



# Power for Living

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## **READ THIS FIRST**

Many years ago, three men climbed into a spaceship named Columbia about to launch from Cape Kennedy. The rocket was 184 feet, weighed 4 -1/2 million pounds, and carried 500,000 gallons of fuel. Within 2 two minutes it soared 23 miles into the atmosphere, the result of 23 million pounds of thrust.

It finally reached an altitude of 189 miles and proceeded to orbit the earth at 17,000 miles per hour for seven days. 113 times around. What a display of power...power made by man.

Journalists compared it to an eagle.

The problem is, it wasn't an eagle. It was a hunk of metal that fell out of the sky when out of fuel... and in the end found a disastrous end in 2003 when it broke apart reentering the earth's atmosphere. No, Columbia was not an eagle.



Eagles soar endlessly, and ride rising thermals of air with little effort, and stay aloft with little effort, quite different from the Columbia, with its destiny to fall back to earth. To truly become an eagle would be to be born as one or somehow reborn as one.

This is not unlike us - all of us. We have a certain amount of natural power but often fall far short of rising to high places, or a high destiny, and having the ability to stay. So many strive, so many achieve so little, very few much, yet all fall back to earth, and sometimes to true disaster.

Eight highly successful people, who in their lives found a place of soaring in high places - a lot like eagles, were asked how they achieved an eagle-like status in life. What was their secret?

Their answer was the same...every one of them.  
God.

All of them claimed their power to soar was NOT simply from their efforts, but was discovered in a personal relationship with God. Rather than point at their great ability or talent, each one instead say they turned to God and allowed Him to take control of their lives.

That is when they began to soar.

“God? You say. “He might be able to help people who already made it, but what about me?”


Wait a minute. God is not just for the rich and famous, the few that “make it.” He is for everyone. Including alcoholics, addicts, the forgotten, the helpless, the insignificant.

Everyone...women alone, businessmen - frustrated, teenagers - confused and insecure. The list is endless, and includes everyone.

God loves you. And stands willing, if your will let Him, to direct your steps, and give you power for living.

That is what this ebook is about. Power for living. Words written by a prophet almost 2800 years ago have proved to be true... for literally billions of people from ALL walks of life, in many nations, across many centuries.

Here is what that prophet of old named Isaiah said: “Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not be weary, they will walk and not be faint.” (Isaiah 40:31)



*In everything you do, put God  
first, and he will direct you and  
crown your efforts with success.”  
Proverbs 3:6*

## **REACHING YOUR GOAL**

Everyone dreams of success. It is what drives people through life. Some think that success is found in money, a comfortable life, and easy retirement. Others aspire for recognition, others for fame. Others seek proficiency in work, and the recognition of “climbing the ladder.”

How about material things? A beautiful home, the newest car, along with toys to distract on the weekends...That is success for many in the world.

And along with that, to great many, family represents the pinnacle of success. Along with a long life that is free from sickness and any disease.

Everyone has a dream of success.



The Bible states that if you “delight yourself in the Lord He will give you the desires of your heart” (Psalm 37:4) What a promise! However, it seldom seems to happen. The majority seem to have a success “deficit” when our dream list isn’t fulfilled.

Could it be that we have the wrong idea of success? Do we need to look more carefully at God’s conditions for success?

The only condition listed in the verse above is to “delight yourself in the Lord.” in other words to put God first. Jesus said something very similar when He said that if we would “seek first God’s kingdom and God’s righteousness,” everything else would be given to them. (Matt 6:33)

Our problem is not that we have goals. Rather, we have the wrong goals.

## **GETTING OFF AT THE WRONG DESTINATION**

Two women left Italy on a long trip to Melbourne, Florida. They were routed through New York before heading south to Melbourne. What they didn't realize is that the plane had one more stop before Melbourne...in Tampa. Unaware of this, they got off in Tampa. Rather than finding their family and friends waiting, they recognized no one and got lost in the airport. Speaking only Italian, they did not realize they were short of their goal, their final destination. The result was a lot of frustration and confusion.

Most of us are like that. Lost and confused, when it seems our goals don't satisfy as we don't know we have gotten off at the wrong destination...as we equate success with money, security, and prestige...and don't feel that good about things. What we don't realize is that true success is only found when our spiritual needs are met.

We don't understand the 'language' of the Bible, and in life, have gotten off at the wrong destination and feel lost and unsatisfied. The primary need now is an "interpreter" someone to help us understand we got off at the wrong destination. Someone might have even given us wrong directions.

The purpose of this website, this ebook, is very simple. We want you to find your way, to get back on the plane, and find your way to real success. You may still think that somewhere at your current destination...(money, security, and prestige), you will find it. Maybe it seems to you that so many others are in this same place. Maybe some have told you that following God and trusting in Him makes you a fanatic.

So, you stay in Tampa, the wrong destination, riding escalators, continuing your search, lost in the airport....

Sound silly? Sound familiar?

## **EIGHT WHO FOUND SUCCESS**

These eight didn't allow worldly success to blind them from finding God's goal of success for them...a lasting success that endures forever.



Roger Staubach





# **Roger Staubach**

NFL HALL OF FAMER

For those who know football, this name was a household name across the nation. The Dallas Cowboy quarterback who achieved along with the Cowboys success and fame. Yet, he had other things to say about that.

“Ours is a very fast, dynamic, fast-paced world. Sometimes your mind seems to spin when you consider everything that is happening. It seems that it's just one thing after another that you can't just enjoy peace of mind these days.”

“To me there's a very simple solution. If you have a relationship with Jesus Christ he will give you peace of mind.”

“My future reaches far beyond football and this really excites me Christianity is the most important thing of my life.”

Roger has a verse of scripture he says some sums up success for him. “Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:1)

Steve Bartkowski



# **Steve Bartkowski**

FORMER NFL QUARTERBACK

The best pure passer in the NFL, some said. He appeared in Pro Bowls, and passed for 24,000 yards. Many consider him quite successful. Yet, here is where he found true success.

“Of course I love playing football,” he says, “and despite the pressures of the game, there is a great thrill that goes along with being quarterback for a professional football team. But, there is no greater attainment than to know God in a personal way. Nothing compares to it in all the world. As for my career, I leave that in his hands. It says in his word: ‘In everything you do, put God first, and he will direct you and crown your efforts with success.’”

“For years the Bible was a dead book to me... like grits without salt. But after I gave my life to Jesus Christ, it became alive. I saw that the Bible was God's way of talking to me.”

Janet Lynn





## **Janet Lynn**

### OLYMPIC ICE SKATING CHAMPION

In her time, many called her “America’s Sweetheart” an Olympic finalist who went on to become one of America’s highest paid female athletes.

“When I was 11 years old I asked Christ to help me live. From that time on he has consistently been there when I needed a friend as well as being an ever-present guiding force in my life.

“My faith has often been challenged as an ice skater and also as a person. Though I'm not great at being patient, Christ has worked good out of situations I would have never believed he could.”

Chuck Colson



## **Charles W. Colson**

SPECIAL COUNSEL TO PRESIDENT NIXON

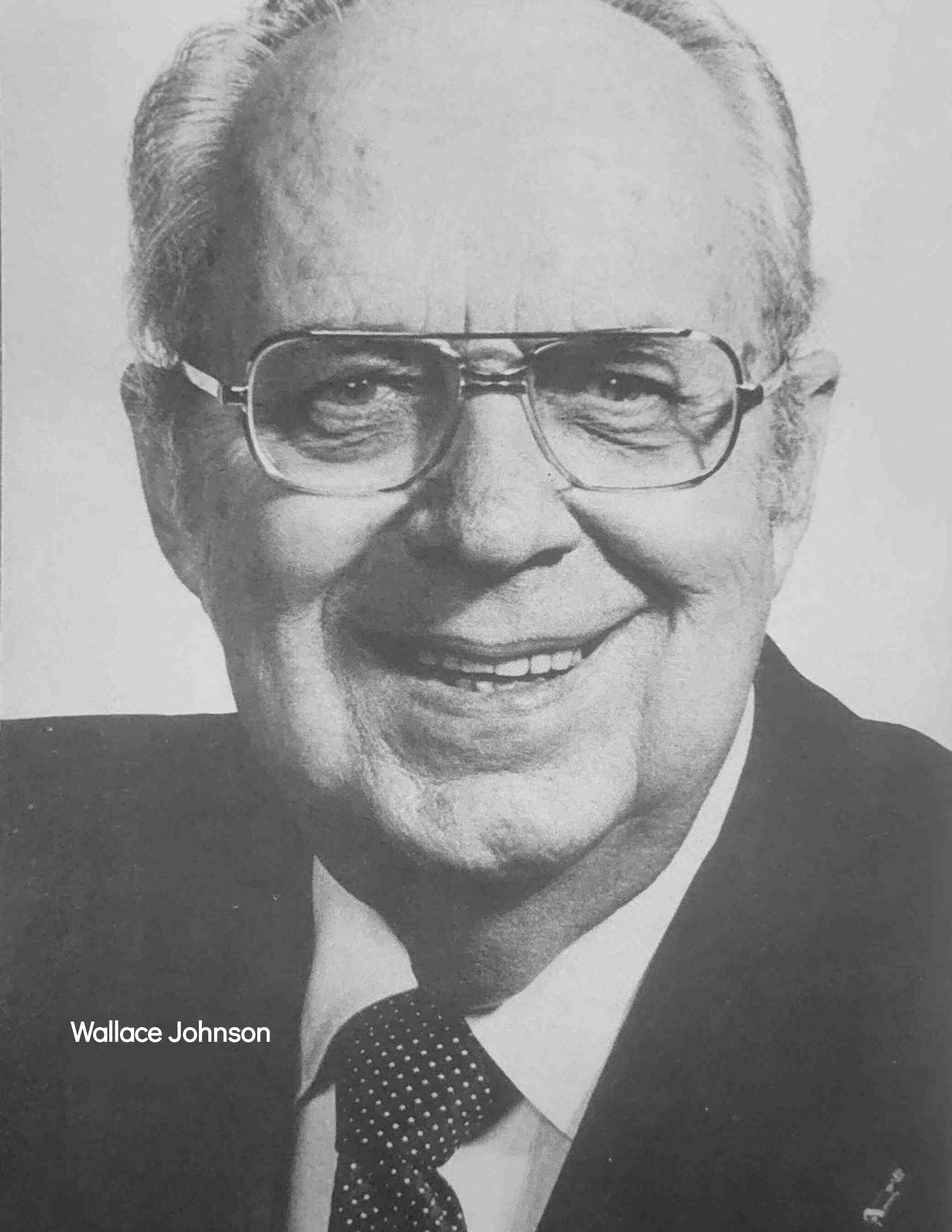
“I felt a strange deadness when I left the White House. I had gotten to the top of the mountain and I couldn't think of any other .”

“And then I saw Tom Phillips, an old friend, a guy much like myself. At age 40, he had become the president of a large corporation - a fantastic success story. When I saw him in the spring of 73, he seemed totally different - less frantic. He was smiling. He was radiant, caring about me. What had happened? He committed his life to Jesus Christ.”

“The whole idea of an intelligent educated successful businessman saying, ‘I have accepted Him and committed my life’ just through me. Months went by. Then one evening Tom read me the chapter on pride in CS Lewis Mere Christianity. It was a torpedo.

“My biggest problem had always been intellectual reservations. I knew there was a God, but I could never see how a man could have a personal relationship with Him. Then the case for Christ became obvious. That night I experienced a feeling of tremendous cleansing, of wholeness, as I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior.

Charles Colson went to prison, BUT he was not a failure. He found true success and lived the rest of his life for Jesus Christ...and along the way wrote many books and greatly impacted the lives of many people across the nation and world. The White House doesn't give success, and a prison can't take it away. Success is found in a relationship with Jesus Christ.



Wallace Johnson



## **Wallace Johnson**

CO-FOUNDER OF HOLIDAY INNS

I've had a lot of successes and my share of trials. I've worked long and hard, often as much as 16 hours a day, under some trying circumstances. Through them all, I've learned that the only answer to the problems - and to the future of the world - is having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

“The only people who are truly happy are those who have found Jesus.

“The one reason we've always had an open Bible in every room in the Holiday Inn motels is to help people find Jesus and the solution to their problems, no matter who they are.

“I could reminisce about how that opened Bible has saved thousands. Once a man from Mobile, Alabama, who had some business reversals, packed a gun and drove to Birmingham with the intention of killing himself. When he checked into a Holiday Inn and found the Open Bible in his room, he read it and found Christ.

“Personal problems, social problems - whatever the problem - the solution is found in knowing Christ. I know he's made a difference in my life. Why not in yours?”



Edward Johnson

## **Edward L. Johnson**

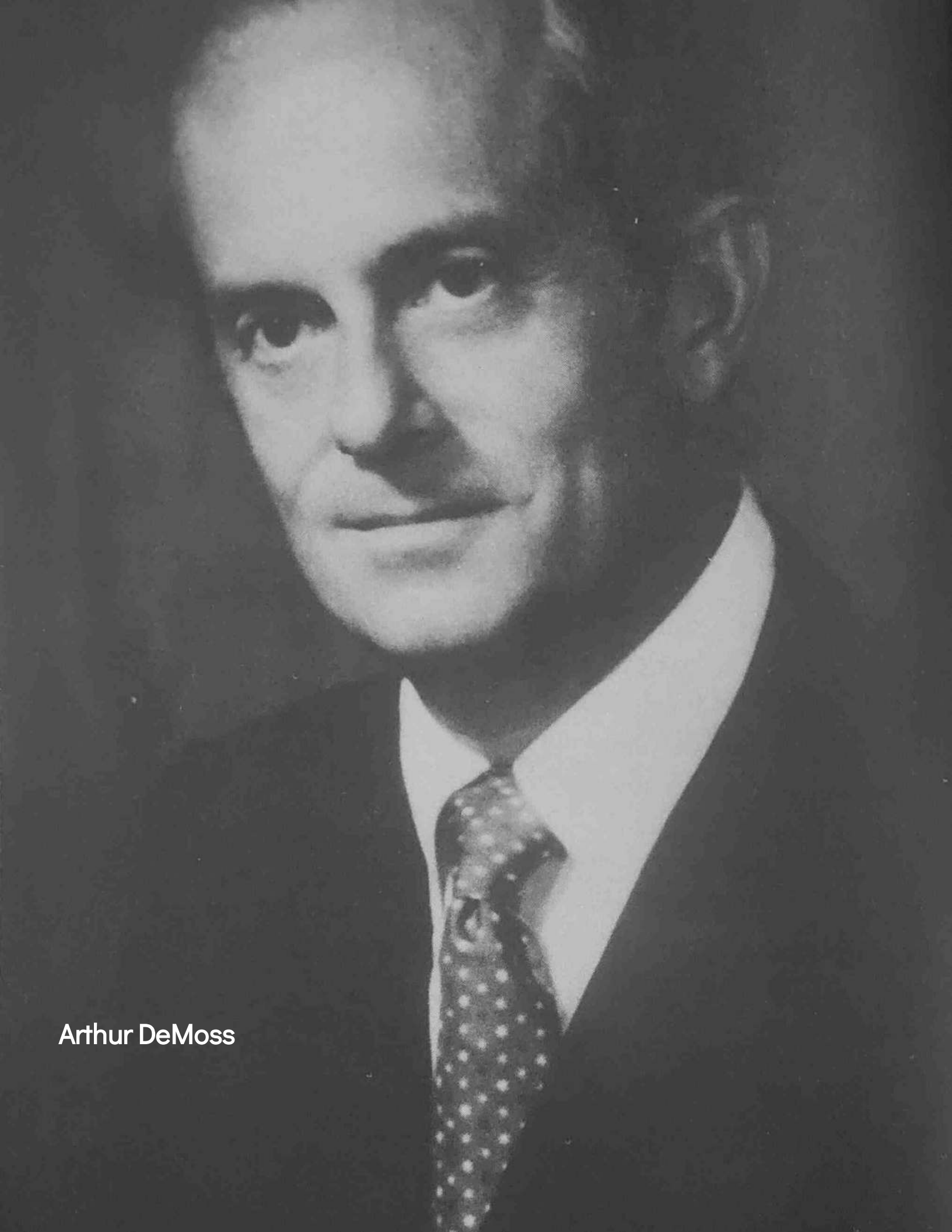
A LEADER IN THE SAVINGS AND LOAN INDUSTRY

“As Retired Chief Executive Officer of Financial Federation Inc., I've had to determine what's good and what's bad for the business. I felt the responsibility for handling 100 million in value that belongs to the stockholders. That demanded uncompromising standards and all the business acumen I had.

