Satan's Pests)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-130.mp3>

"The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light."

(Romans 13:12, NASB)

Paul encourages us to get ready for the day of Christ's return by shedding our coat of sin and darkness and preparing to fight evil with weapons of the light. In certain parts of the south, especially along the Gulf coast, mosquitoes are very prevalent. They surround you and attack every inch of exposed skin. Tourists will often cover their body from head to toe with insect repellent sprays or creams like, "DEET" or "Off! Deep Woods." Locals will use bath oils and citronella candles indoors, but take a more basic approach when they go outside. They try to avoid being out after dark and cover every inch of bare skin especially in the swamps and bayous. Living close to the Gulf, I thought about mosquitoes as I read Paul's words. Mosquitoes are relentless pests that always seem to find you. They will swarm and bite, draw blood and leave a painful welt. They can even infect you with deadly diseases. Mostly, they are a nuisance or irritation.

As Christians, we need to expect supernatural or spiritual pests. They are Satan's pets and have names – fear, doubt, worry, unbelief, selfishness, pride, hurt, anger, resentment, jealousy, lust, envy, and greed. Are you ready and prepared to face them as you go out into the world each day? Have you put aside sin and rebelliousness, stubbornness and disobedience to God and His Word?

Child of God, are you living under God's covering of protection? Have you taken all of the precautions you need to stay safe? Have you covered yourself, head to toe, with the oil of righteousness? In times of spiritual warfare, have you applied God's "Armor of Light" to repel Satan's pesky spirits of darkness? I encourage you to forget "DEET" and "Off! Deep Woods." Instead, plead the blood of Jesus over your life and walk in God's Light. It works every time in every situation!

Father, thank you for the protective covering of your Word, your love, mercy, and grace. Jesus, your blood gives me all the protection and covering I need to repel the pests of darkness. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Chapter 11
A Life of Prayer, Praise, and Worship



Pray with an Attitude

(Start with Thanksgiving)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-131.mp3>

“Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving;”
(Colossians 4:2, NIV)

The first word in this verse seized my attention. Webster’s Dictionary defines the word “devote” as: to concentrate on a particular pursuit, purpose, or cause; to set apart or dedicate. The Holy Spirit began to instruct and teach me a deeper truth in this verse. As the revelation came, questions began to race through my mind. Have I established a dedicated time each day to go before the Lord in prayer? Have I set apart or consecrated my prayer life, creating a daily routine or habit? Have I chosen a space as my Prayer Room where I go to be alone with God? I confess that I was grieved by my answers. I realized prayer was only a small part of my daily routine. The Holy Spirit showed me I needed to be much more intentional and purposeful about my prayer life.

In addition to bedrooms and kitchens, many of us have a Family Room, Study, Exercise or Game Room. Some homes have an Entertainment Room. Why is it, we don’t have a Prayer Room? I was led to designate my Study and Garden as places of prayer. I’ve come to prefer my garden as my consecrated place of prayer. I feel God’s majesty and wonder looking up at the sky, moon and stars. I’m in awe as I smell, touch, and look at the diverse beauty of our flower beds, crepe myrtles and fruit trees, along with numerous potted plants. In the quiet and stillness, I pray and worship God. I hear His voice as He directs my eyes to a plaque that hangs on our fence. It reads, “Prayer Changes Things.” I’m joyful to be in a place in my walk with God where my prayers have evolved from asking for help to giving God praise and thanksgiving because He is God. I’m thankful that I’m growing more devoted in my prayer life. I’m learning to pray with an attitude of joy and thanksgiving.

Child of God, I encourage you to devote yourself to prayer. Prayer will change things starting with you!

*Father, thank you for Your Word and for Jesus’ example of prayer as praise and worship.
Holy Spirit, help me grow closer and become even more devoted to Jesus my Lord and Savior.
Teach me to pray at all times with an attitude of joy and thanksgiving. Through the blood
of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

The Power of Prayer from a Pure Heart

(Be a Blessing to Others)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-132.mp3>

“So give Your servant an understanding mind and a hearing heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and bad. For who is able to judge and rule this Your great people? [James 1:5.] It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this.... I have also given you what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that there shall not be any among the kings equal to you all your days. And if you will go My way, keep My statutes and My commandments as your father David did, then I will lengthen your days.”
(1 Kings 3:9-10; 13-14, AMP)

When Solomon took the throne as king, instead of asking God for great power, riches, and wealth, he asked for divine wisdom to effectively rule God’s people. These verses give us profound insight into Solomon’s heart, his desires and motivation when he prayed. They show us God not only heard his prayer, but answered it in ways that Solomon could not have expected. God richly blessed him with vast wealth and possessions, in addition to great wisdom and discernment.

Our desires and motives are very important to God. As I grow in my faith walk, I’ve come to understand that God wants to change my heart more than my circumstances. In 2016, I asked for a divine heart transplant and new mindset as I left my mom’s nursing home in tears. The weight of years of caring for her as she withered away with Alzheimer’s had worn me down. As I walked to my car, I cried out and asked God to give me a new heart filled with love, peace, joy and gratitude. In an instant, He did just that. Suddenly, I was able to love my mom and care for her in ways I had never imagined. The last six months of her life were a special time that I treasure and will never forget.

Child of God when you pray what are the desires and motives for your prayers? Do you pray with a clean and pure heart? I encourage you to pray that God will use you to be a blessing to others. Like Solomon, I bear witness you might be surprised by His answer!

