

Life as God Intended:
A Guide to Basic Christian Discipleship

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Introduction

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! If you are reading this book, it is because you wish to gain a better understanding of what it means to be a believer in and follower of Christ. This brief introduction will help you follow along with what you are about to read.

This book has a simple progression. It starts with laying the foundation of how we are saved. It goes on to build on that foundation by teaching who we are in Christ, and the nature of God's love for those who receive Him. It then goes on to teach how you can go beyond knowing you are loved by God, to loving Him back in a personal relationship. From there, it teaches why that relationship is secure. Finally, it invites you to receive Jesus as your Savior if you have already received Him.

This book is rich in Bible passages. I reference Bible passages as I make my points, but oftentimes I will quote the Bible so you can see what it says for yourself. Many times, I let the Bible do most of the talking and keep my commentaries short. The sayings of God are likened to a weapon to help you battle negativity in your spiritual life, and my desire is to give you a solid arsenal (Ephesians 6:10-18 NIV).

Before I begin, I want to sum this book up in one word: love. Salvation is a gift from a loving God. God's love for His children is deep and seemingly beyond reason at times. We love God because He loved us first. We follow Jesus out of love. And God's love will never let you go. If you want a stern book presenting a demanding God we are called to appease, this book isn't for you.

I hope you are blessed as you go on this journey through the Bible with me.

Chapter 1: Salvation

“²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23 NIV)

“²³ For the wages of sin is death [Hell], but the gift of God is eternal life [Heaven] in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23 NIV)

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son [Jesus Christ], that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16 NIV)

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9 NIV)

“Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand.... For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:1, 3-4 NIV)

“⁹ If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.” (Romans 10:9-10 NIV)

Christianity is different from other religions, because it is not a religion. Religions teach that we follow rules to earn some form of salvation. Christianity teaches we are all sinners, and we could never earn salvation through our works (Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23). The Bible teaches that we are saved from Hell and let into Heaven, because God sent His Son Jesus Christ to die on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins to be received by faith (Romans 5:6-11).

The message of the cross is this. Our sins have to be paid for, and they are normally paid for by us in Hell. That is an undeniable truth of scripture. There is a Hell, and a loving God would send people there. God is loving, but He is also just. He won’t deny His justice simply because He is loving. But God is loving, and He didn’t want to fate us to Hell without any hope of salvation. This created a problem for God; how can God punish our sins in justice and love us at the same time?

God came up with a creative solution to this problem. He decided if He punished an innocent person for our sins, we wouldn’t have to receive the punishment we deserve. But in order for this to work, God would have to find a person who met three requirements. They would have to be free from sin. They would have to have an infinite nature that could pay for the sins of every person throughout human history. And they would have to be willing to suffer the punishment we deserve. Where could God find someone like that?

The answer to God’s dilemma was right beside Him. God has a Son, and God’s Son met all three requirements. He was without sin, He was infinite, and we are fortunate enough that He was willing to take our punishment. God’s Son left Heaven, and was born into a peasant family

2,000 years ago. His name is Jesus Christ. He lived a sinless life, and after a three-year ministry, He was arrested and crucified. While Jesus was on the cross, He offered Himself as a human sacrifice to pay for our sins. And in a moment of horrible agony, He took the wrath we would experience in Hell for our sins to satisfy God's justice. When He finally died, Jesus was buried in a tomb. But after three days, He rose from the dead and conquered death. The death and resurrection of Jesus made salvation available to us, and all we need to do to be saved is place our faith in Jesus (John 6:27-29).

Faith is believing you are made right with God because Jesus paid for all your sins, so you wouldn't have to pay for them yourself (2 Corinthians 5:21, Romans 5:1). This includes future sins (Colossians 2:13-14). Jesus chose to pay for our sins, and faith is seeing that reality (John 10:11-18). There is nothing you offered Jesus that made Him do this (John 6:27-29). He did it for you. We also believe that Jesus rose from the dead, as the above Bible passage says.

However, the turning point of your eternal destiny comes with a decision. When you discover faith, you act on that faith by confessing Jesus is Lord (Romans 10:9-13). Jesus is the Lord, and He suffered greatly to forgive our sins and give us Heaven as a gift. If we wish to receive His forgiveness, He certainly deserves that honor (Philippians 2:5-11). When you act on your faith by confessing Jesus is Lord, your conversion is complete, and you enter into grace. Grace is the unmerited favor of God that makes us righteous, brings us into relationship with God, and gives us Heaven as a gift.

While salvation is an experience that happens at conversion, faith is a lifelong journey (Ephesians 1:13-14, John 11:25-26). You continue to believe. When a person discovers faith, it lasts the rest of a person's life (1 John 2:19). God sees to that (Philippians 1:3-6, John 10:27-29). That is why a person can receive the gift of salvation at conversion, instead of at the end of a lifetime of faith. This means your salvation remains stable as you experience doubts along the way, which God accepts as a natural struggle of faith (2 Timothy 2:13).

A relationship with Jesus will make you grow as a person, but you will still sin (2 Corinthians 3:18, Matthew 6:9-13). One of the biggest struggles of receiving mercy is the awareness that you don't deserve it. But we are promised faith frees us from all condemnation (John 3:18, Romans 8:1). This is the gospel! This is the good news of the Bible that's almost too good to be true. It's an invitation for whoever will receive it, and it is an invitation for you if you have responded to it yet.