“I don't go around waving a flag, but I make no bones about it. I seek and receive God's help in my business. Success, for me, means being in the will of God. That's the kind of success which is eternal - not subject to the whims of a changing economy. The Scriptures say that the one who does the will of God abides forever. I believe that and I live by that.

“One of the things that made an impact on my life was when someone said to me, ‘Your mother prayed for you before you were born.’ She died when I was only three, and I committed my life to Christ when I was 17. I've gone on and trusted the Lord ever since. His help is a constant reality in every facet of my life: at home, in church, in sorrow, and joy. Why shouldn't it work in business?





Arthur DeMoss

## **Arthur S. DeMoss**

INSURANCE COMPANY FOUNDER

“Early before my 25th birthday, I was tens of thousands of dollars in debt. This in spite of the fact that I've been working over 100 hours a week.

“Like so many other businessmen, I had the particular notion that I was indispensable to my business. If I had to leave it for even a few hours, I'd call the office frequently just to make sure everything was all right.

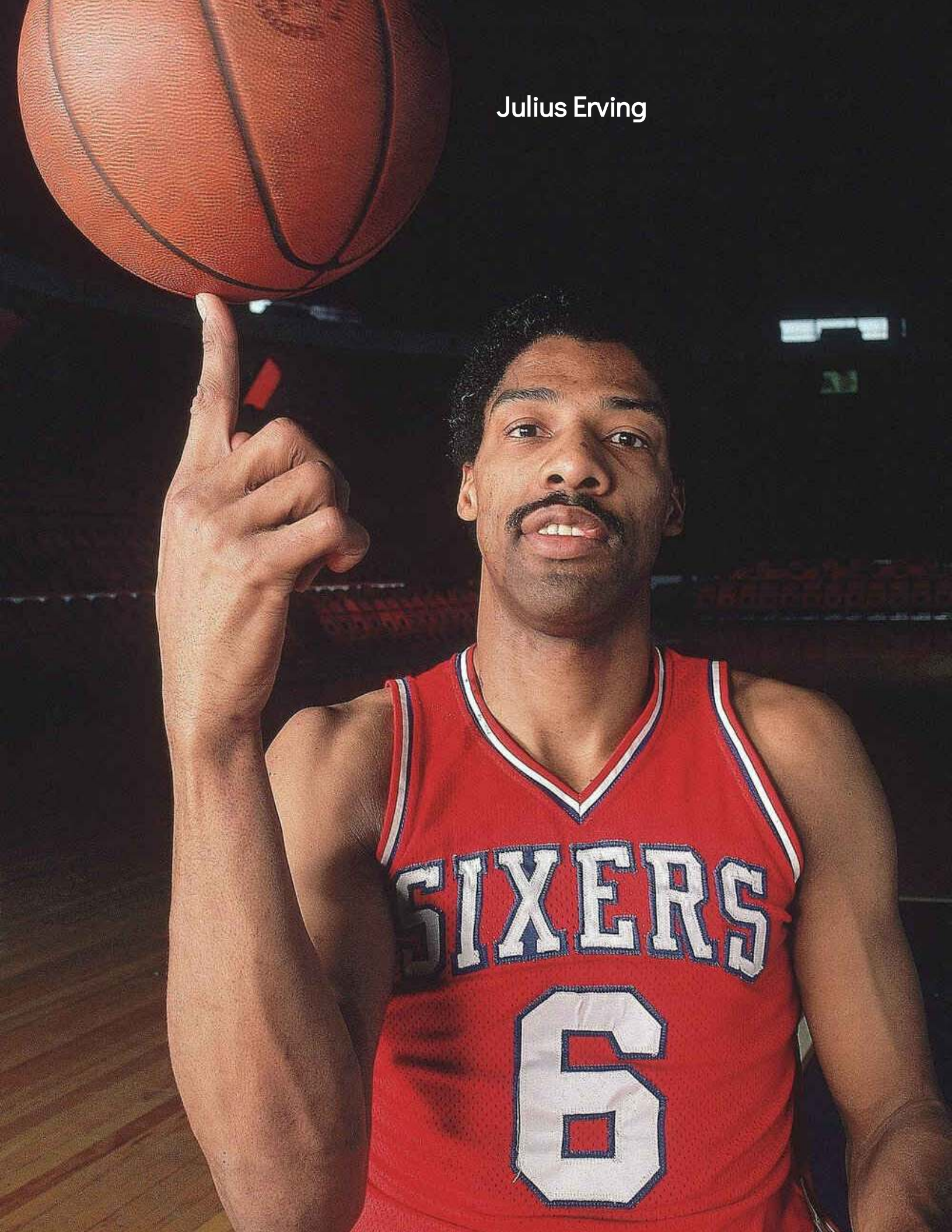
“When I gave my life to Jesus Christ, He promised to lift my burdens, meet all my needs, and solve my problems. He first took me out of debt right after my conversion. I no longer had to work night and day and Sundays.

“What did I do? I put God first. The more time and money I gave him, the more he gave me. Now I spend time every day reading the Bible and praying for God's guidance. I've given God my business and my problems that come up. Some might say it's incredible but it's true - I never worry anymore.”

That is a testimony! The very opposite of the experience of so many. Irrespective of money and fortune, more important was the peace of mind that Arthur DeMoss found through Jesus Christ. That's real power for living.



Julius Erving



## **Julius "Dr. J." Erving**

NBA HALL OF FAMER

This man succeeded both in basketball and business. Here is his direct testimony about where and how he found power for living.

“At age 29, I realized I was looking good on the outside but was hitting a lot of peaks and valleys on the inside. After searching for the meaning of life for over 10 years, I found the meaning in Jesus Christ.

“When I gave my life to Jesus Christ ,I began to understand my true purpose for being here. It’s not to go through life and experience as many things as you possibly can and then turn to dust and be no more. The purpose of life is to be found through having Christ in your life and understanding what is plan is and following that plan.

“Now, there's no pressure in my life and I'm never alone. I know that my Christian faith has helped me put my priorities in order. If I put God number one in my family after that, along with my social existence and my job, I can withstand any attack and criticism.

“Since I asked Christ to be my Lord and Savior, there are still some peaks and valleys, but I am still being operated on by the greatest doctor of them all. So that Glory goes to Him.”

There you have it...eight people who discovered the right destination and true success. All realized that they were failures without God, despite being quite successful by world's standards.

“How does this apply to me?” you ask.

This ebook is written to let you know that you, along with the eight people above joined by multiplied millions, can find power for living.



This ebook is written for you. You may have gotten off at the wrong stop, and are not realizing the deepest desires of your heart. You must know that they can be met...as you allow God to give you power for living.

## **YOU ARE SPECIAL TO GOD**

According to a Cheyenne Indian legend, Indian adults would often venture alone into the forest to a small silver stream, and there in that privacy of that stream and its reflection, would begin to speak of the deep things in his heart. After this, they felt very good inside.

This they did often, yet only privately, and they told no one.

One day, two children ventured into the forest, found the stream, and found themselves speaking of deep things of the heart. They, too, felt good, and ran to the village to tell everyone about it. The adults then took up stones and chased the children out of the village.

According to the legend, everyone needs someone to talk to and to share the deep things of the heart. Any yet, because doing that is also considered a sign of weakness, you dare not let anyone else know.

The Indians are half right. Everyone has a deep need to relate. Inside of each of us is a child who desperately needs to lean on God.

But our society has done a strange thing in conditioning us to think that it is a sign of weakness to depend upon God. Someone who says, “I surrendered my life to God” or “I asked Jesus to take control of my life” is considered weak, or a washout, or someone who needs a crutch.

Our culture also is dismissive of the spiritual world. Yet, when we are alone and quiet and honest, when we speak the deep things of our heart, we can hear a small voice inside us that whispers that God loves us and are special to Him

Our problem is pride. We don't want to admit that we can't handle life's problems on our own.

Charlie Brown in the cartoon series moaned. It all goes back to the beginning the moment I was born and said foot on the stage of Life they took one look at me and said not right for the part how many of us like Charlie Brown have looked in the mirror and concluded we're not right for the part

That feeling can quickly turn into an attitude - of rejection and inadequacy - yet it is a perversion of the truth. A lie, actually, that is whispered to us by the devil to convince us we are not really created in the image of God. And therefore certainly not very precious to Him. If this attitude is not corrected it will lead to depression or worse.

Some feel a 'dark cloud' looms over them and creates disasters everywhere they go. Almost a curse that constantly follows them, one that in the end will catch up and swallow them.

In part, this has some truth in it. The Bible indicates that ALL are sinners and are trying to live apart from Him and His laws. This result is a life of great separation from God. Because all good things come from God, it becomes difficult to experience lasting good.

In the Bible, the most famous Old Testament character, who also sinned, was confronted by a prophet concerning his sins and then said these words. “Surely I have been a sinner from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”

A powerful confession, and profoundly true. David took a good look at himself and said, “not right for the part.”

Every arrow extends out from our lives saying, “we’re not okay,” “we’re not okay,” “we’re not okay.”

If we were not a sinner from birth, we could perhaps say, “I’m okay, you’re okay, we are all okay. And everything is fine.

But that is not what the Bible says. “All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23)

Imagine a golf that has been severely damaged...run over by the car in the garage and severely twisted, the head deformed. Then wondering why the golfer the next day on the course wondering why the ball simply doesn't go straight and turn.

That is what sin does to us. Makes us incapable of driving the ball straight and true on the course of life. And soon, drives us to defeat and into futility, causing us to say, “Why try? So what. Forget about it. Tomorrow you die anyway. So eat, drink, and sleep with Mary.”

But we need to look back into the Bible. David, in the OT, the great sinner, didn't give up. He asked God for mercy and to create in him a pure heart. He wrote, “wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.” (Ps 51:2)



We all have a choice. Like the eight stories, and stories of so many, we can recognize that no matter how successful we are by world's standards, we can not make it alone. Like them, we can recognize we are not "right for the part" and ask God to take control of our life. Rather than trying to "rule" life ourselves, we can let God take control of our lives. Then, like them, we can be given supernatural power for living.

Someone wrote a book with this written on the dedication page, "Dedicated to the hope that somewhere in our universe there exists a civilization where the inhabitants possess Soul dominion over their own lives."

There is such a place. It is called hell. A place of total and final divorce from the God of love who created all of us.

The way to be given power for living, we must be properly related to God.

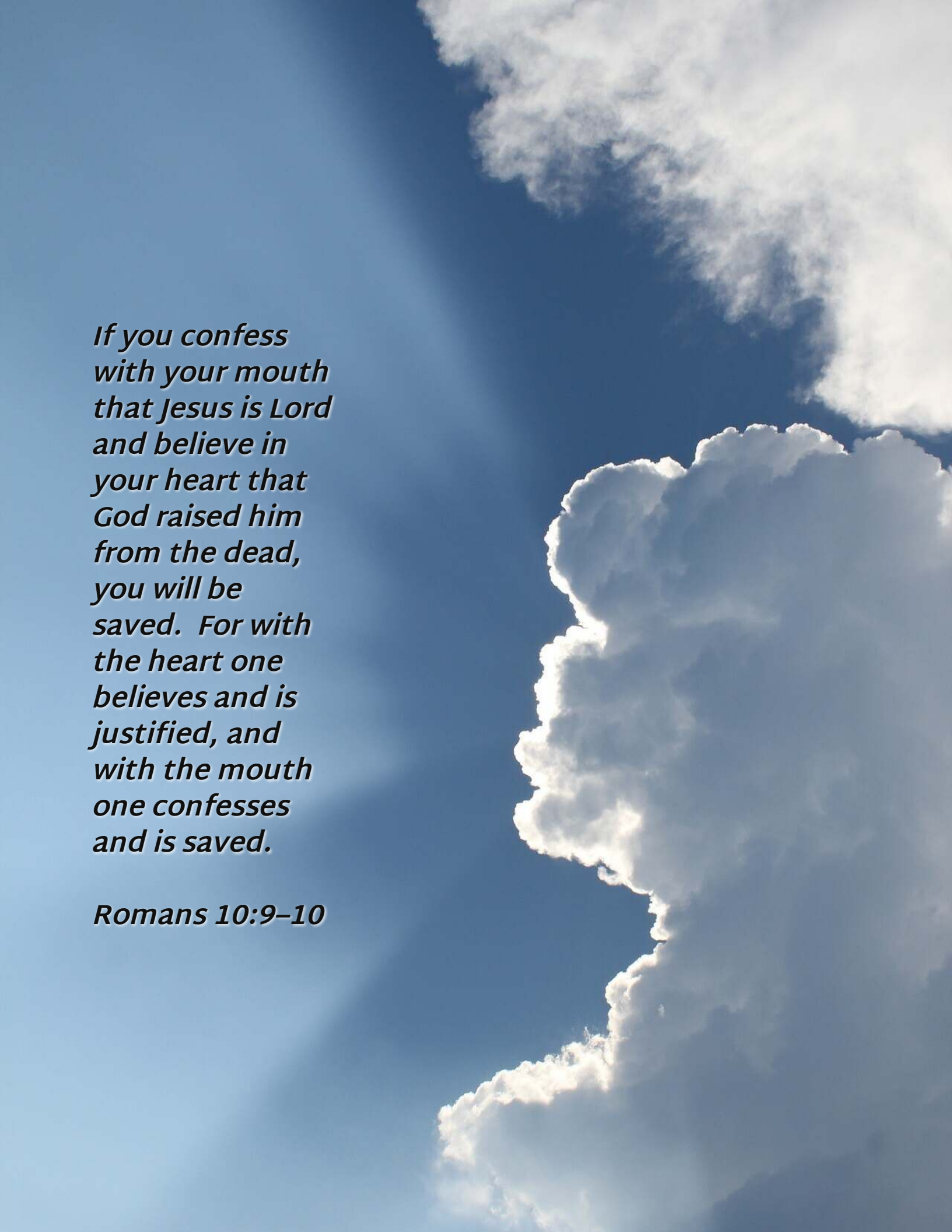
There are 5 drives within each of us.