Father, thank you for the opportunity to come before your throne in prayer. Holy Spirit, give me a clean and pure heart when I pray. Teach me to serve others with gratitude and joy and to always be a blessing to others. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Ask in Boldness

(Be Bold in Your Prayers)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-133.mp3>

“Then the one inside answers, ‘Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and My children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.’ I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs.”
(Luke 11:7-8, NIV)

To fully grasp the meaning of this passage, you must read Luke 11: 5 where we're told the man knocks on the door at midnight. It's significant that the timing of the visit and the request come when everyone in the house is asleep! Jesus tells us the man's bold-ness of coming and requesting aid at midnight motivates the neighbor to get up and help.

As a Christian, do you come before the Lord and express your needs in boldness? Early in our marriage, Karen and I realized that we were timid and holding back in our prayer life. We were not praying or asking God in boldness and trusting Him for the outcome. We were going before God meekly with small prayers asking for “just enough.” We failed to ask and trust God to bless us with “more than enough,” so that we might be a blessing to others. As we studied God's Word and came to a deeper understanding of God's nature and His promises, we changed our prayer life. We began to come before God with bold prayer requests. We realized that it was impossible for us to help others if we lived and operated in a place of lack and insufficiency. We did not ask for more for ourselves, but more for the kingdom. Believing God would grant our prayers, we stepped out in faith and increased our level of giving and helping others.

Child of God, are you praying and asking in boldness? I encourage you to trust Jesus and go to Him with a clean and pure heart. Ask in boldness with confidence and expectant hope. Watch as God opens the door and supernaturally provides more that you can ask or think!

Father, thank you for your love and provision. Jesus, you know my needs even before I ask. Teach me to come boldly and confidently before your throne, expecting answers to my prayers. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Keep On Keeping On

(Keep Believing and Trusting God)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-134.mp3>

“So I say to you, Ask and keep on asking and it shall be given you; seek and keep on seeking and you shall find; knock and keep on knocking and the door shall be opened to you.”

(Luke 11:9, AMP)

As a Baby Boomer of the 60's, we had an expression that reflects the meaning of this verse. We said, “I just keep on keeping on.” This phrase rang through my ears every time I listened to Bob Dylan's song, “Tangled Up in Blue.” In this verse, Jesus explains the benefits when we “keep on keeping on.” We show that we keep on keeping on, whenever we: listen carefully and follow Jesus' instructions; are persistent despite obstacles, opposition, or discouragement; persevere, endure, and are tenacious in our faith. We keep on keeping on, walking forward in our faith no matter what whenever we refuse to give in to fear, doubt and unbelief.

The impact of persistent action is illustrated by the effect that running water has on solid rock. Over time, a persistent drop of water will wear away solid rock. Sadly, many Christians, fall into the following behavior patterns: “Well, I tried it once, but nothing happened.” “I know I shouldn't, but somehow I keep falling off the wagon.” Why is that? Why do we give up, cave in, and quit so easily?

Child of God, I encourage you to examine your life. Do you start reading God's Word with the intention of daily meditation and study, but quit before you have created the habit? Do you spend time in prayer and thanksgiving every day, or wait until you are in a jam and face a crisis? Do you tithe only when you have “extra money?” Do you choose your favorite pastime or recreation over church on Sunday mornings? If your answer is “Yes” to any of these questions, I encourage you to ask God to show you where you need to “Keep on keeping on.” Ask the Holy Spirit to help you. Trust Jesus and His grace. No matter what, keep your eyes on Jesus and keep on keeping on!

Father, thank you for never changing or wavering in your love for me. Holy Spirit, teach me to set my eyes on Jesus at all times and to be consistently obedient and faithful. Jesus, with your grace, I can penetrate any difficulty, and nothing is impossible for me. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Love, Ask, Believe, and Receive

(Send Your Prayers to God Wrapped in Love)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-135.mp3>

“I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. Therefore, I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.”

(Mark 11:23-24, NIV)

I’m comforted by the truth and power of these verses. The message is so simple, yet hard for many Christians to grasp and walk out. Often, we fail to read Verses 25 and 26 about forgiveness, and seem to forget that Jesus instructs us to walk in love with God and man. Everything depends on our love walk. The path to shalom (peace, abundance, wholeness, success, and prosperity) starts with love. The steppingstones are named Love, Ask, Believe, and Receive! I’ve come to understand the pathway to a “successful and prosperous life, starts and ends with love (God’s love in us, and our love for God and others).

John Lennon’s song, “All You Need Is Love” was first performed by the Beatles on “Our World” the first live global television link. Watched by 400 million people in 26 countries, the program was broadcast via satellite on June 25, 1967. Released during the “Summer of Love” the song would become one of the best-selling classic Beatles’ tunes. In a 1971 interview about his song, “Power To The People,” Lennon was asked if that song was written as propaganda. Without hesitation, he responded, “Sure, so was ‘All You Need Is Love.’ I’m a revolutionary artist. My art is dedicated to change.” As a Christian, I know Lennon was right. Love is all you need. Real love, unconditional love, changes everything. Life with God and others must start and end with love.

Child of God, the next time you pray, start by examining your heart. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you any area of your life where you have stumbled in your love walk. Start by loving God with all your mind, heart, and spirit, and then love others. Once you have mastered Love, then Ask, Believe and Receive the promises of God!

Father, thank you for your unconditional and boundless love for me as evidenced by the sacrifice of Your Son Jesus on the cross. Jesus, your love is all I ever need. Holy Spirit, help me to remember that asking, believing, receiving and having starts with loving God and man. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Prayer Comforts a Willing Spirit and Weak Body

(The Power of Prayer)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-136.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 had just returned to the disciples after spending time alone in prayer, asking God to strengthen Him and prepare Him for what He was about to face. Knowing the challenges that awaited Him and the disciples, Jesus had instructed them to watch and pray, so they would not fall into temptation.” While Jesus rebuked them for sleeping, he looked past their behavior into the spiritual realm and declared, “The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.”