Chapter 2: Baptism

“¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19 NIV)

The issue of baptism is controversial. While water baptism is seen throughout the New Testament, Bible scholars disagree about what extent (if any) baptism contributes to salvation. I can't settle this debate, but I can offer a practical solution for it; get baptized. Jesus said get baptized, so get baptized... end of story.

From a certain point of view this is a trivial issue, because the only requirement for baptism is that a person believes in Jesus (Mark 16:16). If you came to faith in Jesus, you are already doing everything you need to do to get baptized. You don't have to change what you believe to get baptized, so get baptized. There isn't a required ceremony for a baptism to be valid. Any baptism ceremony you participate in will be based on the beliefs and traditions of the baptizer. The only requirement for a baptism ceremony is that it be done “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” There isn't even a requirement for the baptism to be done by a pastor or priest. Any Christian can baptize.

Churches often offer baptism classes, and they are a good opportunity to learn about the newfound faith one has discovered. Whether or not baptism is needed for salvation under normal circumstances, all circumstances, or any circumstances is debated, but what isn't debated is that baptism is a public confession where a person declares their faith, and it is a person's introduction into the Christian church. If you haven't been baptized, I encourage you to do so.

Chapter 3: Identity in Christ

“¹⁴For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. ¹⁶I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.” (Ephesians 3:14-19 NIV)

The purpose of this chapter is to get you to see yourself as God sees you if you responded to His offer of salvation. You could say I am trying to develop your identity in Christ. This is a short list of ways God loves you. As you read, I want you to absorb the awesome nature of God’s love and kindness towards you. If you don’t believe, I want you to imagine that you do to get the intended impact. Here is the truth of what God says about you if you are in Christ:

All your sins are forgiven:

“¹³When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.” (Colossians 2:13-15 NIV)

Jesus didn’t die on the cross to give you a fresh start and an opportunity to do better. He died to forgive ALL your sins. This includes the sins you haven’t even committed yet. If you are in Christ, you are as forgiven as you are ever going to be. The Bible goes as far as to say you are holy, without blemish, and free from accusation (Colossians 1:22). This is who you are in Christ.

Before I move on, what kind of loves shows such mercy? We belong to a good God.

You are declared righteous:

“²¹God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV)

“⁵However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness. ⁶David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the one to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: ⁷‘Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. ⁸Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord will never count against them.’” (Romans 4:5-8 NIV)

Jesus took your sin on the cross, so He could give you His righteousness as a gift. When God looks at you, He doesn’t see your sin anymore. He sees the righteousness of Jesus. That righteousness is compared to clothing that covers our sin so that it is no longer visible to God (Galatians 3:26-27). God still knows you’re sinning, but He no longer holds your sins against you. What grace!

You are destined for Heaven:

“¹³ I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.” (1 John 5:13 NIV)

The problem with religion is you can never really know where you stand with God. You do the works you believe you have to do, and all you can do is hope you are doing enough. That's not what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches you can KNOW you have eternal life. You can know you are going to Heaven. You can carry that hope with you throughout your life, and daydream about what eternity will be like. If you are sick, you can imagine what it will be like to enjoy perfect health. If you lost loved ones who were saved, you can imagine rejoicing with them forever in paradise. If you are depressed, you can imagine what it will be like to experience only happiness. And you can imagine what it will be like to spend eternity with the God who loved you, and gave you this awesome gift. You are saved.

You are chosen:

“³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. ⁴ For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will” (Ephesians 1:3-5 NIV)

The purpose for sharing this scripture isn't to present the idea that there are people chosen for Heaven and people chosen for Hell. It is possible for people to be chosen, and yet still receive God's grace through an act of free will. We don't know if that is the case, but it is possible. This is a mystery of the Bible that Jesus said we aren't given an answer for (Mark 4:26-29). Anything people say about election is speculation at the end of the day.

But with that being said, God is so heavily involved in our salvations that even if we have the free will to say yes or no to His offer of grace, nobody is saved unless they are chosen. Firstly, Jesus said nobody can come to Him unless they are drawn to Him by His Father (John 6:44). People don't find God. God finds people (Luke 15:1-10). After being drawn to Jesus by the Heavenly Father, the Holy Spirit convicts people of their sin, so they see their need for salvation (John 16:8-9). The Holy Spirit also opens people's eyes to see the truth about Jesus and the gospel, making faith possible (1 Corinthians 2:6-12).

All of these things are needed for salvation, and they are all works God chooses to do. Maybe we are given opportunities to receive grace, and the ones who aren't chosen are those who keep refusing God? Maybe the chosen are those who realize they need God, and at some point receive Him into their lives? It is possible we have free will to choose whether we receive the gift God offers. But it doesn't matter in the end, because nobody makes it to those moments of decision without God first leading them there, and giving them the power to say yes to His offer. And after salvation, people keep their faith with God's perfect help (a concept discussed later in this book).

What does all of this mean? If you are in Christ, you are chosen by God to be His. How special does that make you feel? If you believe, you didn't pull a fast one on God. God isn't in Heaven wishing you didn't belong to Him. He desired a relationship with you, made that relationship happen, and sustains that relationship. God loves you fiercely.