1. Security
2. Recognition
3. Love
4. Adventure
5. The need to create

These drives control our lives. In one way or another we are all on a journey to fulfill these drives in our lives. In the end, these drives will push us into the arms of our loving heavenly Father...or...as we seek to meet them in a selfish or perverted way, will lead us to hell.

If we don't find these drives met in God, our human nature will force us to seek them in other ways, and in the end lead us to the place of being inadequate, defeated, and like Charlie Brown, "Not right for the part."

However, once you enter the Kingdom of God through Christ, you will find yourself saying, "I am numbered among those who have been called by God. I have been chosen. I have a place in history."



*If you confess  
with your mouth  
that Jesus is Lord  
and believe in  
your heart that  
God raised him  
from the dead,  
you will be  
saved. For with  
the heart one  
believes and is  
justified, and  
with the mouth  
one confesses  
and is saved.*

*Romans 10:9–10*

Once there was a young boy born out of wedlock...who suffered for it. His community made him pay, as this was not common in those days. In school and when downtown, he felt every eye upon him, wondering who his real father was...until he was 12 years old.

A new preacher came to town. As he tried to quickly leave the service the new preacher caught up with him and asked, "Who are you, son?"

He felt the old weight come on him. It was like a big black cloud. Even the new preacher was about to put him down.

But as the preacher looked down on him, studying his face, he began to smile a big smile or recognition. "Wait a minute," he said. "I know who you are. I see the family resemblance. You are a son of God."

The name of that boy was Ben Hooper, one of only two illegitimate children elected governor of Tennessee.

That is what it means to be chosen by God. Although we have been born in iniquity and although we have chosen to go our own way through the blood of Jesus Christ we are saved not only from our past but from the fear of failure in our present and from powerless living in our future as well.

Our inheritance is great and the power for living that God gives to us will enable us to go and claim it.

## **HOW TO GET RIGHT WITH GOD**

You are special with God. In fact, so special that God sent his son, Jesus Christ, so you can have power for living. This Jesus accomplished through his death and resurrection, not only for forgiveness but can have power to overcome fear.

(What follows is the testimony of Jamie Buckingham, Christian author)

As a child, I had two great fears. One was the fear of being left alone. The other was the fear of the unknown.

I was always afraid my father and mother would die and leave me alone. I was afraid I would have to go live with my uncle and Aunt in Indiana. These fears haunted me day and night.

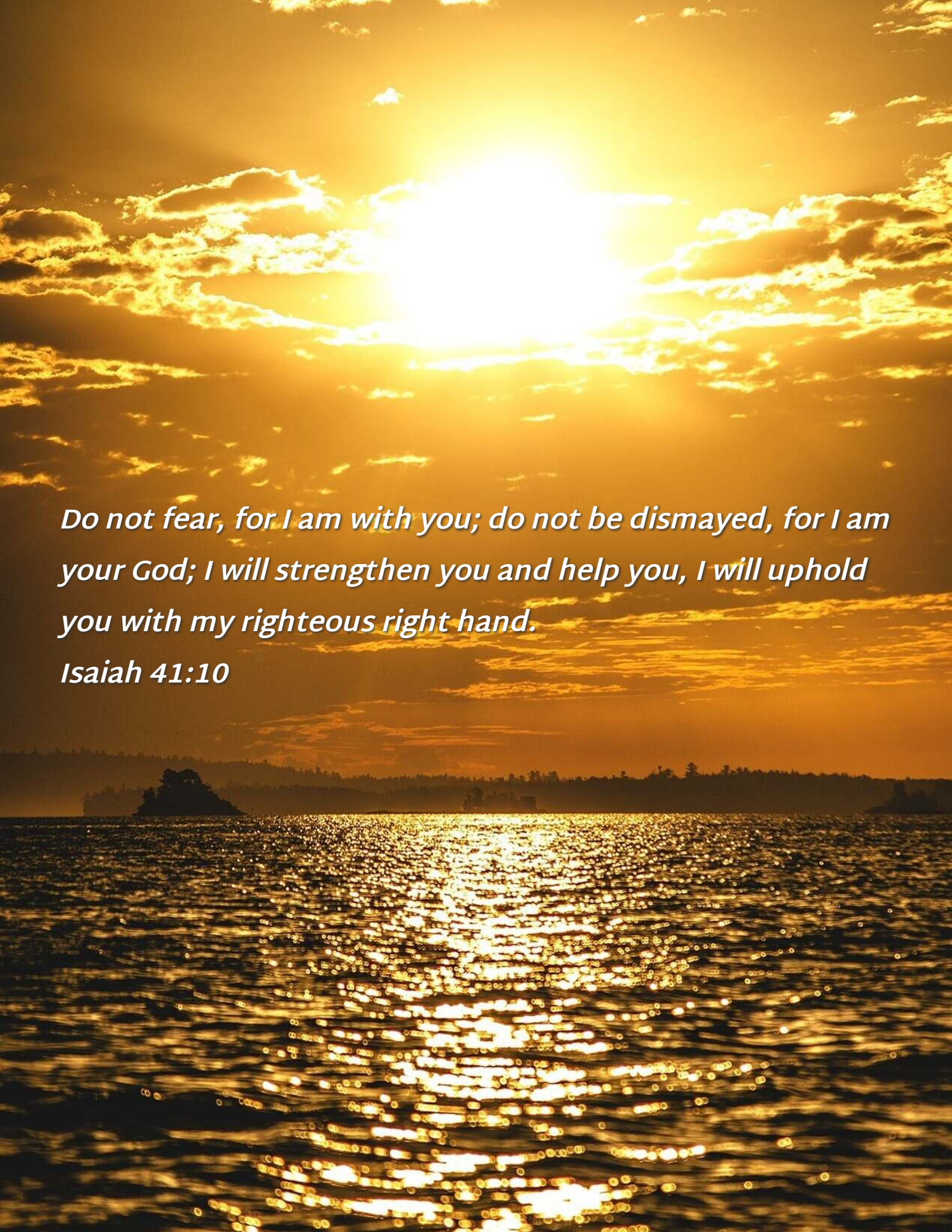


I remember the night I was left alone with my mother when my father was out of town. My mother was sick and when I tried to help her get out of bed to go to the bathroom, she fainted on the floor. She was too heavy for me to move. I had the presence of mind to call our family doctor who was an old friend and lived not far from our rural house. He came over, got my mother back into her bed, and told me not to be afraid.

But I was afraid. I stayed awake all night with my nose pressed against the screen of the window wishing my father would pull up in the driveway so I wouldn't have to be alone.

I was also terrified by the fear of the unknown. Occasionally our family would drive north from her home in Florida to visit my mother's relatives in Kentucky or to pay a visit to my father's sister in Indiana. I dreaded those trips because we always spent the nights in tourist homes on the road. Those were the days before motels were popular. Instead, travelers stayed in what were called tourist homes or rooming houses in the small towns on the way. These were usually big, old houses in which an old couple, perhaps a widow, would open up to taking overnight lodgers.

I dreaded staying in the strange homes. Invariably I would have to stay in a room at the end of the hall on the third floor. If I was fortunate I got to sleep in the same bed with my younger brother. The beds were usually creaky old iron poster beds with exposed spring metal springs. The walls would be covered with pictures of people who no doubt had lived and died in that same room. All through the night I would waken and see them staring down at me from their dusty picture frames



*Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am  
your God; I will strengthen you and help you, I will uphold  
you with my righteous right hand.*

*Isaiah 41:10*

Equally frightening was rain at night. It was always a terrifying situation to drive into a strange city at night with rain peppering against the windshield. I would huddle close to my daddy and wish I were back in the familiar surroundings of my home in Florida.

That all came back to me last winter when I went on a hunting trip with some of my friends deep in the Florida Everglades. One of the men in the group owned a small cabin perched in the clump of live oaks and cabbage palms called a “hammock.” This was surrounded on all sides by low, marshy ground. As far as the eye could see there was a swamp dotted with these “hammocks” - all of which look alike.

The first afternoon we were there, one of the men took us out into the swamp in a jeep with oversized tires. He let each man off at a separate deer stand about a mile apart in approximately 2 miles from the cabin. He promised to come back before dark to pick us up.



Shortly before dark it began to rain a soft misting rain. I pulled my rifle under my Poncho and snuggled against the trunk of the huge oak tree where I was perched on a limb high off the ground. It began to get dark, and I could hear the raindrops dripping lonely on the palm fronds in front of me below me. I began to think, "What am I doing up here in this tree in the middle of the Everglades when I could be home in my nice warm bed instead? Besides, I don't even like to kill things. The only reason I'm here is to be with my son Tim who is getting ready for college. And I'm not even with him because he's on a deer stand on the other side of the swamp

I slipped out of the tree and started back to the cabin. The rain was falling harder now and darkness had totally enveloped the swamp. I made my way through the thick hammock where I'd been sitting and across an open glade. I was sloshing through ankle deep water in tall grass looking for the barbed wire fence which marked the edge of the section where we were hunting.

But it but now it was completely dark. I found the fence where my friend was supposed to pick me up but there was no sign of a truck. Perhaps he had already come by and thinking I had walked back to the cabin gone on. I had no choice but to find my way back to the cabin in the dark.

Finding some Higher Ground along the fence line I slogged down through the misting rain, following the fence to a gate. I knew at that point I had to turn left across an open glade and walk about a mile. But there were no landmarks. No stars. Only the dark shadowy silhouettes of various hammocks against the darkening horizon. I searched the ground find the impressions of truck tires and set off across the glade in a hopeless quest of following the tire tracks in the dark. I knew the cabin was located in one of those dark clumps of trees but had no idea which one. I was literally feeling my way when it occurred to me. I was lost unless someone came looking for me. I just might have to spend the night in the swamp.



I waited for the old feelings of fear to set, the gnawing and the pit of my stomach, the sting of tears in my eyes, all the old sensations I used to have as a child when I was left alone or in a strange place. But there is nothing. No fear. No anxiety. Just a simple resignation that if I had to spend the night in the swamp I had better try and find a dry spot.

I stumbled upon a small cattle feeder, a little shed like structure which protected a block of salt for the range cows that wandered free in this section of the swamp. But as I knelt down to see if it was dry under the little roof, I spotted far on the distance a light shining through the trees in one of the hammocks. It was our cabin. In a short while I was safe in the warm dry house preparing for a dinner of smoked turkey with my friends - all of whom including my son thought it was a great joke that I had been lost in the dark

That night, lying on my cot, listening to the darkness of the rain drizzling on the tin roof of the cabin, I reflected on my feelings. What had happened to the old fear? Where was the old gut-wrenching fear of the past? it wasn't until the next morning that I fully realized what had happened to me.

I was back at the deer stand at dawn. Only this time I didn't climb up in my tree. I leaned my unloaded rifle on a log and stood at the edge of the woods watching the sun come up listening as the world came alive at dawn. Moments before it had been totally silent. Not a sound, not a leaf moving.

Then as the eastern sky began to turn, first light blue, then a soft rose color, a bird chirped. Then a squirrel moved. I heard the rustle of a raccoon family coming through the tall grass. An armadillo scurried in front of me, his long nose probing the ground for grubs and beetles. Butterflies and mosquito hawks sailed gracefully overhead. Next came the sound of many birds chirping, squirrels barked in the trees and scampered along the low branches of big oaks. And now in the distance, I heard the gobbling of a flock of wild turkeys.

Then, on the far side of the small glade where I was standing, I spotted him - magnificent buck. He was standing head erect, his rack of horns crowning his regal head. He sniffed the air, looked directly at me, and slowly turned and entered into the woods. He and I were part of the same creation - citizens of this marvelous garden of nature.

I stood for long moments, scarcely breathing,  
my heart beating in tune with all the sounds  
around me. The rain the night before had  
sweetened the air and freshened the earth. The  
golden sun rose in the east behind the clumps  
of cabbage palms, and suddenly the entire  
earth was alive with color and sound. I heard  
myself singing an old hymn

When morning gilds the skies  
My heart awakening cries,  
May Jesus Christ be praised.

The night becomes as day,  
When from the heart we say,  
May Jesus Christ be praised.

The powers of darkness fear  
When this sweet chant they hear,  
May Jesus Christ be praised.

That's it. The powers of darkness no longer had dominion over me. Why? Because the number of years before I had given my life to Christ. That which used to terrify me no longer controlled me. Now, through Jesus, I had power for living. I had appropriated what the Apostle Paul had told his young friend Timothy, "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, of love, and of a sound mind."

How does one give his life to Jesus Christ? How can you come into this intimate fellowship with the Lord God of the universe who takes away our fear and replaces it with power?

Just as there are physical laws that govern the physical universe causing the rain to fall in the sun to rise so there are spiritual laws which govern your relationship with

God. Submitting to these laws will allow Jesus Christ to become the Lord of your life. When that happens, he replaces your old power with this supernatural power for living.

## **LAW ONE :**

God loves you and offers a wonderful plan for your life.

### **GOD'S LOVE**

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

John 3:16

### **GOD'S PLAN**

“I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly.” John 10:10

But as we've seen already, simply knowing that God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life isn't enough. there are things which block us from God's love. and that brings us to the next law.

## **LAW TWO:**

Man is sinful and separated from god.

Because of this he cannot know and experience God's love and God's plan for his life.

### **MAN IS SINFUL**

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of god.” Romans 3:23

You see, man was created to have fellowship with God. Just as I was able to stand in the Everglades and feel God's presence all around me without fear. So God wants you to have fellowship with Him. It is the same kind of fellowship Adam and Eve had with God in the Garden of Eden before sin entered the world. There, these two friends of God walked with him in the cool of the evening, talking to their Creator as a son and daughter talk to their daddy.



But then Adam and Eve decided to go their own way rather than God's way. They broke fellowship with God, and ever since then men have chosen to go his own independent way. Sometimes the self will is exercised in active rebellion against God. Sometimes it is expressed in passive indifference toward god. Whatever form it appears, this self will is what the Bible calls sin.

## MAN IS SEPARATED

“For the wages of sin is death spiritual separation from God.” Romans 6:23



This diagram illustrates that God is holy and man is sinful. A great gulf separates the two. Man continually tries to reach God and the abundant life through his own efforts, such as living a good life, philosophy or even religion. The third law explains the only way we can bridge this gulf.

### **LAW THREE:**

Jesus Christ is God's only provision for man's sin.

Through him you can know and experience God's love and God's plan for your life.

HE DIED IN OUR PLACE

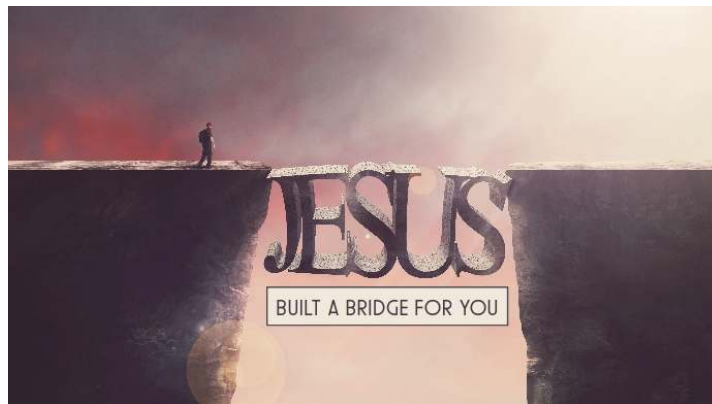
“But God demonstrates his own love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Romans 5:8

HE ROSE FROM THE DEAD

“Christ died for our sins...he was buried...he was raised on the third day, according to the scriptures.. he appeared to Peter, then to the 12 after that he appeared to more than 500.”  
1 Corinthians 15:3-6

## HE IS THE ONLY WAY TO GOD

“Jesus said to him,: I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the father, but through me.” John 14:6



This image illustrates that God has bridged the gulf that separates us from him by sending his son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross in our place - to pay the penalty for our sins. But it is not enough to know these three laws. we need to know the fourth one.