As a Christian, how many times a day do you face the same painful realization that Paul writes about in Romans 7:18-19? He says, “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.” What are the areas of your life where your spirit is willing, but your body is weak? Where can Satan tempt you and cause you to stumble and fall? Reading Mark 14:39-41, we see that Jesus went and fell on His face three times and prayed to God for help to prepare Him for the cross. Jesus didn’t just tell His disciples what to do, He showed them how to resist and overcome temptation. He spent time alone before God in prayer to find comfort for His grieving spirit!

Child of God, I encourage you to decide today to trust God and His Word. Trust and imitate Jesus. Spend quiet time alone in the Word and on your knees before Him in prayer and thanksgiving. Pray with confidence, knowing that Jesus will hear you and that your prayers will bring comfort to a willing spirit and a weak body.

Father, thank you for being my Rock, Fortress, and Shield of strength. Jesus, your actions show me the power of prayer. Holy Spirit, help me to humble myself in prayer whenever I am tested and feel weak. Jesus, I realize the utmost failure in life is a failure to pray. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Will You Pray for Me?

(Be on the Alert and Pray)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-137.mp3>

“With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,”
(Ephesians 6:18, NASB)

Now, I was stunned by the words that pierced my ears. I said, “Pardon me, what did you say?” The young man repeated, “Will you pray for me sir?” That was the first time that I was approached by a stranger who asked me to pray. I’m used to it now, as it happens often. Looking back on that event, I remember sitting and talking with my client in the far corner of the restaurant away from the hustle and noise. I recall seeing the man pass us, and sit down in the next booth. He was joined by a waiter, and they talked for a while. As I stood and said goodbye to my client, the man said, “Will you pray for me sir?”

I confess, at the time I was not on the alert. I was focused on my own plans and agenda. I didn’t look around with spiritual eyes to see needy hands reaching out, or listen with spiritual ears to hear the cries of despair from those around me. As was often the case with Jesus’ disciples, I was in a hurry to get to my destination. I was not on “full alert” with the heart of Jesus, filled with love and compassion, ready to stop and minister to others in their place of pain and need. I praise God for my Spiritual Mentor, Colin Millar, who taught me how to do this, and helped me to understand why it’s important to PRAY NOW in the moment. Now, I seldom go through a day without praying for others. Looking back, I can see how God has richly blessed me as a result of that simple act of obedience.

Child of God, are you a man or woman of prayer? Are you on alert for others who are hurting and in need? I encourage you to ask God to help you grow in your prayer walk. Adopt a “PRAY NOW” not later habit. Be on the alert and pray at all times!

*Father, thank you for your life-giving and life-changing Word. Holy Spirit, help me to be on the alert to the pain and needs of others. Help me develop the habit to PRAY NOW in the moment with confidence and boldness that you hear and answer my prayers.
Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

Chapter 12
Rest in Confident Hope



Forget Charlie's Angels

(Our Protection Detail)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-138.mp3>

"Lot didn't move right away. So the men grabbed him by the hand. They also took hold of the hands of his wife and two daughters. They led all of them safely out of the city. The LORD had mercy on them. As soon as the angels had brought them out, one of them spoke. He said, 'Run for your lives! Don't look back! Don't stop anywhere in the valley! Run to the mountains! If you don't, you will be swept away!'"
(Genesis 19:17, NIRV)

Reading this verse, I'm reminded that man attempts to copy and imitate God. The show "Charlie's Angels" aired from 1976 to 1981 and was one of the most successful TV series of the 1970s. It was the story of a wealthy mystery-man (Charles Townsend) who ran a detective agency via phone through his personal assistant, John Bosley. Charlie's Angels were three beautiful women, all highly trained and fearless graduates of the police academy. They never refused an assignment – confronting evil and stopping bad guys. Somehow, they were always victorious in the end and saved the day. While Charlie's Angels were fictional, the angels who rescued Lot and his family were very real.

As a Christian, I'm comforted to know God has assigned angels to stand watch, guard and protect me. Scripture tells us angels will minister to us in times of need (Hebrews 1:14). Angels are part of Heaven's Personal Security and Protection Unit. Like Charlie, God is invisible, but I know He is there. God always knows when I'm in trouble and need His help. Like Charlie, God does not ask for payment for His angel's assistance. I praise God that, like Charlie's Angels, our heavenly angels always win, overcome evil, and defeat Satan's forces of darkness. In 2010, Karen and I were saved from injury and potential death in a car accident, because we prayed. Our heavenly angels intervened. In the moment, we both cried out to Jesus for help and our angels showed up and saved us.

Child of God, forget Charlie's Angels. I encourage you to put your heavenly angels to work. Cry out to Jesus in a difficult situation and trust Him to put His heavenly angels to work on your behalf!

Father, thank you for your love and covenant protection. Just as your angels ministered to Jesus in the wilderness after His confrontation with Satan, I know that your angels stand watch over me. They protect me from evil and are at work for me every day. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

He Put Them All Out

(Don't Be Afraid to Put Doubters Out)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-139.mp3>

“And all wept, and bewailed her: but he said, Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead. And he put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise.”