Jesus loves you:

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:1-2 NIV)

Jesus suffered more than anyone else in human history. The wrath He took on the cross is so unimaginable, it is a mystery how it didn't tear His body to pieces. But He did it, because there was a greater joy He had in mind. What was that joy? You! Jesus loved you so passionately that He went to the cross for you. And the only thing He expects from you in return is your faith. How can we not adore such a Savior?

Your Heavenly Father loves you:

"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him." (1 John 3:1 NIV)

Contrary to popular opinion, we are not all God's children. The Bible teaches that before a person is saved, they aren't one of God's children (John 8:42-44). But when a person comes to faith, they are adopted by God and become one of His children. We become God's flawed adopted children, and God becomes our perfect Father in Heaven who loves us with a perfect fatherly love. What a privilege! God chose you to be a member of His family, and the Bible says you can relate to Him with the same closeness a small child has with their earthly father (Romans 8:15-16).

You are fully known and loved:

- ¹³ For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
- ¹⁴ I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.
- ¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place,
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.
- ¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in your book
before one of them came to be.
- ¹⁷ How precious to me are your thoughts, God!
How vast is the sum of them!

¹⁸ Were I to count them,
they would outnumber the grains of sand—
when I awake, I am still with you.” (Psalm 139:13-18 NIV)

“¹⁹ This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence: ²⁰ If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.” (1 John 3:19-20 NIV)

God knew everything there was to know about you before you were even born. He knew every strength and weakness. He knew every success and failure you would experience in life. He knew all the plans He had for you. And what was God’s verdict for you? I love you! God knows you fully, and He loves you anyway. You don’t have to worry about disappointing God or losing His love, because you would have to be able to surprise God in order to do those things. You are secure in God’s love. When God chose you, He did so with full knowledge of who you are.

You can cling to these truths:

The purpose of this book is to provide basic Christian discipleship. With that in mind, I wanted to keep this book simple. The problem is the Bible isn’t always simple. If you were to read the New Testament, it is likely you would have questions. However, the beauty of logic is you don’t always need all the answers. You just need to be able to cling to the plain stated truths of the Bible in the face of what you don’t know.

In past books, I included a section dedicated to interpreting difficult Bible passages to show how they fit in with the message of the first chapter. I didn’t do that this time. Instead, I will give you a general rule to help you keep your understanding in the face of questions. Don’t question Bible passages with plain stated meanings when confronted with complicated Bible passages that require interpretation. For whatever questions you may encounter, you can cling to these truths about your identity in Christ.

Chapter 4: Loving God

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.” (Romans 12:1 NIV)

“¹⁵ If you love me [Jesus], keep my commands.” (John 14:15 NIV)

After the last chapter, you probably understand why a person saved by grace would love God. You can also likely understand how those truths would give a person the desire to show God love in a tangible way. That was the point! I wanted to lay a foundation that would make you fall in love with God, and use this chapter to show you ways you can act on that love.

I created a simple seven-point acronym that shows ways the Bible says we can love God. If you were to study the Bible on your own, you could find ways to add to this list, but this is an expansive list nonetheless. The acronym is “WISE LEG.” (bizarre, but easy to remember). It stands for:

W – Worship

I – Intercede

S – Serve

E – Express Faith

L – Love

E – Evangelize

G – Give

A common theme that runs throughout all these points is they have to do with loving God and loving people. This is because love for God and love for neighbor is considered the sum total of everything the New Testament commands (Matthew 22:36-40). With all of these acts we can do for God, love is the theme. I could simplify this list by giving you those two commandments, but I wanted to provide some specific examples to guide you.

Keeping those two commandments is how we love God. When Jesus and the Apostles who represented Him gave commandments, they were teaching us how to love God. These commandments aren’t needed for salvation (Galatians 3:1-3, Galatians 3:10-14). The Jewish laws that weren’t carried over into Christianity aren’t needed either. The choices you make for God are for the sake of showing Him love for the goodness He has already shown you (1 John 4:19).

Seven major ways to show God love include:

Worship:

“¹⁵ Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name.” (Hebrews 13:15 NIV)

“¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 NIV)

One thing I love is that you can relate to God in your natural love language. If you value words of affirmation and quality time, this is a natural way for you to show God you love Him. Spend time with God, and tell Him how you feel about Him. One of the easiest ways to show God you love Him is to tell Him so! Make time to come before God and talk to Him as your closest friend. Tell God why you love Him. Give Him thanks for all His blessings, and give Him thanks on the days when you don’t feel like it. Rejoice in your relationship with God, and let God know that whatever life throws at you, you love Him. This is the simplest way to show God love, and it is also one of the great joys of the Christian life.

Intercede:

To intercede is simply to pray for someone else. Praying for others is a discipline that pleases God. It’s commanded throughout the Bible. In the book of 1 Timothy, we are told to pray for political leaders and public concerns (1 Timothy 2:1-2). In the book of Ephesians, we are told to pray for other Christians (Ephesians 6:18). Jesus said we should pray for God’s saving work in the lives of unbelievers (Matthew 9:37-38). Jesus said elsewhere that we should pray for our enemies (Matthew 5:44). Repeatedly we are told to pray for others. Pray for everyone God put in your life, and ask the people you know if they could use prayer. Prayer is a simple act of love that requires nothing more than being thoughtful.