## **LAW FOUR:**

We must individually receive Jesus Christ as Savior and lord.

Then we can know and experience God's love and plan for our lives.

### **WE MUST RECEIVE CHRIST**

“But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of god, even to those who believe in his name.”  
(John 1:12)

### **WE MUST RECEIVE CHRIST THROUGH FAITH**

“For by Grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourself, it is a gift of God: not as result of works, that no one should boast.” (Eph. 2:8,9)

### **WHEN WE RECEIVE CHRIST WE EXPERIENCE NEW BIRTH**

“Jesus declared, ‘I tell you the truth, unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ (John 3:3)

## WE RECEIVE CHRIST BY PERSONAL INVITATION

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him.” (Revelation 3:20)

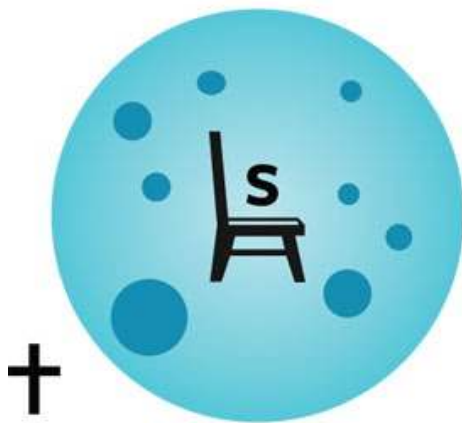
Receiving Christ means we have to turn to him. In order to do this we have to turn away from our sin. we cannot do this in our own power. but we must be willing to relinquish our sin and to surrender to him all the rights to our life. Then, in an act of faith, we invite Jesus to take over the control of our life.

While this may seem difficult, it is in reality a very simple thing. all you do is, by an act of your will, say, “I want you, Jesus, to take over my life.”

If you mean it with all your heart - he will.

Let me illustrate it by these two circles which represent two kinds of lives: the self-directed life and the Christ directed life:

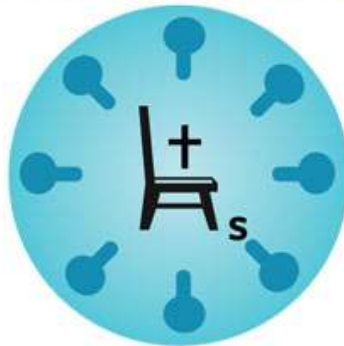
## Self-Directed Life



- S** Self is on the throne
- † Christ is outside the life
- Interests are directed by self, often resulting in discord and frustration

## Christ-Directed Life

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Patience
- Kindness
- Goodness
- Faithfulness



- Life is Christ-centered
- Empowered by Holy Spirit
- Introduces others to Christ
- Has effective prayer life
- Understands God's Word
- Trusts God
- Obeys God

Which circle best represents your life?

Which circle would you like to represent your life?

## **HOW YOU CAN RECEIVE JESUS CHRIST**

When you stop and realize you were created by God for one purpose - so you could have fellowship with him - then it stands to reason that God's greatest purpose for you is to have that fellowship restored. How is this done? It happens when you accept God's son, Jesus christ, as your lord - the one who will - from this time on - direct your life.

Well, you ask, how does that mean I have to join a church?

What about the bad habits in my life? don't I have to give them up before I'm worthy to have fellowship with God?

I've done too many bad things. I don't believe God will take me the way I am. don't I have to do something first before He'll receive me?



Let's put these questions aside for a while, because right now they don't make any difference. all of them are based on the presupposition that you have to do something before God will receive you. But remember the scripture verse we looked up at a moment ago from ephesians? He pointed out that our relationship with God is not by works but it is a gift of God. None of us could ever earn or deserve God's love and forgiveness. But he makes it freely available to anyone who will stop trusting his own good works and efforts and will place all his faith in Jesus Christ to save him.

The wonderful thing is that you don't have to wait for God to receive you. He is waiting for you to receive him.

Here's how you do it. You simply get alone somewhere and tell God that you believe in him, that you cannot go on living without him, that you are now accepting Jesus Christ as your lord, and that from this time on you are going to allow Jesus to sit on the throne of your life.

Here's a simple prayer you can pray. In fact, if after reading this prayer it voices how you feel, you can read it over again and make it your prayer. When you do that, God will hear you and Jesus will come into your life as Lord.

“Dear God, I've been living my life my own way. Now I want to live it your way. I need you and I'm now willing for you to take control of my life. I receive your son, Jesus Christ, as my personal Savior and Lord. I believe he died for my sins and has risen from the dead. I surrender to him as Lord. Come, Lord Jesus, come in and occupy the throne of my life. Make me the kind of person you want to be.”

That's all there is to it. Oh, there's much more to come, and that's what the rest of this book is all about. But right here is where it all begins. And now that you've accepted Christ, and have allowed him to move into the throne of your life, you should expect some tremendous changes to take place. We'll be talking about those changes, too, and what you can expect.



***Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. but one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me having to work in Christ Jesus.***

***Philippians 3:13-14***





You see, as a new citizen of the kingdom of God, you have certain rights and privileges you've never had before. These are exciting things, for Christianity is not just a matter of surrendering, it is a matter of receiving The marvelous gift Jesus brings with him when he takes control of your life. in fact, the moment that you, as an act of faith, receive Christ, many things happen, including the following:

FIRST, Christ came into your life. Have you seen one of those little toy cars in the department store? It looks real enough, but if you examine the box it came in, you'll see a little notice: battery is not included. Without batteries, no matter how authentic it looks, it won't run. You are made in the image of God. Because of sin, your battery's never did work. When Christ came into your life, he brought his power with him.

Paul says it this way: “Christ died Christ in you the hope of glory.” (Colossians 1:27) That's exciting. And powerful.

Look at the words of Jesus. “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will go in and eat with him come and he with me.” (Revelation 3:20)

SECOND, your sins were forgiven. When my oldest daughter was about 2 years old, she climbed up on my dresser and found a ring which had been given to me by my father. It was not a valuable ring, but it had a lot of meaning to me. Robin played with it for a while, then flushed it down the toilet. The next day, when I asked if anyone could see my ring, she admitted her sin. Even though I punished her, I was unable to forgive her. The ring was that meaningful to me.

The next afternoon I came in from work and settled in my chair with the newspaper. When I looked up, there stood my 4 year old son. Beside him, with tears on her cheeks, was little Robin. Bruce did the talking. “Robin is sorry she lost your ring, Daddy. But we made you a new one this afternoon.”

He held out his hand. In it was a ring braided out of pine needles.

I swept them both into my arms and held them close to my chest. Not once since that time have I missed my old ring, nor have I ever blamed my daughter for what she did. because of the action of her brother, she was forgiven. Totally.

That is what Jesus did for us. He went to the father and paid the price of our sin. Because of him, Paul says in Colossians 1:14, “We have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”

THIRD, you became a child of God. In fact, the Bible says, you now have the same rights as a son of God, Jesus Christ. These are inherited rights because you are now an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ.

“To all who received him...he gave the right to become children of God.” (John 1:12)

Something like this happened to my younger sister. After my parents had four sons, they decided to adopt a little girl. She was only a few days old when mother brought her home from the hospital. Although a woman other than his wife had given birth to her, my father fully accepted Audrey as his own child. She grew up as a Buckingham and has shared equally everything belonging to the family.

Recently, I was meeting with a group of men in the retreat lodge near where Audrey lives in Missouri. One afternoon she drove out to the retreat center to visit me. Although none of the men in the group had ever met her before, in fact, none of them even knew I had a sister. When she showed up at the retreat center looking for me, several men recognized her as my sister.

Across the years we've even begun to look alike. She is my father's daughter, fully accepted in the family.



FOURTH, you received Eternal life. That may not mean much to you right now, but in the long run it is the most important thing that can ever happen to you. Eternal life means you not only belong to the family of God, but because Jesus died and then also rose from the dead, overcoming death, you, too, will live forever.

Death is man's greatest enemy. It is man's greatest fear. but as a child of god, you no longer have to fear death. The grave may hold your body, but you will live on forever with Jesus Christ in heaven. "And this is a testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son of God has life: he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. 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. 1st John 5:11-13

FINALLY, You began the great adventure for which God created you.

Jesus said, "I have cometh they may have life and have it to the full." (John 10:10). It's not just life after death which Jesus gives us. He also gives us full and abundant life here on earth. He gives us powerful living - now!

If anyone is in Christ, Paul tells us, "He is a new creation; the old is gone, the new has come!" (II Corinthians 5:17) All the adventure of the universe is yours to experience, all the joy of being on the winning side, all the wisdom of God, all the peace of Heaven - It is all yours... and more... because of Jesus.

Now, before we go on, let's pause and review those four laws that brought you into your new relationship with God. In fact you might find it helpful to list these statements on cards to review them regularly until you know them by heart. That way, when others start asking you what has brought about the marvelous changes they'll see in your life, you can share the same laws with them.

1. God loves you and offers a wonderful plan for your life.
2. Man is sinful and separated from God. Therefore, he cannot have fellowship with God or receive God's full love.
3. Jesus Christ is the only way man can approach God. Through him, however, you can experience God's love and his plan for your life
4. Each person must receive Christ individually. It is not enough to belong to a church or have a Christian parents. If you receive him, he will make you a son of God also.

## **HOW TO KNOW THAT CHRIST IS IN YOUR LIFE**

People often ask, “How can I know for sure that I am a Christian - that Christ has come in my life?” Remember that promise we looked at in Revelation 3:20? Here Jesus says, “If any man hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him...” You can know on the authority of the trustworthiness of God Himself and His Word that Christ has come into your life.

Thank God often that Christ is in your life and that He will never leave you. You can know that the living Christ dwells you and that you have eternal life, from the moment you invite him on the basis of his promise. He will not deceive you.

Can you think of anything more wonderful that could happen to you than receiving Christ? Before reading any further, why don't you close this book and thank God In prayer for what he has done for you. Remember, your relationship with God is not based on your "feelings." You may not feel any different now than you did before you prayed the prayer accepting Christ. The feelings will come later. Right now except your salvation by faith. Christ is Lord of your life because God said - in his Bible - that if you receive him, Jesus will take control.

## **LIVING BY FAITH**

The problem is that most of us don't really trust God to do what he says he will do in the Bible. the Bible says, "The just shall live by faith and without faith it is impossible to please God." The object of our faith, then, is God himself. Once we understand who God is, that he is not only holy and righteous, but he is loving, forgiving, all wise and full of mercy, we should have no problem trusting him.

God, the Bible says, loves us unconditionally. In other words, no matter what you do behind God's back, or to his face, he loves you. Once we understand that, we can ask for forgiveness and then trust him with our lives totally and completely.

Many people are afraid of God. They see him as some kind of 'super fuzz', a huge cop sitting behind the cloud with this spiritual radar gun waiting to catch them disobeying the law so that he can punish them. As a result they are unwilling to totally surrender their life to him for fear he'll slap them in leg irons and put them to work on the road gang. Better to stay far away from God as possible, they feel.

Maybe you felt this way about God. You felt if you gave your life to Jesus Christ, the God would March you off to some concentration camp and beat the life out of you. Nothing is farther from the truth. Instead of putting us in prison, faith in Christ sets us free.

Remember, he loves you with an everlasting love. He sent his only son to die for you to pay the penalty if you send. No, he wants to bless you. He wants to give you power for living. But he cannot bless you unless you trust and obey him, unless you are willing to live by faith.

As you exercise faith in an unlimited God and upon his unlimited resources, you will begin to experience the abundant life which Jesus came to give!



## **HOW TO KEEP GROWING**

Becoming a Christian is only the beginning of a wonderful new life. God really takes people to heaven the moment they become Christians. He has work for you to do here on earth.

Being born again is like hatching out of an egg. Long before your birth, even before your conception, God had you in mind. All along God has had a distinct purpose for you to fulfill on Earth and an eternity. But you will never find or fulfill that wonderful purpose unless you grow as a Christian. Simply being hatched is not enough. you need to fly.

Soren Kirkegaard, the Danish philosopher, once told the story about a flock upon your grease in Denmark. Every Sunday, the geese would gather in the barnyard near the feeding trough. One of their number, a “preaching goose” would struggle up to the top rail of the fence and exhort the geese about the glories of “goosedom.” He would tell them how wonderful it was to be a goose, rather than a chicken or a turkey. He would remind them of their great heritage and tell them of the marvelous possibilities in the future.

Occasionally, while he was preaching a flock of wild geese, winging south from Sweden, across the Baltic Sea on their way to sunny France, with fly overhead in a marvelous V formation, thousands of feet in the air. When that happened, all the geese would excitedly look and say to one another, “that's the way we really are. We are not destined to spend our lives in the stinking barnyard. Our destiny is to fly.”

They never did fly.

Sadly, there are a number of people in the kingdom of God who remain in the barnyard, rather than spread their wings and learn to fly.

God is a PURPOSE for you.

Salvation, in its highest sense, is the process of becoming who you really are in God's mind.

Conversion, being born again, is an event. It only happens once. it is the experience of moving from darkness to light, from death to life. Salvation, on the other hand, is a process. It begins a conversion, and continues until you are fully transformed into the image of Jesus Christ.

### **MOVING ON FROM SPIRITUAL INFANCY**

There are a number of things which keep us in the barnyard of infant Christianity, when God's highest purpose for us is to grow to flying maturity. It may be that we're unwilling to run the risk of failure. “Now that I'm a Christian,” you might say, “I know I'm going to heaven, why do more.”

Others are afraid to leave the comforts of the barnyard for the rugged life of faith. But anything worth having has its price. People who want to move on to spiritual maturity are willing to pay the price. These are the ones whom God uses in a special way to shape the world.

Paul told his friends at Philippi to continue to “work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for this God who works in you to will and to do according to his good purpose.” (Philippians 2:13)

He was not talking about entering the kingdom of God by good works. Remember, we read earlier that you do not work your way into the good graces of God. No, he was talking about the process of salvation whereby you grow in grace and are conformed to the image of God's Son, Jesus Christ. He was saying that growth as a Christian demands cooperation with God. In fact, he said you had to work at it. Then God, who works at you through the Holy Spirit, will make things happen.

In the next chapter Paul goes ahead and warns the church at Philippi against stopping along the way in their Christian life. He told them there was “more,” more than they had experienced in Christ. Yet, he was, in essence, telling them to grow as Christians.