(Luke 8:52-54, KJV)

I'm fascinated with Jesus' boldness in this passage. In the eyes of the world, the young girl was dead. Many people believed it and were expressing their grief over her death. Jesus saw the situation with spiritual eyes and called things that were not as though they were. For Jesus, she was simply asleep and waiting to be healed. Jesus understood the divine power and authority He carried and knew how to use it. He exercised it by speaking words in agreement with God's will and His Word. I'm drawn to the fact that Jesus put all the people out of the room. He removed the doubt, fear and unbelief. All that remained was a sleeping girl and Jesus. Jesus, Son of God, who would call her from the “sleep of death” to life with a simple, “Maid, arise.”

As Christians, we must start imitating Jesus' words and actions, walking confidently in our divine power and anointing, and refusing to see life as the world sees it. We need to use our mouths as creative and life-affirming instruments, to speak our desires and believe they will come to pass. Trust Jesus and expect miracles. Refuse to give up hope even when others have given up. Hold fast to your love for God and his Word. Stand on the truth and power of God's Word and His grace. Examine your heart and mind for traces of fear, doubt, and unbelief. When you find them, imitate Jesus. Treat them as unwanted and unwelcome guests. Open the door to doubters and haters and put them all out!

Child of God, who are the doubters and haters in your life? Have you allowed them to hold you back from your divine destiny? I encourage you to copy Jesus. Show them the door and put them out. Speak God's Word over yourself. Then, arise and walk boldly into your new life.

Father, thank you for the life-giving and life-changing power of your Word. Holy Spirit, teach me to copy and imitate Jesus by removing the doubters and haters from my life. Help me to walk by faith and act in boldness, calling things that are not as though they are.

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

Complete the Work

(Faithfulness Develops Character)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-140.mp3>

“Tell Archippus: ‘See to it that you complete the work you have received in the Lord.’”
(Colossians 4:17, NIV)

Paul tells us Archippus’ assignment came from the Lord. Paul is very specific in his instructions, “complete the work you have received in the Lord.” Paul mentions this man again in Philemon 1:2. We read that Archippus, a fellow soldier in ministry, held church meetings in his home. As a Coach, I often find myself echoing Paul’s encouragement to my clients, “Complete the work, finish the task, don’t give up, cave in or quit.”

Our society is plagued by a growing attitude that quitting and giving up is acceptable. Statistics bear this out: divorce rates are rising for people ages 55 - 65+ but declining for Millennials who delay marriage or choose to simply live together; high school dropout rates indicate 1.2 million students drop out annually (one every 26 seconds – or 7,000 a day); we have the highest college dropout rate at almost 55%; 31.2% of custodial moms have incomes below poverty level; 5.1 million homes went into foreclosure from 2013 – 2017; and the default rate on student loans is 11.5% in 2017. These stats reflect people’s failure to complete the work they started and finish the task.

I confess, I’m growing in my understanding of the importance of faithfulness and refusing to quit on God. Karen and I were given a Kingdom assignment in 2009 – assist in the planting, startup, and operations of World Changers Church Houston (satellite church under Pastors Creflo and Taffi Dollar). For several years, we labored long and hard and performed tasks we would never have imagined. At times, we grew tired and weary, but we resolved that we would do whatever God told us to do no matter what. Looking back, I see how God used our faithfulness and obedience as Servant Leaders to teach us many things, and to shape and mold our character. I praise Jesus that He is always faithful and that He is teaching me to be faithful, even when I want to quit. To Paul’s directive, I say, “Yes and amen.”

Child of God, I encourage you to complete the work you have received in the Lord.

*Father, thank you for your everlasting love and faithfulness. Jesus’ willing obedience and faithfulness on the cross encourages me to complete the work that You have given me.
Jesus, I am thankful that you never give up or quit on me. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

I Can't, But Jesus Can

(Trust in Jesus' Faithfulness)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-141.mp3>

"Faithful is He Who is calling you [to Himself] and utterly trustworthy, and He will also do it [fulfill His call by hallowing and keeping you]."

(1 Thessalonians 5:24, AMP)

This verse comforts and reassures me that I can always count on Jesus. Paul calls Jesus "utterly trustworthy." The proof of his claim is that Jesus was obedient and faithful unto death on the cross. Knowing I'm weak and cannot trust my own will power; I'm comforted to know that I can overcome every test, because Jesus is always with me, and I am victorious in Him. I can make it most of the time, but with Jesus, I make it all the time. When I can't, the Holy Spirit reminds me that with Jesus, I can. While I sometimes quit, Jesus never quits on me.

As the Prodigal Son, there were many times in my life where I gave up in defeat, but now as a born-again Son with Jesus as my Savior and friend, I never give up. When I am weak, Jesus is strong. When I am in need, Jesus provides for me in abundance. When I try to deceive myself, Jesus always speaks the truth. When I lose my way, Jesus takes my hand and leads me on the right path. When I sin and act selfishly, Jesus reminds me that I am holy and helps me to willingly serve others. When I'm tempted to give in to fear, with Jesus I am bold and confident. When I wonder if things are going to work out, with Jesus I walk in hopeful expectation and know all is well. When I try to do just enough sometimes, with Jesus I strive for excellence all the time. When I respond in hurt and anger, with Jesus I walk in unconditional love and compassion all the time. When I'm attacked by Satan's forces of darkness, with Jesus I have victory by His grace.

Child of God, have you come to know the unwavering truth of Jesus' nature? He is always faithful and utterly trustworthy. Even when you can't, I encourage you to remember that with Jesus, you can!