Serve:

“⁴² Jesus called them together and said, ‘You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ⁴³ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.’” (Mark 10:42-45 NIV)

If you have an acts of service love language, you also have a natural way to relate to God. A simple way to show God love is to serve in His name. This could take the form of volunteering your time at church. It could take the form of offering your time to help others. It can also take the form of using your spiritual gifts for the good of God’s Kingdom. Every believer has a spiritual gift, and one of the best gifts you can give to God is to use the gifts He gave you (Romans 12:4-8, 1 Corinthians 12:4-6). Maybe your gift is leadership? Try looking for opportunities to be a servant leader. Maybe your gift is ministry? Look for opportunities to use that gift. Maybe you have one of the other gifts listed in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4? Use it for God’s glory. Your service to others is a service to God.

Express Faith:

“⁵ Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. ⁶ Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.” (Colossians 4:5-6 NIV)

The goal of most Christian works is to lead others into a relationship with Jesus. Expressing your faith is one of the simplest ways to do that. Tell people how God has blessed you. Tell people how God has answered your prayers. Incorporate biblical sayings into your conversations with people that will point them towards Jesus. Let your light shine before others (Matthew 5:14-16). Set a good example when you are doing so. Don't overlook the last part. If you are going to express your faith, be careful of the example you set. Otherwise, your efforts to give God glory will have the opposite effect.

Here's a truth you may have to see to believe. Your friends may not care if you swear, have pre-marital sex, or skip church every Sunday. They may do these things themselves, approve of those things, and encourage you to engage in those behaviors. But the moment you try to express your faith to them, watch how quickly those same people turn and use those things to call you a hypocrite who doesn't practice what they preach. As absurd as that is, it will happen almost every time. It won't matter whether you preached about anything either. You'll still get dinged.

If you wish to express your faith, you put a target on your back that says "open to criticism." If you are willing to accept that, you are almost forced to hold yourself to a higher standard. This self-imposed higher standard will keep you honest with commandments in the Bible you may not otherwise keep. Expressing your faith is not only a way to point people towards Jesus, it is also a way to push yourself to be the best example you can be.

Love:

⁶For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love." (Galatians 5:6 NIV)

⁸Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. ⁹The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not covet,' and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' ¹⁰Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law [the moral commandments]." (Romans 13:8-10 NIV)

This acronym could really be simplified into this one point. If we wish to love God, we love other people for Him. Jesus placed such an emphasis on love that He summed up how to love Him by saying love others (John 14:15, John 15:17). Love everyone, and do it for God. Love your family. Love your friends. Love your coworkers or classmates. Most of all, love people you don't have a natural reason to love. Jesus said the ultimate test of a person's love is if they are willing to love their enemies.

⁴³"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are

not even the tax collectors doing that? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?” (Matthew 5:43-47 NIV)

This doesn't mean God doesn't value justice. In fact, the Bible says if we are willing to love our enemies, God will fight on our behalf (Romans 12:17-21). Nevertheless, the greatest act of love you can show God is to love those you personally have no reason to like.

Evangelize:

“¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19 NIV)

Evangelism is a word used for sharing the basic message of salvation with people. Most Christian works are done for the purpose of furthering evangelism. Be an evangelist! Look for ways to share your faith with people. Maybe you share your testimony with people? Maybe you use a proven strategy like the Romans Road evangelism method? Maybe you hand out tracts? If you look at all the strategies out there, you are bound to find an evangelism method that fits who you are.

And don't be intimidated. Most people are okay with people sharing their faith with them. Very few people will get angry with you, and many people will even appreciate the kindness of the gesture. The worst you will likely encounter is people who look at you like you're weird. But people have short memories, and if you share your faith with a stranger, you will likely see them again after your brief encounter. Let that take the fear away. Once you start evangelizing, you quickly find out it isn't so bad.

Give:

“⁷ Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” (2 Corinthians 9:7 NIV)

As I said before, you can relate to God no matter what your love language is. Gift givers are no exception. If you aren't able to give your time to serve in a ministry, make a donation to help those who are serving in a ministry. Every financial gift you give to a ministry that does God's work is really a gift to God. You may not be rich, but that doesn't matter. What matters isn't how much you give, but the heart behind what is given (2 Corinthians 8:12). A small amount of money given by someone who doesn't have much can say more than a large sum of money given by someone who has a lot (Luke 21:1-4). If you give with the right motives, it is a gift to God.

Chapter 5: Temper Your Enthusiasm

My goal with chapter 3 was to get you excited to serve God. The goal of this chapter is to temper your enthusiasm. This may seem like an odd thing to put in a Christian book, but there are good reasons to “temper your enthusiasm” about serving God. Here they are:

Faith drives the Christian life:

“²⁷ Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.’

²⁸ Then they asked him, ‘What must we do to do the works God requires?’

²⁹ Jesus answered, ‘The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.’” (John 6:27-29 NIV)

“⁷ Now if the ministry that brought death [the Ten Commandments], which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, transitory though it was, ⁸ will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? ⁹ If the ministry that brought condemnation was glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness! ¹⁰ For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. ¹¹ And if what was transitory came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts! ¹² Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. ¹³ We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to prevent the Israelites from seeing the end of what was passing away. ¹⁴ But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. ¹⁵ Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. ¹⁶ But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” (2 Corinthians 3:7-18 NIV)

Faith is the fuel that drives the Christian life. If you become so wrapped up in works that you lose sight of your faith, you are losing touch with the source of genuine love for God. We love God, because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). Beholding Jesus by faith is also what causes us to grow as Christians (2 Corinthians 3:18). If you aren’t believing, you are cutting yourself off from the source of your power.