“One thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”  
Philippians 3:13 and 14

Paul constantly warned his friends of the danger of not growing. In fact, he went so far as to say he feared becoming spiritually shipwrecked if he failed to grow. “Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize... I did not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I preached your others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.” (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)

It sounds like Paul took this Christian life pretty seriously. He knew that if he did not grow as a Christian, if you did not move forward, he could easily fall back into the old life. If this was such a major concern to a man like Paul, it seems the rest of us ought to take growth seriously as well.

the saddest of all people are those Christians who do not go into full growth, who never leave the spiritual nursery, who remain in diapers and booties rather than down in the gear of the mountain climber in order to scale the heights with the help of the Holy Spirit.

### **TOOLS TO ACCOMPLISH THE TASK**

One of the purposes of this book is to give you the proper tools necessary to climb those magnificent mountains to spiritual maturity. maybe a good way to understand these tools is by looking at the word growth in this acrostic colon.

G - Go to God In Prayer daily (John 15:7)

R - Read God's word daily (Act 17:1)

O - Obey god, Moment by moment (John 14:21)

W - Witness for Christ by your life and words  
(Matthew 4:19)

T - Trust God for every detail of your life (1st Peter 5:7)

H - Holy Spirit, allow God to control and empower your daily life. (Galatians 5:16-17: Acts 1:8)

## **G**

### **GO TO GOD DAILY IN PRAYER**

Prayer is simply talking to God, and this thing while God talks. It is the most basic expression of our faith. It is the breathing of our spiritual life. it is our Lifeline to God

Many people mistakenly think prayer needs to be formal, with these endows. not so. Prayer is nothing more than a child talking to his daddy. it can be:

A cry for help in time of need.

A squeal of the light for receiving a gift.

A plea on behalf of someone else.

A quiet time of adoration

A period of listening is God talks

A gentle time of receiving God's love.  
Prayer is basically conversation with her  
Heavenly Father.

“Forgive me, Father. I really blew it this time. I didn't want to explode at my son, but I did anyway. Will you now forgive me? Give me strength to ask his forgiveness also?”

“Lord, remember last year when I began asking you for money to buy this new car. My faith was very strong back then, wasn't it? But oh, how I thank you for your faithfulness. You provided. Now the car is ours. Thank you, thank you.”

“Help me God. I've been over this checkbook a dozen times and it doesn't won't balance. Please show me where I made my mistake.”

“Oh God, I'm not worthy to even talk to you. I've messed up my body with all these drugs, I've destroyed my loved ones... oh God... I need help. Please help me.”



“Well, Lord, I've just signed the greatest contract of my life. Now I've got to produce. All I have is yours, just asking you to take over my brain so that I can get the job done.”

“Father, I've been battling this problem long enough. Now I'm going to turn it over to you and ask you to treat me as a little child until I learn my lesson.”

Do you know any energetic, joyful christians? You know, the kind that smile all the time, who seem to love everyone, who are on top of their problems. Almost certainly, they know the secret: prayer provides power for living.

## **HOW DOES GOD ANSWER PRAYER**

Remember, God wants to grant your requests much more than that most loving father

on earth wishes to give his children good things. But remember, too, he is your Father. As any good father, he knows how to give good gifts, and when to give them.

This means sometimes God says no to our requests. However, he never says no without having a better answer waiting for us just around the bend of the road.

It's important to remember this: When God says no to us, it's not because he can't afford it. nor is it because he doesn't care. God is the owner of everything, riches, knowledge, wisdom, power, health, joy and love. not only that, but he cares for us. He Loves Us more than any earthly father could ever love us. Thus, even though God does, on occasion, say no, this is the exception. His usual response to us is YES!

That's the reason, when we pray, we should expect a yes answer. When we know from the Bible what God's will is in a matter, and act on that will even though we have yet to see it taking place in their lives, we open the door for God to answer our prayers even more quickly.

## **WRITE DOWN YOUR ANSWERS**

I recommend you keep a prayer notebook. I have such a journal. it is just a little loose leaf notebook where I keep my requests. On one page, I write down my request: on the opposite page I note when and how God answered that request. As I look back over my number I'm amazed to discover that about 97% of my prayers are 5 years ago I've been answered, and the rest are being answered.

I don't pray for everything everyday. some things I pray for only once a week, on specific days. But I keep my prayers journal just as faithfully as I brush my teeth. And I pray just as faithfully.

Running down God's answers has encouraged me and given me more faith. Every year I pray for bigger and more impossible things. Each year God keeps increasing my faith, my bigger prayers now I answer just as easily as my smaller prayers were answered a number of years ago. This is one of the joys of growth. You get to measure your own progress, especially in your prayer life.

What's the most important thing to remember about prayer? Just this. Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6). This means for prayer to be real prayer, it should be in the name of Jesus. when you come to God in the name of his Son, He pays attention.

# R

## READ GOD'S WORD DAILY

If prayer is your lifeline to God, then the Bible is your bread basket. Just as it is important for you to develop good eating habits, eating regular meals of proper food, so it is vitally important for you to Feast to God's table, the bible, everyday.

Bible reading, like prayer, can be made into a habit. A good habit. The Bible is absolutely central to our lives. There are several reasons for this.

First, the Bible, by the power of God Spirit, produces faith in our hearts. Remember, we said salvation was the process of growth. One of the ways you achieve your growth potential is through daily Bible reading. if you don't eat, your body won't grow. Likewise, if you don't read your Bible, you'll never grow beyond spiritual maturity infancy.

Secondly, the Bible continues to nourish us throughout our lives. Jesus prayed that the Bible would have this effect upon his followers: “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.” (John 17:17)

Sanctify means to set apart or make holy. How does God make us holy? By bringing us into regular contact with this word. As we eat his word, as we digest it, as it all goes into our spiritual cells, we become filled with the Word of God.

Third, the Bible is our standard for making decisions and forming opinions in every area of life. “All Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Someone said the definition of a Christian was one whose life was totally dominated and controlled by the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you know what Jesus wants of you? By reading his Word. In the pages of the Bible you will find God's will for your life.

I often drive from my home in Melbourne, on the east coast of Florida, to the central Florida city of Orlando, about 70 miles away, for editorial meetings with the staff for the magazine where I work as an editor at large. We have an excellent Christian radio station in Melbourne, and I enjoy listening to music on my car radio. However, as I drive away from Melbourne, I begin to lose the station on my radio. I can do a certain amount of fine-tuning, but eventually the station disappears, and almost at once, I pick up in Orlando station which plays music I don't care for. The station back in Melbourne is still broadcasting. My radio is still working. The trouble is that I have moved too far away to get a clear reception.

When I drive back home from Orlando with the close of the day there is a spot along the highway where suddenly the Melbourne station is picked up. I'm back in range.

The reason I read my Bible daily is to keep me in range of God's voice. I make enough mistakes as it is, without tuning out the word of God for my life. A daily look at God's word will give you access to God's wisdom and knowledge, keeping you safe from wrong decisions and feeling you with power for living.

## **O OBEY GOD MOMENT BY MOMENT**

How can you know if you really love Jesus, that it's not some kind of phony or artificial love? One of the most exciting things in the world is that God has given us a standard for love. Here it is.

“But whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.” (John 14:21)



How do we know we love Jesus? Because we obey his commands. Of course, we don't have to prove anything to anybody. But obedience becomes the guage by which we can check ourselves. "And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands." II John 6

If you love God, the Bible says, you will also love others.

"He has given us this command: whoever loves God must also love his brother." (I John 4:21)

That's pretty plain.

## **ARE YOU IN CHRIST?**

The term "in Christ" is used 165 times in the New Testament. In fact, in the first chapter of Ephesians it is used nine times. That means being "in Christ" must be important. What does that mean?

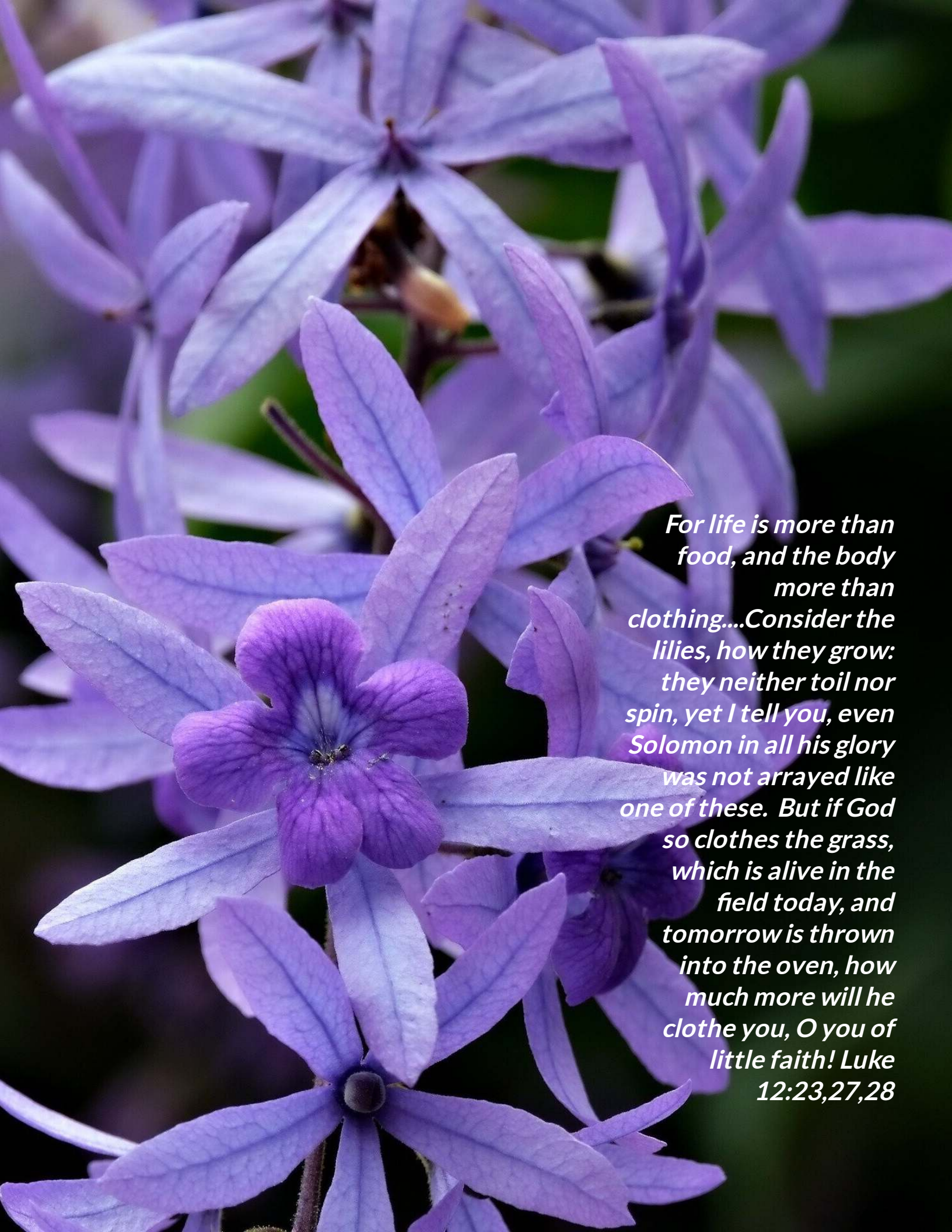
You are IN CHRIST when you obey the still small voice of the Holy Spirit as he interprets the Bible. The Holy Spirit often speaks in a corrective voice. He is like those small rockets on the base of the giant rocket which carry satellites into orbit. When the main rocket begins to veer off course, a command can be given from Mission Control that fires one of the small, directional rockets. This pushes the spaceship back on course. The Holy Spirit often speaks to us like this. We sometimes call it our conscience, but for the Christian that is the voice of the Holy spirit.

God does not bless disobedience. He may protect us while we are disobedient, but his blessings are reserved for those who obey him. When we drive down the highway my wife sometimes reminds me that the minute I exceed the speed limit I am “on my own” as far as God's blessings are concerned. You may protect me if I drive in disobedience to the law, but I have literally driven out from under his blessing, for the Lord wants us to obey those civil laws which are not in direct conflict with the Bible.

Living a life of obedience to God - moment by moment - insures your growth as a Christian.

Likewise, we are told to love our brothers and sisters. Paul described this family as a “body.” He pointed out the body as many parts: hands, feet, knees, elbows to, ears, plus a lot of parts we can't see, things like liver, spleen and heart. Each one of us serves as a part of that body. Just because you are a finger should not make you upset because someone else is an eye. You are both important, even though you have different functions to perform.

If the eye has picked up a grain of sand, it needs the finger to help it out. An elbow or a foot simply won't get the job done. Likewise, the finger needs the eye so it can see where the cotton swab is which will take the grain of sand out of the eye. And both need the feet to take them into the bathroom if you need to find the cotton swab. Then, have you ever tried to put your finger to your eye with a stiff elbow? All parts are necessary to the body.



*For life is more than  
food, and the body  
more than  
clothing....Consider the  
lilies, how they grow:  
they neither toil nor  
spin, yet I tell you, even  
Solomon in all his glory  
was not arrayed like  
one of these. But if God  
so clothes the grass,  
which is alive in the  
field today, and  
tomorrow is thrown  
into the oven, how  
much more will he  
clothe you, O you of  
little faith! Luke  
12:23,27,28*

Loving one another means we are one body. That body is called the church. It is not a building, it is not even an organization. It is a group of people - all different - who love the Lord and love each other. You need to be part of such a family if you're going to be obedient to God.

As you grow in your Christian life, remember the simple, yet profound, words of Jesus: “If you love me, you will obey what I command.” (John 14:17)

**W**  
**WITNESS FOR CHRIST**  
**BY YOUR LIFE AND YOUR WORDS**

Witnessing for Christ is simply being who you are. It does not mean that you need to preach, it doesn't necessarily mean you have to go door to door telling strangers about Jesus. All it means is living for Jesus every day so that not only your words tell of Christ, but your life reflects his life as well.

How do you witness with your life? By doing what we've just been discussing: obeying God's word, being directed and controlled by the Holy Spirit, displaying the fruit of the Spirit in your actions and behavior.

This doesn't mean you have to become a prude, wear strange clothes, and be unable to have a good time. It doesn't even mean you have to carry your Bible around all day either. It simply means you stay attached to Jesus at all times.

Jesus described it as branches attached to a vine. He is the vine. We are the branches. If we stay attached, we will bear fruit in our lives to be a testimony to all around us.

A Christian nurse in a psychiatric clinic had several opportunities to speak of her faith to the doctors in the clinic. They all thought she was a little strange but didn't object too much since she was an excellent employee.

Then that woman's much beloved teenage son was killed in a motorcycle accident. In the weeks that followed, one physician after another came to the nurse privately, admiring her faith and questioning her about the inner strength she showed. Her calm demeanor and peaceful spirit in the face of deep grief “preached a silent sermon” each finally was able to hear.

As the witness for Jesus, you will affect the entire world. “You are the light of the world,” Jesus told his followers. “A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on a stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:14-16)



However, just being a witness with your life is not enough. Christian growth means you will also witness with your mouth. The redeemed of the Lord will “say so,” says the psalmist. That means once you're saved and filled with his Holy Spirit, you're going to want to tell others about this wonderful way of life. It will come as naturally as telling others about the person you love. Or about your new car. Or about your child or grandchild. God will give you just the right words - and will provide just the right people to talk to. All you have to do is make yourself available.