Father, thank you for the unwavering faithfulness and trustworthiness of Jesus my Savior. Holy Spirit, teach me to be faithful, to look always to Jesus as my role model and remember that when I can't, with Jesus I can. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen

Filled with Good Things Once More

(God Started the Restoration Business)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-142.mp3>

“So the LORD says, ‘I will return to Jerusalem. I will show its people my tender love. My temple will be rebuilt there. Workers will use a measuring line when they rebuild Jerusalem,’ announces the LORD. He says, ‘My towns will be filled with good things once more. I will comfort Zion. And I will choose Jerusalem again.’”
(Zechariah 1:14-17, NIRV)

As a Mighty Man of God, I’m encouraged by this passage. It reminds me that God is always faithful. He honors every promise He makes to us in His Word. When we are stubborn, hard-hearted, and disobedient, we will suffer the consequences. However, when we repent of our sins and return to Him, He always forgives us and restores us. I am thankful that God is in the restoration business.

I have a friend and brother in Christ who owned a company that specialized in restoring homes and businesses after they were damaged by natural disasters, fires, or other accidents. Their crews came in to wrap, pack and remove all furniture, equipment, and personal items. They transported and stored all your contents in their warehouse. They replaced damaged roofs, walls, doors, windows, floors, and fixtures. They removed debris, water, and moisture. They painted and installed new carpet and tile. After this, his trucks returned and unloaded the customer’s cleaned and repaired furniture, equipment, and personal goods. The home or business was restored to its original state. As this verse shows, God was also in the restoration business. He is an expert at restoration. He restores lost souls, wealth and possessions, families and relationships, sick and ailing bodies, weary minds, and aching hearts. God’s restoration work always comes with a life-time guarantee. Not only will your life be restored, but it will be better than before.

Child of God, have raging storms made a mess in your life? Are you surrounded by debris, brokenness, and decay? Has sin rained down and produced mold and mildew that is slowly destroying your spiritual health? If so, I pray you’ll listen to the words of Zechariah. Cry out to God today and trust Him to hear you. Watch and be amazed as He rebuilds and fully restores your life and fills it with good things once more!

Father, I praise you that you are a Master Builder and Jesus is the cornerstone of our lives. Your unconditional love, mercy and grace restore broken lives, when we repent and turn back to You. After every loss, you fill me with good things once more. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

I Say to You, Get Up

(Open Your Mouth and Speak Life)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-143.mp3>

“As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out -- the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, ‘Don’t cry.’ Then he went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it stood still. He said, ‘Young man, I say to you, get up!’ The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother. They were all filled with awe and praised God. ‘A great prophet has appeared among us,’ they said. ‘God has come to help his people.’”

(Luke 7:12-16, NIV)

In this passage, we see Jesus at work performing a great miracle as He raises a young man from the dead. While the crowd saw death and decay, Jesus saw life and health. They saw a widow who lost a son and had no one to provide for her. Jesus saw a family reunited. The crowd cried tears of sadness and despair. Jesus cried out in confident trust in God and commanded the dead body to get up and live once more. The crowd held back and watched as the coffin passed by. Jesus stepped in, touched the coffin, and performed a miracle. The crowd took the dead son away in a coffin, but Jesus gave the living son back to his mother. The crowd was filled with awe and wonder at Jesus’ anointing. Jesus was filled with love and compassion for both the mother and her son. The crowd shared in the widow’s grief. Jesus shared in her joy for a risen son. In the end, I am encouraged that the crowd was filled with awe, saw God’s anointing on Jesus, and joined Jesus in praise for God’s goodness.

Child of God, are you sharing good news of Jesus with others? Are you walking in God’s power and might and speaking life or death, blessings, or curses? I encourage you to be bold, act, and command sickness and death to obey you. Speak like Jesus, and command the dead areas in your life and the lives of others to GET UP!

Father, thank you for the life-giving and life-changing power of your Word. Holy Spirit, help me walk in faith and confident hope. Teach me to speak life and blessings over myself and others and use me as an instrument of joy. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Hope That Never Disappoints

(Faith, Hope and Love)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-144.mp3>

“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. Such hope never disappoints or deludes or shames us, for God's love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit Who has been given to us.”
(Romans 5:4-5, AMP)

Paul encourages us to greet troubles with a smile and joy in our hearts, knowing the pressure and hardship we're facing will lead to spiritual growth and maturity. He insists that trials and tests serve to shape and build our character. Once our character has been established and grounded in faith and love, we experience joy and hope. God's love and His promise assures us He will never abandon or forsake us. His love will never fail us.

In 2010, Karen and I were at a difficult place in our marriage. We both said and did things that caused hurt and pain. Like many couples, we were tempted to give up on our marriage and say, “This is just too hard. I don't want to do this anymore.” But in the midst of the storm, Jesus told me to put my trust and hope in Him. He told me not to worry or be concerned about anything Karen said or did. I was to do one thing – put my trust, confidence and hope in Him and in His ability to heal and restore our marriage. The Holy Spirit gave me the grace to walk in love with my wife no matter what. He promised that if I walked in love, He would take care of Karen. I committed to walk in love with her, even when it was difficult.

I praise God I've learned to experience the truth of Paul's words when he says “. . . faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.” (1Co 13:13). With Jesus' love and His grace, I can endure all tests (relational, financial, professional, spiritual). I praise God that during the storms in my life, Jesus is with me, and the Holy Spirit is teaching me that when I walk in love by faith, hope abounds and never disappoints.

Father, thank you for Your unconditional love, mercy, and goodness. Jesus, I accept you as Lord and Savior. I have faith, confidence, and hope in your love. I know you are with me in every storm and that you will never leave me or forsake me. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Life Is in the Blood

(The Blood of Jesus Assures Us of Victory)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-145.mp3>

“For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life.”