Your love for God is imperfect, but God’s love for you is perfect:

“⁸ If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” (1 John 1:8 NIV)

“¹⁴ We know that the law [the moral commandments] is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. ¹⁵ I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ¹⁶ And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷ As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. ¹⁸ For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I

cannot carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. ²¹ So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²² For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; ²³ but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. ²⁴ What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.” (Romans 7:14-25 NIV)

Another reason to “temper your enthusiasm” is you can’t love God perfectly. As excited as you may be to serve God and show Him how much you love Him, you are still a sinner. You can’t love Him perfectly. If you try to love God perfectly, you will needlessly torture yourself. The good news of the Bible isn’t that you can love God perfectly. The good news of the Bible is that while you can’t love God perfectly, God loves you perfectly.

“³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:38-39 NIV)

It’s a wonderful thing to be loved; don’t throw that away:

“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.” (Romans 5:1-2 NIV)

It is a wonderful thing to be in a love relationship with God. Serving God is one of the greatest joys in life, and we get to enjoy that. But the ultimate joy is knowing that in Christ, you are perfectly loved and accepted by God. Don’t get so zealous that you miss out on that. If you are torturing yourself trying to be what you think you have to be for God, when God loves you as you are, you are missing out on what God intended for your life. Don’t become so wrapped up in works that miss out on that wonderful love.

Chapter 6: You are Enough

By now, we've seen that God's perfect acceptance is expressed by His grace. There is a logical conclusion we can draw from this reality. You are enough. Your imperfect expressions of love for God are received and enjoyed. When you worship God from the heart, He receives it. When you love someone for God, He receives it. When you serve, give, or make any other decision for God, He receives it. Your imperfect love for God is enough, because in Christ, you are enough!

We don't have a disappointed Father in Heaven who wonders why He puts up with us. We have a Father in Heaven who declares us chosen and beloved. What a joy! We can have a personal relationship with the Creator of the universe where we are perfectly loved, and we can love Him back without the burden of shame. This is what the Bible refers to when it talks about Christian freedom (Galatians 5:1, Galatians 5:13-14). What Jesus offers is so much better than religion, and He offers it freely to all who believe.

Chapter 7: Evidences of Salvation

“¹⁷ Anyone who chooses to do the will of God [believes] will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.” (John 7:17 NIV)

The Bible gives evidences you can look for to validate your salvation. You don’t have to guess whether or not God is present in your life. God will make Himself known to you in various ways. If you are in Christ, these signs (as well as others not mentioned) will validate your faith. If you aren’t a Christian, these blessings can be yours. Here are four things you can observe to know God is with you in your Christian journey.

God gave you the Holy Spirit:

“¹³ This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit.” (1 John 4:13 NIV)

“¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” (2 Corinthians 5:17 NIV)

“¹⁷ For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Romans 14:17 NIV)

The Holy Spirit is the One who leads us to faith in Jesus. And after conversion, the Holy Spirit (who is God) comes to live inside of believers to keep them in the faith. If you are in Christ, God lives inside of you and is helping you! And He makes His presence known. The Holy Spirit gives us the ability to perceive God, and rejoice in His goodness (Romans 8:15-16). The Holy Spirit gives us the joy and peace of salvation (Romans 14:17). And over time, the Holy Spirit’s character becomes our character (Galatians 5:22-23). The Holy Spirit helps us live the Christian life, and we can know we are saved by our awareness of His presence.

God disciplines you:

“⁷ Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? ⁸ If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. ⁹ Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! ¹⁰ They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. ¹¹ No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.” (Hebrews 12:7-11 NIV)

This may be one of the more difficult blessings of God to accept, but it is a blessing that validates our faith. One of the ways the Bible describes our relationships with God is a parent-child relationship. And like any good parent, God raises His adopted children. God loves you as you are, but He doesn’t want to leave you as you are. He wants to make you the best version of yourself that you can be. While God can use positive experiences to build us up, He often uses the hardships of life to develop us and make us better. While discipline isn’t fun, we always wind

up thanking God for it when the lesson is learned (Hebrews 12:11). God's discipline is one of the things we can look to when we are looking for reassurance that we belong to God.

God turns all things for your good:

“²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.” (Romans 8:28-29 NIV)

This is one of the most famous promises in the Bible. If you are in Christ, God will cause all things to work together for your good. This means that when you experience pain, it isn't wasted. Nothing you go through as a Christian is meaningless. It is all working together for your spiritual good. And sometimes things work together for you to be blessed. That isn't the intent of the promise, but it can happen. You can see God work in your life. If it feels like every day is part of some higher plan for your life, this promise is why. If you see God doing this in your life, it is evidence of your relationship with Him.

God answers your prayers:

“³¹ We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly person who does his will.” (John 9:31 NIV)

“¹⁹ This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence: ²⁰ If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. ²¹ Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God ²² and receive from him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him. ²³ And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.” (1 John 3:19-23 NIV)

This is not a comprehensive teaching on prayer. This is merely a declaration that if you are in Christ, God will answer your prayers. He may give you something different from what you asked Him for. He may not answer your prayers on the time table you want Him to. He may answer some of your prayers in ways that disappoint you. You may even cry out in pain and wonder why God doesn't appear to be moving. But if you are in Christ, God hears your prayers and answers them as He sees best.