## **T**

### **TRUST GOD FOR EVERY EVERY DETAIL OF YOUR LIFE**

When God placed you into his family, he took responsibility for your life and your problems. David said it was better than anyone has ever said it: “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall lack nothing.” (Psalm 23:1).



God is a God of unlimited resources. When you trust him, you move beyond your understanding, beyond your comprehension, to a dimension of belief where you are willing to relax in life because you know there is a great, all powerful, loving God watching over you. What, therefore, is there to fear?

How is this done?

When you reach the place that everything you own belongs to God, then everything God owns belongs to you.

It's that simple.

There are those who want to know God's will in advance so that they may determine whether to do it or not. But God Reveals His will only to those who are committed to follow it - come what may.

Man's intellect is always trying to figure things out. He wants answers to all his “what if” questions. God does not answer such questions, however. He simply says, “trust me.” That means God always reserves his best for those who leave the choices to him. “Commit your way unto the Lord, trust also in Him and He will bring it to pass.” Psalm 37:5

## **H HOLY SPIRIT - ALLOW GOD TO CONTROL AND EMPOWER YOUR DAILY LIFE**

As a Christian everyday can be an exciting adventure. But in order for that to happen, you must be filled with the Holy spirit. Far too many believers stop with the act of becoming a Christian and never move on to the victorious life of walking in the Spirit.

Dr. Bill Bright, the founder and president of Campus Crusade for Christ, says: “If there were only one truth I could share with the Christian world, it would be how to be filled with the Holy Spirit, for there is no single truth that is more important than believer.”

That is a powerful statement. And since it is true, you need to ask yourself: how can I be filled with the Holy Spirit?

### **HOW CAN I BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT?**

Several years ago I visited one of those huge hydro hydroelectric dams on the Columbia River in Washington State. I had heard of such things as turbines and generators, but for some reason it always thought the power from those dams was provided by the water which heard over the spillway. It never occurred to me, a flatlander from Florida, that the real power was not in the froth which splattered over the top, but was produced in the hidden machines far below the top of the dam.

We took an elevator deep into the mysterious interior of the dam. Stepping out into a huge room, as long as the dam was wide, I was sending the middle of more power than I had ever imagined possible. The spotless room, with huge cranes overhead on their tracks, was filled with a deep “hmmm.” The very air was vibrating with power. Where did it come from? Nor did it come from the water which splashed over the spillway hundreds of feet above. Nor did it come from those giant, hidden turbines in the floor. It came from the millions of pounds of water pressure in the lake above. As the water moved through those slowly turning turbines, it created enough power to provide electricity for half the state of Washington and part of Oregon.

So does the Holy Spirit move through the spiritual “turbine” of the believer, creating incredible power.

Being filled with the Spirit involves a complete surrender of your will, without reservation to the will of God. This is not an event, it is a process, a continual process. Paul wrote to his friends in Ephesus and told them to be “filled with the spirit.” (Ephesians 5:18). His language means to be continually filled. What he is saying is, “be filled, and filled, and filled with the Holy Spirit.”

Why do we need to keep on being filled with the Spirit? Well, for one thing, we often take back the control of our lives we had already yielded to Him. We decide that we want to be our own master and make our own decisions. When we do, the Holy Spirit is grieved - that is, the flow of his power through us is hindered. In order to get this power restored it must agree with God that we have sinned, and once again heal the control of our lives to his Spirit.

But first, let's ask some other basic questions.

## **WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?**

Maybe it would be easier if I first told you who he is not. He is not an it. Nor is he a Ghost. Some kind of shadowy vapor. The word “ghost” in the King James bible, by the way, is the ancient translation of the word better translated “spirit.” The Holy Spirit is not some weird, ethereal, mystical feeling or impersonal presence.

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He is a real person. He has a personality. He has feelings. He may be hurt, grieves, loved, honored, known, and communicated with. He has infinite intellect, will, and emotion. He possesses all the divine nature of God. is equal in every way with God and the Son. And - this is most important - He is waiting to take control of your life.

## **WHY DID THE HOLY SPIRIT COME?**

Before Jesus left earth following his resurrection, he called his followers together and told them that when he returned to heaven he would send the Holy Spirit back to earth. The Holy Spirit would actually live inside every believer! In fact, the same power that raised Christ from the dead could then control the life of every Christian.

The spirit's ministry and the believer's life takes on many forms.

For one, he convicts us of our sin. Remember, he is a Holy Spirit. That means he is pure. When he fills us, He does so to purify us - to make us holy.

He also takes away our doubts, those pestering questions about our salvation. He convinces us we really are the children of God, just as the Bible says.

The Holy Spirit makes the presence of Jesus real in us. When Jesus was on earth he spent a great deal of time with his disciples. He taught them and answered their questions. He was their most intimate friend. it's no wonder they grieved so deeply when he left them.

It was then Jesus said, "I will ask the father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever, the Spirit of truth." John 14:16-17. He arrived, just as Jesus promised, it has been with us ever since, making Jesus as real to every Christian as if he was still here in the flesh.

The Holy Spirit does many other things.

He teaches us.

He helps us when we don't know how to pray, actually praying through us. "The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray, but Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express."  
(Romans 8:26)



He gives us power - supernatural power. In fact, Jesus told his disciples, “You will receive power with the Holy Spirit comes on you...” (Acts 1:8) Power for what? Well, for many things, but primarily to be witnesses of Jesus. Filled with the Holy Spirit, those disciples were transformed from a cowardly and defeated band of leaderless travelers to a bold army of spiritual warriors who challenged, and defeated, the forces of hell which held the world in bondage.

But perhaps the most wonderful thing the Holy Spirit does is to produce in you the life of Jesus. When the Holy Spirit is allowed to take control of your life, then Jesus, and all his character and personality, is at home in you. He will live in love through you. You will begin to see in your life what the Bible calls “the fruit of the Spirit”: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. It won't happen all at once, for no tree bears fruit overnight. But day by day you will see your life changing as you take it on the character of Jesus. That's exciting.

## **WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT?**

At the very moment you were born again, the Holy Spirit took up residence in your life. However, that does not mean you are “filled” with the Holy Spirit. Do we filled means you are controlled and empowered. It means you are relying on the power of God to change your life, rather than trying to do it yourself. Powerful living is yours only when you yield to him and let him control your life. You cannot live the Christian life in your own power through self-determination and self-discipline. Only Jesus was able to live a perfect life: and only as he lives in you - through his spirit - can you live victoriously.

In a nutshell, to be filled with the Holy Spirit means to be filled with Jesus.

Dr. Bill Bright refers to this experience as “spiritual breathing.” Well, a baby takes his first breath shortly after it is born, unless it keeps on breathing it will die. Likewise Paul tells us to be continually filled with the Holy Spirit. Spiritual breathing means you exhale anything which hinders or grieves the Holy Spirit, and you continually inhale the power of the Spirit. As you exhale impure air you then inhale pure air.

If you want to be filled with the Holy Spirit you need to exhale the impurities of sin in your life. This is known as confession, agreeing with God that you have sinned, they've been in control of some area of your life and that you are now exhaling that impurity. Then immediately thank God for forgiving you a sin, and once again surrendered control of your life to him.

You want to make spiritual breathing a consistent part of your life, so that you can live each day filled with the wonderful power of the Holy spirit.

It is possible that up to this moment, the Holy Spirit has just been a guest in your life.

Remember that he came to live in you the moment you became a Christian. But he wants to be more than a guest. He wants to be the master of your home. He wants complete access to the library of your mind, the dining room of your appetites, The parlor of your relationships, the game room of your social life. He wants to be invited into the small hidden rooms where you previously engaged in shameful activity. In short, he wants to be in charge of your life.

That sounds like a pretty major surrender. and it is! but in exchange for surrendering your life to him, the Holy Spirit fills you with supernatural power over sin, and abundant, meaningful life, and the indescribable love, joy, peace, patience, goodness of Jesus himself.

Like your salvation, the feeling of the Holy Spirit is a gift of God. You cannot earn either. Both are received by faith and the complete yielding of your will to him.

Do you want to be filled with the Holy Spirit? You don't have to search for him, or wait for him. He is already dwelling in you, waiting for you to allow him to control your life. If this is a desire of your heart, then simply tell God that you want to be filled with the Holy Spirit, accept His power by faith, and begin to thank him. All the power of heaven is yours as you begin living the Spirit-filled life.

## **FELLOWSHIP AND THE CHURCH**

One of the most practical helps in our growth of Christians is our fellowship with other believers in Christ. Fellowship is spending time and doing things with others who love Jesus.

In a fireplace several logs from Bradley together, but place one alone on the cold hearth and the fire grows out. Christians need to be together, or the fire of enthusiasm will go out. That relationship is vital for Christian growth. God's word tells us in Hebrews 10:24-25 to “let us not neglect our church meetings.”

The best place to find this fellowship with other Christians is in a church in your area. It is also here that you will receive good teaching from the Word of God and experience the joy of worshipping him.

As you consider a church you might want to be a part of, let me suggest some questions that you might ask to help you evaluating which would be best for you:

How does the church treat God's word, the Bible?

Does it recognize the Bible is coming from God and teaches as such.

How does the church treat the Son of God?

Does it recognize that Jesus Christ is God's sinless Son who died on the cross for our sins and was resurrected from the dead?

How does the church treat God the Father?

Does it recognize Him as loving and merciful, yet a just and righteous Father, who is worthy of our adoration and worship? How do the people of this church treat one another?

Are they kind of loving and attractive individuals who obviously care for each other and desire to help and encourage each other in walking with God?

Ask God to help you find a local church for weekly fellowship and worship.

There you have it: GROWTH. Like children, we are afraid to face it, but when it comes we think it's great. So your growth as a Christian will be both exciting - and useful.

By way of review, we see that to move on from our initial conversion to spiritual maturity we need to use these special “tools.”

G - Go to God In Prayer daily

R - Read God's word daily

O - Obey God moment by moment

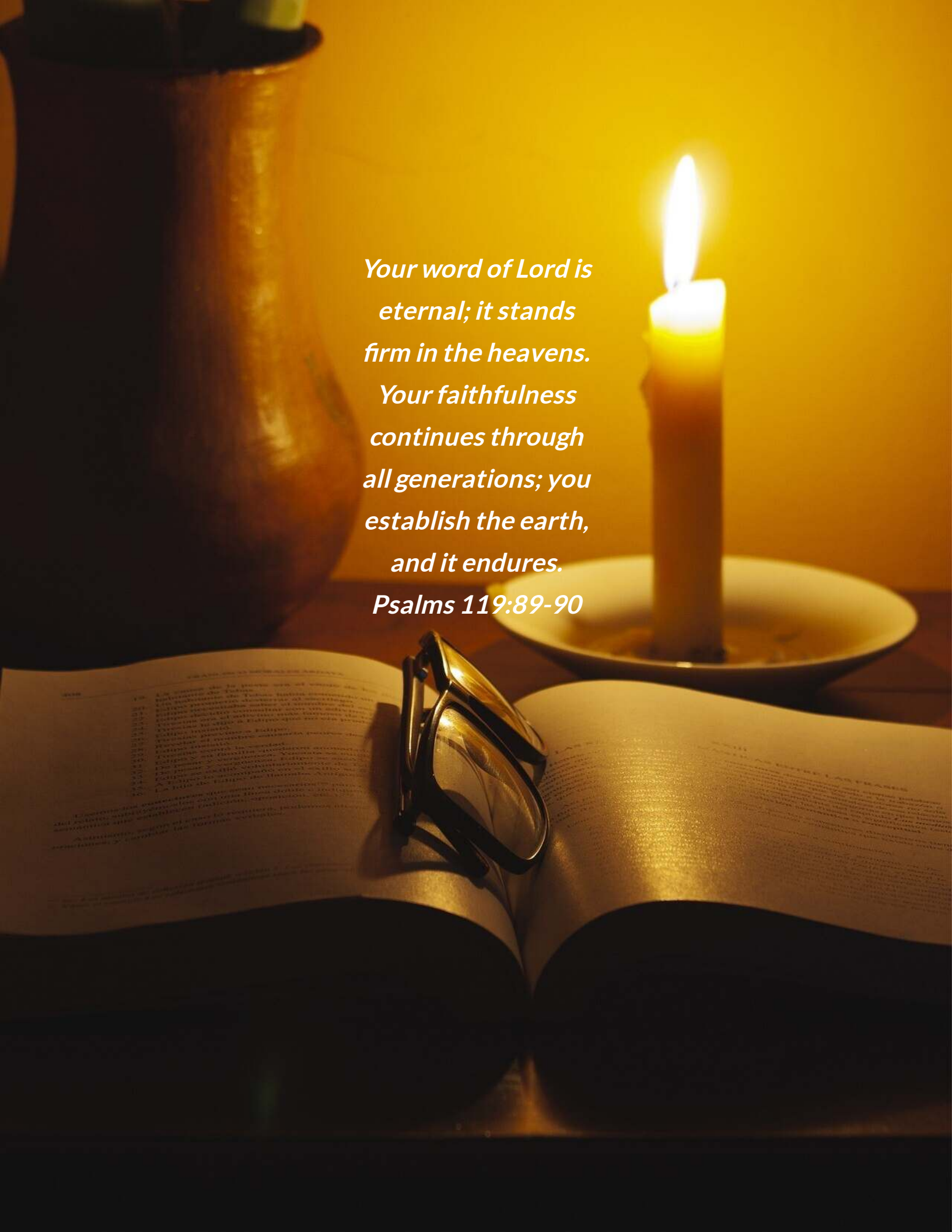
W - Witness for Christ by your life and words

T - Trust God for every detail of your life

H - Holy Spirit: allow God to control and empower your daily life.

Your Christian growth gives glory to God and allows him to bless you with his presence - and that presence brings power for living.





*Your word of Lord is  
eternal; it stands  
firm in the heavens.  
Your faithfulness  
continues through  
all generations; you  
establish the earth,  
and it endures.  
Psalms 119:89-90*

# **WHAT THE BIBLE IS ALL ABOUT**

The Greek philosopher, Plato, once said there are three valid sources of knowledge.

1. The five senses, touch, taste, smell, sight, sound, which we share with the animal kingdom..
2. Reason, which sets man's apart from the lower animals.
3. The third he called "Divine Madness" - by which he referred to the spiritual world of supernatural communication.

Later his disciple, Aristotle, eliminated the third source, the entire intuitive faculty by which Divine perception comes to man. Aristotle said knowledge comes only through the five senses and reason.

Much of the western world was affected by what Aristotle taught. But in Eastern and primitive cultures reference to the spiritual world, the world of dreams, visions and supernatural communication, is common in all walks of life.

While Aristotle would have rejected the Bible as a source of knowledge, Jesus never hesitated when he said the Bible is a primary way through which God reveals himself to mankind.

Now, 2,000 years later, more and more people are seeing that Jesus was right. Voltaire, the famous French atheist who was a follower of Aristotle rather than Jesus, died in 1778. Before dying he said the Bible and Christian faith would not be believed in 100 years. On the 100th anniversary of his statement, the Geneva Bible Society purchased Voltaire's printing press and house and started to print Bibles from there.

206 years after Voltaire, the President of the United States declared 1983 as the year of the Bible. Why would the president of the greatest nation in history proclaim the Bible is mankind's greatest source of knowledge?