(Leviticus 17:11, NIV)

Moses tells us that life is in the blood. This was truth in the Old Testament before Jesus came to serve as a sacrifice on the cross for our sins. Post crucifixion and resurrection, every believer's relationship with God and inheritance of Kingdom promises rests on the blood of Jesus. I've noticed that many Christians have a basic understanding of spiritual maturity with regard to faith, healing, deliverance, and redemption; but are limited in their understanding of the power of the blood of Jesus. We must have faith and trust in the blood of Jesus, both in what it has already done, and what it will do. On the cross, Jesus became our sacrifice. His blood was required to tip the scales from sin, evil and damnation to righteousness, holiness, and salvation. The blood of Jesus is the only sacrifice needed to cleanse us from our sins, redeem and restore us into right standing with God.

The blood of Jesus ensures that we can live a life free from sin, curses, strongholds, fear, sickness, disease, poverty and lack. His blood is the key to an abundant life, peace, joy, and hope. His blood enables us to walk in dominion, authority, and power as a Son of God. The blood assures us of a rightful place in the family of God. His blood allows us to come into the presence of God and receive His blessings and favor.

Child of God, to ensure that you win in every situation, I encourage you to plead the blood of Jesus over your life every day. Share your testimony and witness to others about the power of the blood. Trust the power of the blood of Jesus and refuse to walk in fear, doubt, and unbelief. Expect to see miracles and supernatural results. Moses was right . . . there is life in the blood – the blood of Jesus!

Father, thank you for sending your Son Jesus Christ to die on the cross and shed His blood for my sins. Today, I plead the blood of Jesus over every area of my life. I know there is abundant life in the blood. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

That We Might Have Hope

(God's Word is Our Source of Hope)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-146.mp3>

“For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”

(Romans 15:4, NASB)

Paul tells us God's Word was written to give us hope. In the Garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve disobeyed God, their sin caused a separation from God. Life became hard and difficult with pain and suffering. Over time, emotional and inter-personal strife, sickness and disease, poverty, and hunger, will cause man to lose hope and become discouraged. A man without hope will slip into despair and give up his will to live. Hope is essential to life. When we hope, we look forward to the future. Hope is the belief that things will change, get better or improve.

Everyone faces trials and tests, disappointments and heartaches, challenges and difficult situations that will tempt them to give up, cave in and quit. As Christians, we must remember that the Word became flesh in Jesus and that faith in God's Word and Jesus reconnects us with God. Jesus and His grace hold us up and gives us the strength to go on. Jesus stands between our situation and hopelessness. Jesus turns our despair into hope, and helps us to believe the storm will pass. Faith in Jesus is our confidence that fear is no match for Jesus' power and His love. Faith enables us to trust Jesus to always make a way out. Jesus gives us the desire to get back up every time we fall. Jesus is the proof that we are more than conquerors in Him. Jesus' faithfulness is our source of courage to face the impossible. Jesus is our source of power, miracles, and healing.

Child of God, I encourage you to remember that Jesus is the Living Word of God. In Jesus, all that was lost is restored, redeemed, and reconciled to God. In Jesus, we have hope. He came, suffered, died, and rose again on the third day. Jesus is all we need!

Father, thank you for the power and truth of your Living Word. Your Word teaches me, instructs me, encourages me and gives me hope to go on no matter what. Jesus, I place my faith, belief, trust, confidence, and hope in you, knowing that you are all I need. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Inherited and Anointed Power

(God Uses Others to Anoint You with His Power)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-147.mp3>

“I remember your honest and true faith. It was alive first in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice. And I am certain that it is now alive in you also. That is why I remind you to help God's gift grow, just as a small spark grows into a fire. God put his gift in you when I placed my hands on you.”
(2 Timothy 1:5-6, NIRV)

Timothy's faith was passed on through several generations from grandmother to mother to him. He inherited their seed of faith. Power and anointing were imparted to Timothy from Paul, his spiritual father and mentor, by the laying on of hands. Like Timothy, I come from a long line of women who took their faith very seriously. Until Alzheimer's' robbed my 88-year-old mother of her ability to focus and read, she faithfully started her day reading her Bible and devotional books (including mine). She spent time praying for her children, tithed, and attended Sunday service for almost 70 years. She inherited these traits from her grandmother and mother and passed the seed of faith on to me.

Like Timothy, I've been blessed and anointed by several men and women of God. For over a decade, I've sat and studied at the feet of Creflo and Taffi Dollar, Senior Pastors of World Changers Church International and Os Hillman, Founder of Marketplace Leaders. I've been blessed to listen to their messages, read their books, observe their actions, and serve in their ministries. My prayer has been that God would bless me and allow His anointing to be passed on from them to me.

Child of God, what is your inheritance in the faith? Who did God use to anoint you? Was it planted in your DNA before you were born and passed along from one generation to the next? Do you have spiritual fathers or mothers who teach and instruct, correct, and discipline, encourage, and equip you? If not, I encourage you to ask God to guide your steps to a spiritually mature and anointed man or woman of God. Sit at their feet and listen. Ask them to anoint you with a portion of their power and walk into your divine destiny!