The privilege of prayer is only extended to believers. That is what is meant when the Bible says God doesn't hear a sinner's prayer. A sinner is someone whose sins haven't been forgiven. If you are in Christ, God considers you to be righteous because of His grace (2 Corinthians 5:21, Galatians 3:26-27). You are clothed in the righteousness of Christ, and God no longer sees your sin. With that righteousness, God generously extends the privilege of coming to Him in prayer.

So what does that mean? When you see God answering your prayers, you can know your salvation is legitimate.

Chapter 8: Eternal Security

“¹³ And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.” (Ephesians 1:13-14 NIV)

“²⁷ My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand.” (John 10:27-29 NIV)

“⁸ He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” (1 Corinthians 1:8-9 NIV)

“¹³ if we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot disown himself.” (2 Timothy 2:13 NIV)

“³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:38-39 NIV)

We may or may not have the free will to say yes to God’s offer of salvation. The Bible presents that as a mystery. However, what we do know is that once a person is saved, they belong to God forever. You are in the palm of His hands, and He will never let you go. He will keep you firm in the faith to the very end, and remain faithful to you when you doubt. When you doubt, He will help you overcome your doubts and bring you back to Himself. There is nothing you can do to separate yourself from God’s love after you are saved. This concept is known as eternal security, and it is throughout the New Testament.

You may be wondering why it appears that some people lose their faith. Do people who appear to lose their faith make these promises untrustworthy? The Apostle John explains why this appears to happen. If a person appears to lose their faith, it is because they never had faith to begin with (1 John 2:19). People who walk away from the faith are merely proving their conversions were insincere. They aren’t actually losing their faith. If you are a true believer, you won’t lose your faith.

In your spiritual life, the devil will try to attack your faith (Ephesians 6:10-18). He can’t take your faith from you, but He will try to make you lose touch with it to make you ineffective for God. Quote these scriptures whenever the enemy comes at you with his lies (John 8:44).

Chapter 9: Invitation to Receive Christ

If you aren't a Christian, I want to use this opportunity to invite you to receive Jesus into your life. The Bible says we're all on a road leading to our final resting place in the afterlife. There is a narrow road that leads to Heaven, and a broad road that leads to Hell. I want to present you with where the Bible says these roads lead, and close with a choice.

The narrow road to Heaven:

"Then I saw 'a new heaven and a new earth,' for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'" (Revelation 21:1-4 NIV)

The broad road to Hell:

"¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. ¹³ The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. ¹⁴ Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. ¹⁵ Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire." (Revelation 20:11-15 NIV)

The choice:

"²⁸ Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-29 NIV)

I want to pose a simple question with this invitation; what do you have to lose? What is burdensome about the life described in this book? It is life as God intended, and it is the most rewarding life you can experience. You can live your life with joy and peace that comes from your relationship with God, and when your life is over, you can spend eternity with that loving God in paradise. What is bad about that? You have nothing to lose. The only meaningful thing you lose is an eternity in Hell. Respond to Christ's invitation, and place your faith in Him today! You may not get another chance (2 Corinthians 6:2).

This may sound narrow minded, but don't think God will offer you an exception. People doubt whether Jesus taught only Christians will go to Heaven, but the exclusive claims of Jesus are undeniable. Here's what Jesus had to say about there only being one way to Heaven:

“⁶ Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’” (John 14:6 NIV)

Eternity is a long time to spend paying for the wrong choice. Ponder this. In one trillion years, your journey into eternity will only be beginning. 100 trillion years after that, you will be no closer to the end of your stay in wherever you go than you were when you first got there. As horrible as Hell is, can you bear the thought of that? As wonderful as Heaven is, do you want to miss out on that? Make the right choice, and make Jesus your Savior today. God bless you.

Appendix A: Questionable Matters

Many Christians will try to impose rules on you that aren't in the Bible. They will tell you what music you can't listen to, what hobbies you can't enjoy, and what you can't do for entertainment. They will often tell you it is because the things they are forbidding are "worldly." Thankfully, the Bible doesn't forbid activities for such a trivial reason. The passage that gives direction for issues that aren't covered by the Bible's commandments is found in Romans 14. It immediately follows a teaching that love is the perfect expression of God's commandments (Romans 13:8-10). The context of Romans 14 is it deals with issues that have nothing to do with God's command to love. Romans 14 teaches:

"Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters. ² One person's faith allows them to eat anything, but another, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. ³ The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them. ⁴ Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand.

⁵ One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind. ⁶ Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord. Whoever eats meat does so to the Lord, for they give thanks to God; and whoever abstains does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. ⁷ For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone. ⁸ If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. ⁹ For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.

¹⁰ You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. ¹¹ It is written:

'As surely as I live,' says the Lord,
'every knee will bow before me;
every tongue will acknowledge God.'

¹² So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God.

¹³ Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister. ¹⁴ I am convinced, being fully persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for that person it is unclean. ¹⁵ If your brother or sister is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy someone for whom Christ died. ¹⁶ Therefore do not let what you know is good be spoken of as evil. ¹⁷ For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, ¹⁸ because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and receives human approval.

¹⁹ Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. ²⁰ Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a person to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. ²¹ It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother or sister to fall.

²² So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who does not condemn himself by what he approves.” (Romans 14:1-22 NIV)

Appendix B: The Lord's Prayer

⁷ And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

⁹ This, then, is how you should pray:

‘Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,

¹⁰ your kingdom come,
your will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us today our daily bread [meet our physical needs].