Millions of people are looking for a reliable voice of authority. They have found they cannot trust treaties between nations, they cannot trust the statements of scientists: even the great religious leaders are often wrong. The Bible, the Word of God, is the only real authority we have. Proven across the years, the Bible sheds light on human nature, world problems and human suffering. But beyond that it clearly reveals the way to God.

The Bible is God revealing himself to mankind.

Billy Graham is right when he said of the Bible: "The Bible is old: it is ever new. It is the most modern book in the world today. There's a false notion that a book is ancient as the Bible cannot speak to the needs of modern man. Men somehow think that in an age of scientific achievement, when knowledge has increased more in the past 25 years than in all the preceding centuries put together, this ancient book is out of date. But all who read and love the Bible, it is relative to our generation.

“It is in the Holy Scriptures that we find the answers to life's ultimate questions: Where did I come from? Why am I here? Where am I going? What is the purpose of my existence?”

The word “bible” comes from the Greek word “biblos,” meaning book. But the Bible is more than a book, or a collection of books. It is God's written revelation of his will to men. Behind and beneath this book, above and beyond this book, is the God of the Book. For the Bible is all about God, and especially it is about God's son Jesus Christ.

### **MORE THAN A BOOK**

The Bible contains 66 books written by 40 authors, covering a period of approximately 1600 years. These authors came from all walks of life and included kings, peasants, prophets, poets, fishermen, statesmen, scholars, a businessman, a doctor and a missionary. It is separated into two major sections, the dividing place being the birth of Jesus Christ.



*The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it,  
the world and all who live in it: before he  
founded upon the seas and established it  
upon the waters.  
Psalms 24:1-2*

The first section is called the Old Testament. This portion was written mostly in Hebrew with the exception of a few short passages in Aramaic and was completed almost 400 years prior to the birth of Christ. The New Testament was written in the Greek language. Our present day English Bibles are all translated from his original languages.

The word “testament” actually means “covenant” or agreement. The Old Testament is a record of God's covenant with man and points toward the coming of God's son Jesus. The New Testament is the record of the fulfillment of that covenant agreement through Jesus Christ.

### **WHO IT IS ABOUT**

In the sign language for the deaf, the sign for Jesus is to point the palms of both hands with the index finger of the other hand. This is symbolic of the nail prints in the hands of Jesus.

The sign for the Bible is to point with first one index figure and then the other to the palms of both hands, then to open the both palms up as if they were a book. In other words, the Bible is a book about Jesus christ.

Several years ago I was visiting in Hong Kong and rode the hydrofoil from Hong Kong across the harbor to the tiny Portuguese colony of Macao. There, on a hill overlooking the harbor of Macao, the Portuguese once built a massive cathedral. Several centuries ago a typhoon proved stronger than the work of man's hands, and the huge stone building fell into ruins. However, the front wall of the old Cathedral still stands, with its wide steps down to the ancient cobblestone street bordering the harbor. High on top of that jutting wall, challenging the elements down through the years, was a great bronze cross.





***"This is what the Lord says: let not the wise men boasting his wisdom with a strong man boast his strength or the rich man both his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and know me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, Justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the Lord.  
Jeremiah 9: 23,24***

In 1825 Sir John Bowering sailed his ship into Hong Kong Harbor and caught a glimpse of that great cross, towering above the ruins of the old cathedral of St Paul. Sir John was deeply moved. Retiring to the cabin of his ship, picking up a quilt, he dipped it in ink and wrote these words in his journal.

“In the Cross of Christ I glory  
Towering over the wrecks of time.  
All the light of sacred story  
Gathers rounded heads Sublime”

The central message of the Bible is the cross of Jesus Christ. Every book in the Bible either points forward to the coming of Jesus, or points backward to his work on the Calvary.

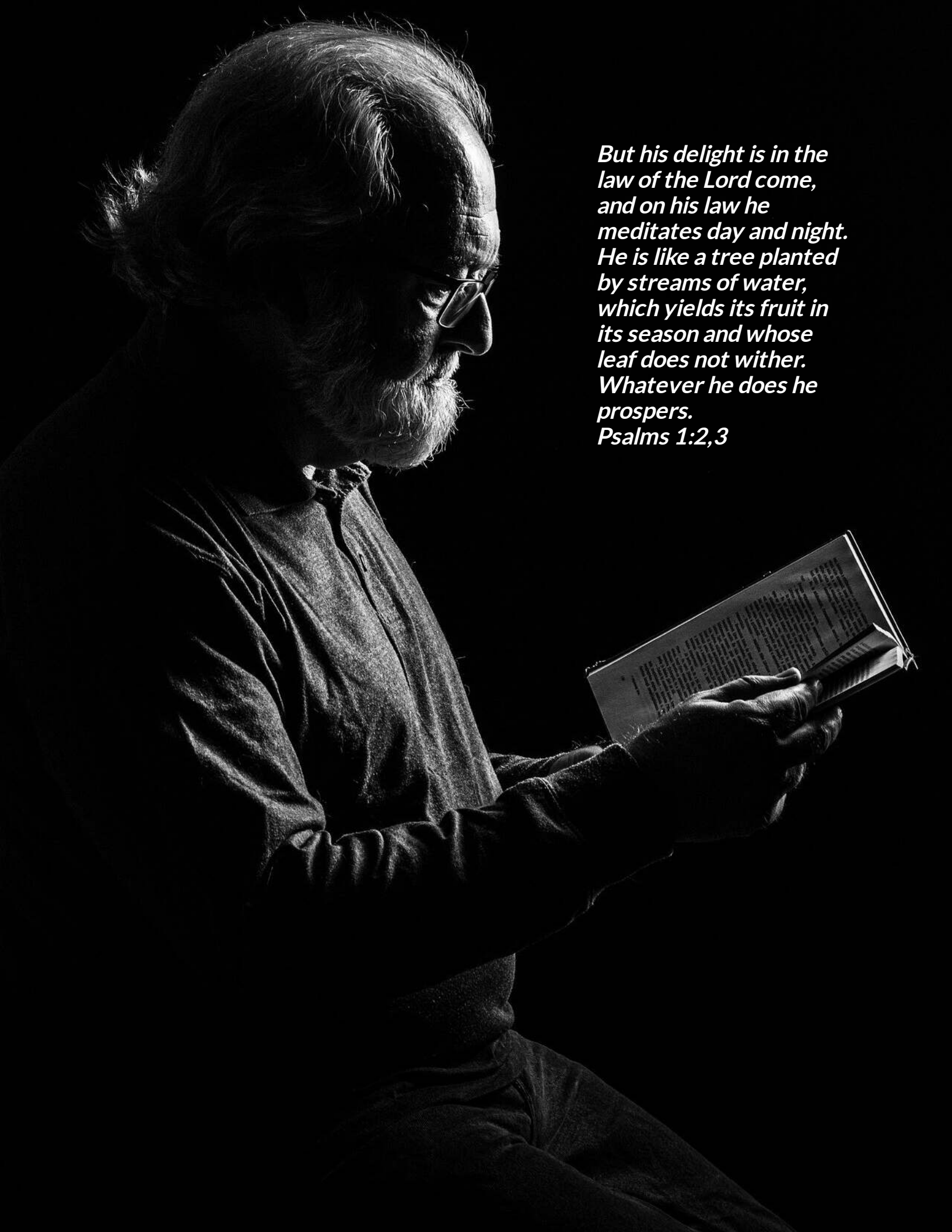
There is a marvelous story in the Book of Luke about an event that took place 8 days after Jesus was born his mother, Mary, and Joseph had taken the tiny baby to the temple and Jerusalem so that he could be circumcised according to Jewish law. When they entered the temple they were prodded by an old rabbi, a godly man named Simeon who had been studying the Old Testament all his life. By reading the Bible he had become convinced that the central message of the Old Testament was to point to the coming of the Messiah, God's son. In fact, the Holy Spirit had told him he would not die until he had seen the Savior with his own eyes.

That day, when Mary and Joseph entered the temple court carrying their tiny baby, something sparked in the oldman's heart. He rushed forward, tears in his eyes, and asked Mary if he could hold the baby for just a moment. Taking the tiny child in his arms he gazed down at the face of Jesus. Then, turning his face heavenward he he prayed:

“Sovereign lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for Revelation to the Gentiles and for the glory of your People Israel.” (Luke 2:29-32.

Then Simeon said something very significant. “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed.” Then looking deep into the tender eyes of the young mother the old man said, “and a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

Simeon was referring to the Messianic prophecies he had been reading in the Old Testament, the prophecies which foretold the coming of the Son of God. In particular he was referring to a prophecy in Genesis when God said to the serpent, Satan, in the garden of Eden, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers: he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” (Genesis 3:15.) He also made reference to a prophecy by Isaiah 700 years before the birth of Christ: “I'll make you a light for the gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.” (Isaiah 49:6)



*But his delight is in the  
law of the Lord come,  
and on his law he  
meditates day and night.  
He is like a tree planted  
by streams of water,  
which yields its fruit in  
its season and whose  
leaf does not wither.  
Whatever he does he  
prosperes.  
Psalms 1:2,3*



## **GOD'S DREAM**

From the very beginning God had a dream. The dream was for man to be restored to full fellowship with God. Jesus was the answer to that dream. All the godly men across the ages who wrote the Bible picked up snatches of that dream, and included them in their writings. Therefore, throughout the Bible, from the time of creation to the birth of Christ, you will find the biblical writers referring to this Messianic dream. Jesus, then, is the central theme of the Bible.

As you read through the Old Testament there looms on the horizon of history one person through whom God would establish his kingdom on earth: Jesus Christ. Micah said he would be born in Bethlehem. Isaiah the prophet said he would be born of a virgin and would be called Emmanuel. David and Isaiah from the Old Testament told how he would die. Job prophesied his resurrection.

Others pointed out that he would be introduced by a strange prophet like Elijah, that he would work miracles, speak in parables, be rejected by leaders, be a smitten shepherd, a man of sorrows, would enter Jerusalem riding on a colt, would be betrayed by a friend for 30 pieces of silver and be led as a lamb to the slaughter. He would die with the wicked. His hands and feet would be pierced. Not a bone of his body would be broken. Lots would be cast for his garments. He would be in a tomb 3 days, would rise from the dead, would ascend to heaven at God's right hand.

It was foretold by David, Isaiah, Daniel, and Jeremiah, all prophets, that the Messiah would offer a New Covenant for his people. He would send the Holy Spirit. His kingdom would be of the Gentiles would be universal and endless.



## **THE MIRACLE OF COMPOSITION**

Suppose one man from each nation on the earth were to work a lifetime carving on a tiny piece of marble. One day all these men come and none of them had ever met or even known anyone else was carving marble, would all gather in a small village in the hills south of Jerusalem, each one bringing their tiny piece of marble with them. The man who had carved what looked like a big toe would place his little piece on the ground. The man who had carved feet without toes or heels would attach his pieces, and they would fit perfectly. More toes would be added, each just the right size and shape. Then the man with the heels would attach his pieces. Then the ankles, the legs, the knees, each piece fitting so perfectly that not even a seam showed, until the entire statue is completed, perfect in every detail..

How can such a statue be accounted for unless there was someone with the blueprint who would outline to each man exactly what he was to carve?

No wonder the angels say of “good tidings and great joy.” The Miracle of the Ages, the one the Bible is all about, had been born in Bethlehem!

Remember, God's word is the foundation of all we know about God, and his plan for salvation. It tells of the origin of sin and how his curse separated man from God. Even though it contained the law of God given to Moses on Mount Sinai, we also discover how utterly impossible it was for the law to bring man the salvation he needs. This we find in his pages that the one purpose of God is to prepare the way for the coming of the Redeemer of the world, Jesus Christ.

Although the Bible is the library of books, it is also the book. It is a story, a grand story of God's love for his people, and the price he was willing to pay for to restore us into perfect fellowship with him. While it is divine, it is also human. The thought is divine, the expression of the communication is human.

So here we have a book unlike all others. The book, the divine revelation, a progressive revelation, revelation of God to man communicated through men, that moves on smoothly from its beginning to its great end. Behind each event stands God, the builder of history, the maker of ages. Eternity bounds the one side, eternity bounds the other side, and time is in between. You can study the minutest detail everywhere and see that there is one great purpose down through the ages, the eternal design of our Mighty God to redeem a wrecked world and to give each one of us, you and me, the power for living.

The Old Testament is the account of God dealing with the nation, the Israelites. The New Testament is an account of God dealing with a man, his son. The nation was founded in order to bring man into the world.

God became man in the presence of his Son so we might know what God is like. If you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus, for he is the perfect revelation of God. His appearance on earth still marks his central event of all history. Even today's calendars are dated from that special time. The Old Testament set the stage. The New Testament describes the play.

And what a marvelous play it is. God is the author. Jesus Christ is the central character. The Holy Spirit is the power behind each of these characters, including the Son of God.

Jesus was a perfect man. He was kind, gentle, tender, patient and full of love. He worked miracles to feed the hungry, heal the sick, and raise the dead. Walters came to him and he taught them about the kingdom of God. But he threatened the religious people of the day, and eventually they killed him. Yet even this had been foretold. It was necessary: for Jesus became the perfect sacrifice for our sins. By his atoning death the way was open for all mankind once again to have fellowship with the Father.

Then, the greatest of all miracles, Jesus rose from the dead! He is alive today. He is not merely a historical figure, but a living person, the most important fact of history, and the most vital force in the world.

His friends and followers wanted him to remain on earth after his resurrection from the dead. But he said he had to leave. He had to leave so he could send his Holy Spirit. That Spirit, he said, The same Spirit that gave him power to rise from the dead, would come and fill each Christian from that time on, giving them power for living. Several years ago I spent time with a young woman who had been part of the Charles Manson gang. She had been convicted on seven counts of first degree murder and sentenced to die in the California gas chamber. Shortly before she was to be executed, her sentence was changed to life in prison. During that time she received Jesus Christ as her Lord and Savior. She had subsequently led a number of young women in prison into a Salvation experience with Jesus christ.

When I heard about this I saw it and received permission to visit her and her cell in the California Institution for Women near chino. We became good friends during these visits, for she had truly been born again and was a child of god.

And one of these visits she told me how she had received Christ. The first week after she arrived in prison, she received a Bible through the mail. She tossed it to one side and didn't even look at it for more than a year. But I know that a large number of people were praying for her. She received several letters from strangers, telling her about God's forgiving love. Then one day she took the Bible off the shelf in her little cell, brushed the dust off the cover, and settled back to read. Knowing virtually nothing about the Bible although she had attended Sunday school as a child, she began to read, starting with the first page.

It was tough reading, but she was determined to find out what the Bible was all about. When she got to the Book of Exodus and read the story of the children of Israel, she became angry. Here was the story of God's love and provision. He delivered the Israelites from captivity and, Egypt, opened the sea so they could escape, protected them from harm, provided water from rocks and manna every morning. Still the people drive to complain. Why, she asked herself, would anyone who is loved as much as God love the Israelites refuse that love and respond so selfishly?

She ran on through the psalms, those beautiful love songs by David. Time after time she had to put the Bible down because tears filled her eyes. All she had ever known from childhood was hate. That is why she joined the Manson gang and participated in those horrible murders. Now she was reading about a tender, loving Heavenly father. She had never known such love existed.