Father, thank you for planting the seeds of your Word in my life through others. I praise you and give thanks for the pastors and teachers who have shared your Word and their anointing with me. Help me teach, equip, and encourage an army of saints dedicated to Kingdom work. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Forgetting What Lies Behind

(Looking Forward, Never Back)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-148.mp3>

“I do not consider, brethren, that I have captured and made it my own [yet]; but one thing I do [it is my one aspiration]: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the [supreme and heavenly] prize to which God in Christ Jesus is calling us upward.”
(Philippians 3:13-14, AMP)

This verse is a continuation of Paul’s discussion about striving for moral and spiritual resurrection with Jesus Christ, and his pursuit of spiritual growth and perfection. He knows there is more to learn, but he is single-minded in his focus to keep growing in Christ. He refers to his one aspiration. Webster’s Dictionary defines “aspiration” as: a strong desire, longing, yearning, or craving. Paul’s aspiration is the heavenly prize of salvation, eternity in heaven with Christ. He tells us that he has chosen to forget the past and everything in the past. He presses on and reaches forward and upward to win the prize that God offers because of what Jesus has done.

I’m puzzled by the number of Christians who spend time looking over their shoulder, into the past with regrets, condemnation, and guilt. Paul tells us to look and reach in one direction and one only, forward, and upward. It seems we spend too much time focused on Facebook, photo albums, old cards and letters, personal mementos, trophies, certificates, plaques, and medals that commemorate our past. In a similar fashion, we focus on our present circumstance and compare ourselves and our circumstances with others. I confess, I have an intense desire, and a longing for heaven. While I am happy with my life here on earth, it pales in my excitement when I think about spending eternity in heaven with Jesus.

Child of God, what is your focus? What are you looking at and reaching for? Are you looking backwards and consumed with the things of the past, or focused on your path forward and upward? I encourage you to ask the Holy Spirit to help you set your mind, heart, and spirit on Jesus. Turn to Him. Look and reach up!

Father, thank you for the life-transforming power of your Living Word. Continue to use the Holy Spirit to convict, teach, and instruct me in the path that leads to your perfect call for my life. Help me press on, look forward, and reach upward to Jesus at all times. Through the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

What's the One Thing I Can Pray About with You?

(Pray Now Not Later)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-149.mp3>

*"Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands,
without wrath and dissension."*

(1 Timothy 2:8, NASB)

My friend and spiritual mentor, Colin Millar, taught me to embrace the power of this verse and to walk it out in my daily life. Colin is a mighty man of prayer. He prays for people, organizations, cities and nations. He's very sensitive to the Holy Spirit's promptings and responds to people in their place of pain and suffering by praying for them. He prays everywhere he goes. He prays in restaurants with waiters, in offices with clients and colleagues during a meeting, on airplanes with the person in the next seat, and in the grocery store aisles with strangers. He seldom has a conversation with someone without asking the question, "What's the one thing I can pray about with you right now?" He has prayed over me and my wife Karen. I'm always amazed at the peace in my spirit after his fervent prayers.

After witnessing Colin, I asked God to give me the heart to "PRAY NOW" with others. I confess, it felt awkward and nervous at first, as I looked for the right moment to redirect the conversation and ask the question, "What is the one thing that I can pray about with you right now?" I am amazed by the look of surprise on people's faces and watch as it changes from hesitation, eagerness, and excitement. I ask them to tell me their greatest need or area of struggle, and explain that I will pray specifically for that. I invite the Holy Spirit to speak through me and allow His voice to direct my prayer. Often people are moved to tears during the prayer as they release their hurt and pain. Afterwards, their faces radiate with a sense of calm and peace that was not there before our prayer. As they express their appreciation and turn to walk away, I too am overwhelmed by peace and joy. I can see Jesus smiling at me and hear Him say, "Well done my good friend and faithful son."

Child of God, I encourage you to stop and PRAY NOW with others. Trust Jesus to hear your prayers. Then watch as blessings rain down from heaven and change things, including you!

Father, thank you for using Jesus to show us the power of prayer. Holy Spirit, fill me with courage and boldness to stop and PRAY NOW with others everywhere I go. Teach me to believe and have confidence that prayer always changes things including me.

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

Surely, I Will Be with You

(I Will Give You Victory)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-150.mp3>

“Gideon said to Him, Oh Lord, how can I deliver Israel? Behold, my clan is the poorest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house. The Lord said to him, Surely I will be with you, and you shall smite the Midianites as one man. Gideon said to Him, If now I have found favor in Your sight, then show me a sign that it is You Who talks with me. Do not leave here, I pray You, until I return to You and bring my offering and set it before You. And He said, I will wait until you return.”

(Judges 6:15-18, AMP)

I'm drawn to Gideon's conflicting emotions and actions in his encounter with God. At first, we see doubt and unbelief in his ability to do what God has asked him to do. He even asks God to prove that He is really talking to him. Suddenly, he demonstrates faith, trust and divine wisdom. He recognizes God's voice and begs Him to wait while he goes and prepares an offering. He understands he must not come before God empty-handed. He understands that in order to receive God's anointing, he must complete the "blessing exchange." Sadly, Gideon continued to test God for proof that He would honor His promise. God was very patient and tolerated his doubt and unbelief. Finally, God decided it was time for Gideon to take a leap of faith and trust Him completely. God instructed Gideon to send 30,000 of his troops back home. He is left with only 300 men to fight the Midianites. Scripture tells us that with God's help, his 300 men defeat the enemy and God richly blessed him for his faithfulness and obedience.

Child of God, are you walking in doubt, fear, and unbelief? Are you demanding that God give you proof that He will honor His Word and His promises? I encourage you to offer a sacrifice, and lay your pride, doubt, and unbelief at His feet. Like Gideon, trust Him with all your heart, mind, and spirit. Know this, when you do, be prepared to watch as God joins you and uses you to do the impossible!

Father, thank you for your unwavering love, patience, and kindness. Holy Spirit, teach me to trust and lean on you. Lord, forgive me for all the times that I have doubted You and Your Promises. Holy Spirit, help me to always be obedient and faithful.