¹² And forgive us our debts [sins],

as we also have forgiven our debtors [those who sin against us].

¹³ And lead us not into temptation [trials in life that serve no purpose],

but deliver us from the evil one [Satan is considered the source of temptations].”

(Matthew 6:9b-13 NIV)

This prayer from Jesus is a prayer we are commanded to pray. I included commentaries in the brackets to clear up any confusion as to what it's petitions mean. While praying it isn't necessary for salvation, we shouldn't overlook this prayer in our prayer lives. While there are no specific instructions for when to pray this prayer, it is a good prayer to start and end the day with. The petitions for daily bread and help with trials show the prayer is intended to be made at the beginning of the day before those things become needs. Regardless of the interpretation you accept for “forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors,” the obvious intent of this petition is that it forces us to forgive, and obey the Bible's teaching not to let the sun go down on our anger (Ephesians 4:26). Specific prayers have a purpose, and we are often called to make them. But this is considered God's perfect prayer. Don't neglect it.

Appendix C: Introductory Scripture Collection

Every Christian has certain scriptures they hold dear and quote to help them in their life of faith. These scriptures have a power to them that give Christians strength in their journeys. This is a sample of some “power scriptures” to help you begin your study of the Bible if you’ve never studied it before. They are taken from the Old Testament book of Psalms and the New Testament.

I included amplifications in brackets to help unpack the meanings of a few of these scriptures. Some of the scriptures from this book are repeated in here, but many are being presented for the first time. The order they appear in this appendix is the order they appear in the Bible. This will help you familiarize yourself with the order of the Bible’s 66 books. This is not intended to be a comprehensive study of the Bible. It is meant to give you a sample of scriptures to begin your Bible study with. I hope you are blessed by them.

“¹⁰ Those who know your name trust in you,
for you, LORD, have never forsaken those who seek you.” (Psalm 9:10 NIV)

“¹⁴ But you, God, see the trouble of the afflicted;
you consider their grief and take it in hand.
The victims commit themselves to you;
you are the helper of the fatherless.
¹⁷ You, LORD, hear the desire of the afflicted;
you encourage them, and you listen to their cry,
¹⁸ defending the fatherless and the oppressed,
so that mere earthly mortals
will never again strike terror.” (Psalm 10:14, 17-18 NIV)

“¹ The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
² He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,
³ he refreshes my soul.
He guides me along the right paths
for his name’s sake.
⁴ Even though I walk
through the darkest valley,
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.
⁵ You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
⁶ Surely your goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,

and I will dwell in the house of the LORD
forever.” (Psalm 23 NIV)

“¹⁸ But the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him,
on those whose hope is in his unfailing love,
¹⁹ to deliver them from death
and keep them alive in famine.
²⁰ We wait in hope for the LORD;
he is our help and our shield.
²¹ In him our hearts rejoice,
for we trust in his holy name.
²² May your unfailing love be with us, LORD,
even as we put our hope in you.” (Psalm 33:18-22 NIV)

“¹⁵ The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous,
and his ears are attentive to their cry;
¹⁶ but the face of the LORD is against those who do evil,
to blot out their name from the earth.
¹⁷ The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them;
he delivers them from all their troubles.
¹⁸ The LORD is close to the brokenhearted
and saves those who are crushed in spirit.
¹⁹ The righteous person may have many troubles,
but the LORD delivers him from them all;
²⁰ he protects all his bones,
not one of them will be broken.” (Psalm 34:15-20 NIV)

“¹⁷ My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart
you, God, will not despise.” (Psalm 51:17 NIV)

“¹⁵ But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God,
slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.
¹⁶ Turn to me and have mercy on me;
show your strength in behalf of your servant;
save me, because I serve you
just as my mother did.” (Psalm 86:15-16 NIV)

“⁸ The LORD is compassionate and gracious,
slow to anger, abounding in love.
⁹ He will not always accuse,
nor will he harbor his anger forever;
¹⁰ he does not treat us as our sins deserve
or repay us according to our iniquities.
¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his love for those who fear him;

¹² as far as the east is from the west,
so far has he removed our transgressions from us.
¹³ As a father has compassion on his children,
so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him;
¹⁴ for he knows how we are formed,
he remembers that we are dust.” (Psalm 103:8-14 NIV)

“¹³ For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother’s womb.
¹⁴ I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.
¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place,
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.
¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in your book
before one of them came to be.
¹⁷ How precious to me are your thoughts, God!
How vast is the sum of them!
¹⁸ Were I to count them,
they would outnumber the grains of sand—
when I awake, I am still with you.” (Psalm 139:13-18 NIV)

“¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12 NIV)

“¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.” (John 3:16-18 NIV)

“²⁴ “Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.” (John 5:24 NIV)

“³⁵ Then Jesus declared, ‘I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. ³⁶ But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. ³⁷ All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.’” (John 6:35-37 NIV)

“⁴⁷ Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life.” (John 6:47 NIV)

“¹⁷ Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.” (John 7:17 NIV)

“²⁷ My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand.” (John 10:27-29 NIV)

“²⁷ Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. Because of what law? The law that requires works? No, because of the law that requires faith. ²⁸ For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law [the Ten Commandments and other Jewish laws].” (Romans 3:27-28 NIV)

“⁵ However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness. ⁶ David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the one to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: ⁷ ‘Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. ⁸ Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord will never count against them.’” (Romans 4:5-8 NIV)

“¹⁴ For if those who depend on the law [the Ten Commandments and other Jewish laws] are heirs, faith means nothing and the promise is worthless, ¹⁵ because the law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression.” (Romans 4:14-15 NIV)

“²² This is why ‘it was credited to him as righteousness.’ ²³ The words ‘it was credited to him’ were written not for him alone, ²⁴ but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. ²⁵ He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.” (Romans 4:22-25 NIV)

“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.” (Romans 5:1-2 NIV)

“⁶ You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him! ¹⁰ For if, while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! ¹¹ Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.” (Romans 5:6-11 NIV)

“²⁰ The law [the Ten Commandments and other Jewish laws] was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more” (Romans 5:20 NIV)

“²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23 NIV)

“¹⁴ We know that the law [the moral commandments] is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. ¹⁵ I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ¹⁶ And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷ As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. ¹⁸ For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. ²¹ So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²² For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; ²³ but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. ²⁴ What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.” (Romans 7:14-25 NIV)

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1 NIV)

“¹⁵ The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, ‘*Abba*, Father.’ ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.” (Romans 8:15-16 NIV)

“²⁶ 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 through wordless groans. ²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God.” (Romans 8:26-27 NIV)

“²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.” (Romans 8:28-29 NIV)

“³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?” (Romans 8:31-32 NIV)

“³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written: ‘For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’ ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth,

nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:33-39 NIV)

“⁹ If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. ¹¹ As Scripture says, ‘Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.’ ¹² For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, ¹³ for, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’” (Romans 10:9-13 NIV)

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.” (Romans 12:1 NIV)

“⁹ Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. ¹¹ Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. ¹² Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. ¹³ Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality. ¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. ¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. ¹⁹ Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord. ²⁰ On the contrary: ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.’ ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” (Romans 12:9-21 NIV)

“⁸ Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. ⁹ The commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not covet,’ and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ ¹⁰ Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law [the moral commandments].” (Romans 13:8-10 NIV)

“⁸ He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” (1 Corinthians 1:8-9 NIV)

“Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. ² By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. ³ For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,” (1 Corinthians 15:1-4 NIV)

“²¹ Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, ²² set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.” (2 Corinthians 1:21-22 NIV)

“⁷ Now if the ministry that brought death [the Ten Commandments], which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, transitory though it was, ⁸ will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? ⁹ If the ministry that brought condemnation was glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness! ¹⁰ For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. ¹¹ And if what was transitory came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts! ¹² Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. ¹³ We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to prevent the Israelites from seeing the end of what was passing away. ¹⁴ But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. ¹⁵ Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. ¹⁶ But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” (2 Corinthians 3:7-18 NIV)

“You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. ² I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law [the Ten Commandments and other Jewish laws], or by believing what you heard? ³ Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh?” (Galatians 3:1-3 NIV)

“¹⁰ For all who rely on the works of the law [the Ten Commandments and other Jewish laws] are under a curse, as it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.’ ¹¹ Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because ‘the righteous will live by faith.’ ¹² The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, it says, ‘The person who does these things will live by them.’ ¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.’ ¹⁴ He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.” (Galatians 3:10-14 NIV)

“⁶ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.” (Galatians 5:6 NIV)

“³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. ⁴ For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace ⁸ that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, ⁹ he made known to us the

mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, ¹⁰ to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ. ¹¹ In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, ¹² in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. ¹³ And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.” (Ephesians 1:3-14 NIV)

“⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9 NIV)

“¹⁴ For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. ¹⁶ I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. ²⁰ Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.” (Ephesians 3:14-21 NIV)

“¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.” (Ephesians 6:13-18 NIV)

“³ I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴ In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶ being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 1:3-6 NIV)

“If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless. ⁷ But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law [the Ten Commandments and other Jewish laws], but that which is through

faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.” (Philippians 3:4b-9 NIV)

“⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6-7 NIV)

“¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. ²¹ Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. ²² But now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation” (Colossians 1:19-22 NIV)

“¹³ When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴ having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.” (Colossians 2:13-15 NIV)

“¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 NIV)

“¹³ if we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot disown himself.” (2 Timothy 2:13 NIV)

“¹⁴ Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. ¹⁶ Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” (Hebrews 4:14-16 NIV)

“¹⁷ Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. ¹⁸ God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope set before us may be greatly encouraged. ¹⁹ We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, ²⁰ where our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.” (Hebrews 6:17-20 NIV)

“¹⁰ This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. ¹¹ No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. ¹² For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” (Hebrews 8:10-12 NIV)

“¹⁹ Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.” (Hebrews 10:19-23 NIV)

“⁷ Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? ⁸ If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. ⁹ Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! ¹⁰ They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. ¹¹ No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.” (Hebrews 12:7-11 NIV)

“⁵ Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”” (Hebrews 13:5 NIV)

“¹⁹ This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence: ²⁰ If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. ²¹ Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God ²² and receive from him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him. ²³ And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. ²⁴ The one who keeps God’s commands lives in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.” (1 John 3:19-24 NIV)

“¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.” (1 John 4:10 NIV)

“¹⁷ This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus [because we have His righteous standing as a gift]. ¹⁸ There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.” (1 John 4:17-18 NIV)

“⁹ We accept human testimony, but God’s testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son. ¹⁰ Whoever believes in the Son of God accepts this testimony. Whoever does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because they have not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. ¹¹ And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹² Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. ¹³ I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.” (1 John 5:9-13 NIV)

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