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

With All Your Heart

(Whatever You Do)

<https://www.godencouragesme.com/2mp3/AS2-151.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).

Married man, I urge you to pay attention to this verse. I’m drawn to the plain, simple yet powerful force of this verse. Most of the time this verse is expounded upon in sermons and referred to as the Christian’s directive for our work life. The Holy Spirit revealed that this verse has a much broader application especially for married men. Jesus has instructed us, in fact commanded us, to love our wives. The only way we can do this is by surrendering ourselves fully to Jesus so that His love can abound in us. With His love and grace in us, we can love our wives like He loved us, completely and unconditionally.

I remember that when Karen and I saw the film, “Fireproof.” It really spoke to us, so we decided to buy 2 copies of the book and go through it as a couple. Reading the book, fostered our decision to seek a Christian counselor to get help with our relationship. George, our marriage counselor, was 74 and he had been married for almost 50 years. He was a former Associate Pastor, and Mighty Man of God. Going to see George was a real blessing for us. We learned many things and were reminded that a successful marriage requires a lot of hard work. It also requires you to have an open and understanding mind and a hearing heart. During my prayer time one morning, as I prayed about our counseling and the things we were learning, God spoke to me and said, “Be loving and kind to your wife at all times no matter what.” Right then, I made God a promise to be obedient and follow His instructions. Now in moments of difficulty or conflict, I am still. I focus my mind and heart on Jesus. I ask the Holy Spirit to give me grace and help me walk in love. I have learned that when I am pleasing to the Lord, then I will be pleasing to my wife.

Child of God, the next time you experience a moment of frustration, hurt, or anger with your spouse, be still and cry out to the Lord. In that moment, focus on your love walk and strive to please God with all you do. Do this in faith, knowing that you will have a great reward – a happy spouse and a blessed and Godly marriage.

Lord, thank you for my wife and a godly marriage. Holy Spirit, continue to teach me and help me to walk in the love and peace of Jesus at all times. In Jesus, I can be pleasing to my wife and others. 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 exploring life with Jesus. I praise God for your willingness to spend time in God's Word and your desire to develop a deeper relationship with Jesus. I pray that you have discovered many rich and wonderful things about yourself, and your relationship with Jesus as you hear these words. Whenever I share my dirt road encounter with Jesus in 2009, people ask, "What has changed in your life since that divine encounter?" I answer, "Everything." I go on to share the moment, as I watched my child-self run into the loving arms of Jesus. Suddenly, I felt His strong arms lift me up and swing me around in circles. I sensed His lips kissing the top of my head. I was lulled into a state of peace as His heartbeat reverberated in my ears. I felt a level of acceptance, affirmation, and safety beyond anything I had never known as I heard His gentle whisper, "I love you, Son." Yes, the moment changed my life. His Spirit continues to wake me up in the early morning hours to go deeper in my intimate conversations. I talk to Jesus, and He talks to me. His Spirit equips me to serve as His Ambassador on the Weekly Prayer Calls and my calls with my clients. Throughout the day, I visualize Jesus sitting across from me. We discuss my praise and worship revelations, the Devotionals, Prayer Calls, and my personal and professional challenges. I ask Him questions. He gives me answers, advice, counsel, and encouragement.

If you started this journey with me as an unbeliever, I pray that these pages have answered some of your questions about Jesus and life with Jesus. I pray that the Holy Spirit has led you to invite Jesus to be your personal savior and Lord. If you joined me as a mature believer, then I pray that you have come to experience deeper encounters with Jesus and include Jesus in all you do every minute of the day. Expect to bump into Him around every corner. Cry out to Jesus when you encounter a problem. Rely on His wisdom when you need an answer to a difficult problem. Remember, prayer is simply conversation. Jesus longs to be included in every situation and to just hang out with you. I've come to realize that Jesus likes to have fun and has a great sense of humor. Often, we laugh together as we recount the day and some of my foolish decisions and moments of independence. I've learned that Jesus is a very gentle and patient teacher who is always willing to reveal hidden mysteries. While He sometimes makes me wait longer than I want for an answer, I've come to trust His perfect timing. I'm learning to look and see His presence in all of the situations where I thought I was on my own. I've come to realize that He was always there standing in the shadows just waiting for me to turn to Him.

Child of God, I pray that God has used this book to draw you closer to Him. As you listened to my testimonies or story, I hope you came to realize that I was simply recounting His story of the "Good News" since He came into my life. Lastly, I want to encourage you to love and serve others. Commit each day to imitate Jesus, to be loving, compassionate, accepting, and

forgiving. Trust Jesus and the Holy Spirit to mold and shape you into His likeness. As you experience deeper levels of intimacy with Jesus, be sure to share your testimonies and praise reports with others so that they too may be encouraged.

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 on the next page 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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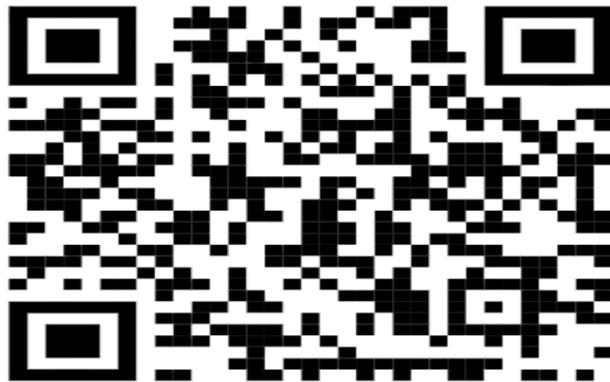
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Our Kingdom Partners

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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