The books by the prophets all told her of a savior, one who would take away her sin and give her power for living. but they didn't tell her how to find him, just that he was coming.

In the gospel she read the life story of Jesus. He was all she imagined him to be, loving, tender, kind, yet a man in justice and righteousness. it was what she had longed for all her life. She read on through the book of Acts and saw how those early Christians, full of the Holy Spirit, had gone out and performed the same miracles Jesus performed. How she longed for that same power in her life. It wasn't until she finally reached the last book of the Bible that she discovered how she could be forgiven of her sins and receive power for living.

Reading through the book of Revelation, she came upon the word of Jesus, an invitation she sensed was given just to her.

“Those whom I love, I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.”



She paused in her reading, letting the words sink in. Could it be that she was in prison not because she was a murderer, but because God loved her and was waiting for her to repent so that he could give her power for living?

She read on. “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will go in and eat with him, and he with me. to him overcomes, I'll give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father and his throne.”

(Revelation 3:19-21)

With tears streaming down her face, she slipped off cot in her lonely prison cell and knelt on the concrete floor. The Son of God was knocking at the door of her heart, asking to come in. Even though she was a murderer she was he was waiting for her to repent and ask his forgiveness. She opened the door of her heart and prayed a simple prayer. “Come in, Lord Jesus, take over my life.”

Susan Atkins is still in prison, but she is a free woman. She has been set free by the Son of God. She has found a new life right where she is, and she has received the power to live that life through Jesus Christ.

The Bible, to Susan Atkins, was more than an ancient book. it was, and is - The Book of Life.

## **MAKING THE BIBLE PART OF YOUR LIFE**

Suppose you are planning a trip. You carefully pack your suitcase, perhaps suspend your newspaper delivery, even get your car checked and gather your family to go with you. You attend every necessary detail except one: you never pick up a roadmap.

Because you're in a hurry to reach your destination, you jump in the car and start driving. Which direction do you go: North, east, south or west? Does it make any difference?

Since you feel you're headed the right way, you keep on driving. You are like the bus driver who after a day of hard driving turns to his passengers and says, “

Folks, I have good news and bad news.”

“The bad news is we're lost and I haven't the faintest idea where we are. The good news is we're making excellent time!”

A lot of people start out the Christian journey this way. They're so excited about their progress they get lost along the way. You're so intent on reaching their destination they ignore the basic steps they should take to get there. In other words, they ignore the fundamental instruction manual, the word of God, which has the principles by which we live and die.

In this chapter I want to give you some practical, helpful hints on Bible study, which will make the journey much easier.

## **WHERE DO YOU START?**

First, everything you need to know about powerful living is found in this book. In its pages are God's instructions and how to raise your family, how to treat your wife or husband, how you should eat, how you should worship... in short, everything you need to know about money, work, fear, pain, sex, and death. Any problem you can experience has its solution in the Bible.

Start by recognizing that even though the Bible is an entire library of 66 books, it is also one book. In Genesis you find the beginnings, in the Revelation you discover how it all winds up. And from Exodus the second book to do the next the last book you see how God carries out his purpose. You cannot dispense with any part of it.

The Old Testament is the foundation: the New Testament is the superstructure. The foundation is of no value unless the building is built upon it. The building is impossible unless there is a foundation, it makes no sense unless there is a superstructure. That's both the Old Testament and the New Testament of equal value.

The Bible is one book, one history, one story. His story. Behind every event stands God, the builder of history, the maker of the ages.

In its original version the books of the Bible were not divided into chapters and verses. Each book was written to be read from beginning to end. Good took great pains to give it to us as a progressive revelation of himself, and you should take great pains to read it from beginning to end. You'll never understand it if you simply open it at random and begin reading.

This does not mean, however, that particular verses or chapters will not become especially meaningful to you. History is filled with stories of men and women who simply open the Bible, and heard God speaking so profoundly it changed their lives. In the beginning, maybe too difficult to wade through long books and chapters. Versus and sections of versus, especially Psalms and Proverbs, will be meaningful to you regardless of the order in which you read them. This should never suffice, though, for earnest, systematic study of the Bible as a complete unity. Just as you would never dream of going to the library, checking out a book, and begin reading in the middle, you need to learn to view the Bible as one book.

## **A LOVE STORY**

The Bible is the greatest love story ever written. It is the story of God's love for mankind, especially you. It is not a book of verses such as you would find on greeting cards: it is a revelation. It must be read, digested, studied, questioned and revered from beginning to end. Don't divide it into short devotional paragraphs and think you can understand its message. Come to its pages with common sense, believe that every book is about something and read and reread until you find out what that book is about.

Since the Bible was inspired by the Holy Spirit, you need the Holy Spirit's power to help you understand it, to interpret it. That is one of the functions of the Holy Spirit, to help you understand the Bible. Therefore, before you begin any serious study of the Bible, ask the Holy Spirit to fill you. Only as he interprets it to you will it make any sense. Otherwise it will be nothing more than a great literature, interesting history, or a jumble of words in genealogies.

Are all the books of the Bible of equal importance? No, but all are indispensable. If you were to ask me if my brain is more important than my hand, I would tell you that my brain is more important. and my hand is important also, and I would have a difficult time without it.

So with the bible. Every book is necessary to make a perfect whole, but some portions are more precious than others. You can't take away the Book of Esther or the Song of Solomon and have a perfect revelation of God. Yet no one either says either of these two books is comparable with the book of John, or the book of Exodus. All are part of an organism that is and that organism is not complete if any part is missing.



## **THE A, B, C'S OF BIBLE READING**

How, then, should we begin reading? Why not begin reading the same way you would visit an art museum? Walk with your guy down through the long rows of pictures. What do you do? Well, for one thing you don't walk her with me. Nor do you carry on a conversation about the stock market or the World Series with a friend. You listen carefully to your guide as he passes in front of each picture. There he describes, not the picture, but the artist. He tells you who the artist was, what he was going through when he painted the picture, where he lived and what he was trying to express through his art. Then he talks about the various art forms. Some paintings are realistic, some are abstract. You need to understand the artist techniques and style, how we use composition, lights, the color, shadows and proportions. Then, finally, the guide will ask you to study the painting itself and see if it has a message for you as an individual.

That's the way you should study the bible.

## **BEGIN WITH THE AUTHOR**

Studying the Bible is much like learning to interpret art. First, you should know the author of each book. As a writer I have learned, for instance, that those who understand my books best are those who know me. The better you know me the better you understand what I have written.

That's the reason you need to start with the Holy Spirit when starting the Bible. The Holy Spirit worked through every writer of these books, revealing the nature of god.

Then you need to learn as much as you can about the human writers. Amos the prophet, for instance, wrote the book that carries his name. It is helpful to know that Amos was a farmer, a herdsman, that he lived in a time when the Kingdom of Israel was divided into two nations, a southern and a northern kingdom, much like the United States was divided during the Civil war. Amos lived in the southern Kingdom called Judah. When he prophesied against the Northern kingdom he got a lot of “amens!” from his Southern audience. But when he began pointing out the sins of Judah, they ran him out of town.

Knowing this background helps in understanding the content of the book.

Take another case. It is helpful to know that the same man who wrote the Gospel of Luke also wrote the book of acts. His name was Luke. He was a physician turned biographer. Not only did he write one of the four biographies of Jesus found in the book of the New Testament, but he later traveled with the Apostle Paul and wrote the history of the early church, actually the biography of Paul in the book called Acts. When you discover that Luke was a medical doctor, you can understand why he uses certain language, he's close attention to detail, there are many references to physical healings and miracles.

Each writer of the bible, from Moses to the Apostle John, used a different style. But each was inspired by the Holy Spirit and all he wrote was to and without air. No one writer had a full picture of God, but when their writings were put together you see God in all his glory, in his entirety.

## **SELECT A GOOD VERSION OF THE BIBLE**

There are many different versions of the Bible on today's market. Owning a Bible which is easy to read is important for the beginning reader. For years all we had to read was the Bible authorized by King James of England in 1611. It is a magnificent book with flowing poetic language which has blessed millions of people across the years. But in the 20th and 21st century, it is difficult to understand. It is full of these and those and uses many words which are no longer popular.

Most of the scripture used in this book is from The New International Version, which is my favorite. It is easy to read and correctly translated from the original languages. Another book that is very popular is the ESV the English Standard Version.

Others prefer to start with one of the translations in Modern English called the New Living Translation the NLT. It is extremely easy to read when used alongside one of the other newer translations, it makes the Bible reason easy and exciting

### **READ FOR THE BIG PICTURE**

A good practice is to train yourself to read the Bible one book at a time. The first time you read a book in the Bible, try to get an overall feel for what the book says. This is the skyscraper view. Don't worry about details, try to get a panoramic sweep. It's like climbing into a tree to see everything from above.

Start, for instance, with the Book of Mark. Mark is easy to read. It is an action book about the life of Jesus, full of stories without too much difficult teaching.

Or you may want to start with Genesis. It's the same kind of book, filled with wonderful history. You probably won't read Genesis all at one sitting, but you can read it by sections. I like to read Genesis as a book of people's lives. That is, I like to see it as a book of biographies of men like myself. so I read about Adam and Eve. Then about Noah. There's a long section about Abraham. Another about Isaac. And finally those thrilling stories about Jacob, who was a man so much like I am. When you view Genesis as a book of stories about people, it is not only easy but exciting to read.

Do not start in the middle of the Bible with books like Daniel or Isaiah. They simply won't make sense until you begin to get the big picture.

## **READ FOR DETAILS**

Don't stop with first impressions. Now that you are looking at the Bible from the top of a skyscraper, move on down and get a sidewalk perspective as well. At this point it helps to begin to follow some steps.

1. Start by reading a book a week. This is not as difficult as it sounds. The longest book of the Bible can be read by spending less than 1 hour a day. Simply divide the book into seven equal parts, set apart a special time each day to read, and establish a habit of Bible reading.
2. Use a notebook. Don't just read. Make notes as you do. Underline passages in your Bible that seem significant to you and make notes in your notebook about any questions you may have, or any ideas the Holy Spirit may give you as you read.



I often use my notebook during Bible reading as I do when I pray. I make notes on what God is saying to me. After all, that's why we should be reading the Bible. It is more than God's Word. It is God's word to me. Well, if God is speaking to me I'd better take notes on what he is saying. So I nearly always read the Bible with an open notebook - pen ready to jot down God's personal message to me.

Perhaps the most meaningful Bible I have is the one my father used immediately after receiving Jesus Christ as his personal Savior and Lord at the age of 62. My father had always been a good man, an active member of the church. but it wasn't until he went through a deep, personal trauma that he surrendered his life to Jesus christ. Immediately he began an intense study of the Bible. He wanted to know what God was saying to him. He began by using a modern translation. Not only did he read, but he underlined using different colors for different emphasis, and he made many notes in the margins of the Bible. it is these notes, along with his explanation points, and stars which helped guide me through my own initial Bible study three years later when I, too, received Jesus Christ as My Savior and Lord.

Writing does something for the mind. Simply putting thoughts on paper helps record them in your brain. I love to see people taking notes in church for future reference. I recommend you make notes directly on the pages of your bible. When that Bible is full, go to another.

You might also want to record your personal paraphrase of the passage you're studying. How does it translate into your life? Writing the scripture in your own words. you'll be astonished at the results. It will make you study aspects of the verse of which you weren't aware. Also, it would help you remember what the passage says.

1. Read devotionally. I recommend you read the Bible seriously, as you would study a book. But in order to get most out of the Christian life you should read it devotionally, believing God will give you hidden nuggets of gold as you dip your hand into its stream.

Let me give you an example of this in my life several years ago.

One day I was alone in our little cabin in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina. It was just a few weeks after my father had died. I'd come to the cabin without my wife or children to work my way through my grief. One afternoon sitting in an old rocking chair on the front porch, looking out at the brilliant Autumn color sprinkled across the mountains, I opened my bible to the 23rd psalm, an old favorite. I read through it casually, but my eye stopped and rested on verse 4: they rod and they staffed they comfort me.



A long, straight asphalt road stretches from the foreground into the distance, leading the eye towards a bright sun on the horizon. The sun is low in the sky, creating a warm, golden glow that illuminates the clouds and the road. The road is flanked by green fields and some trees, particularly on the left side. The overall scene is peaceful and evokes a sense of journey and direction.

*Let your eyes look straight ahead, fix your gaze  
directly before you. Make level paths for your feet  
and take only ways that are firm. do not swerve to  
the right or to the left, keep your foot from evil.  
Proverbs 4:25-27*



The property where a mountain cabin is located had been developed by my father over the last 40 years. He had land cleared, had a stone Mason come in and build the rock wall beside the driveway, and then worked with our old friend and neighbor Raymond Cox, to build the cabins. He loved this place and would come up during the hot summer months to escape the Florida heat. He also loved to come up in the autumn, sit on this porch, rock in this chair, and enjoy the beautiful colors of nature. Everywhere I looked I saw my father's signature on the property.

I glanced up from my Bible, blinking back the tears of grace, and saw, standing in the corner of the porch, my father's favorite walking stick. He had carved it out of a crooked rhododendrum branch. Although it looked much like an Irish shillelagh, I saw it as something far more. I could still hear my father that day when I was a sophisticated sophomore in college, still far from the lord. Daddy, who had surrendered his life to Jesus Christ the summer before, had finished carving and sanding on the walking stick. holding it up for me to see, he grinned and said, "From this time on, every time you see this old stick, you will be reminded that it is God's rod and God's staff which brings you comfort."

Suddenly the grief was gone. In its place was the Presence of God.

Read devotionally, and let God meet you at your place of greatest need, perhaps through a simple verse in a small reminder at your elbow.

1. Ask questions. The Bible is not so sacred that it cannot stand honest examination. Ask when a thing took place. Ask why it was included in the Bible. Ask where it happened. Ask who was writing, who it was written about and to whom it was written. Ask what it meant at that time and what it should mean to you. Don't be frustrated if your study raises more questions than you can answer. You are dipping into a great will of spiritual knowledge that has no limits but will quench all thirst.
2. Respond. Bible study is not an end. It is the means to an end. Many people have studied, even memorize the Bible, but have not responded personally to its call on their lives. The reason we study the Bible is so that we can discover God's will for our lives, and apply it. Your study will uncover many things God wants you to do. But unless you respond, all your Bible study will be meaningless.

I once read of a mule standing exactly between two identical haystacks. He was extremely hungry, but the poor animal stood there and starved to death because it never could make up its mind from which stack to eat.



Often we find ourselves in the same place as that mule. We read the Bible and in it we find God's will for our lives. But since that will usually is in conflict with something else going on in our lives, we simply stand still where we are... and starve to death.

The Swedish nightingale, Jenny Lind, whose real name was Goldschmidt, won great success as an opera singer. She was at that one time the richest and most famous singer in the world. Then one day, at the height of her fabulous career, she left the stage and never returned, choosing to live in privacy.

One day an English friend found her sitting on the steps of a small beach cottage watching a magnificent sunset over the ocean. On her knee was an open Bible. They talked and eventually the English woman asked an inevitable question. "Madam Goldschmidt, how is it that you came to abandon the stage at the very height of your success?"

The famous singer answered quietly. When every day it made me think less of this, she said, laying her hand on the bible, and nothing at all of that and she pointed to the sunset, what else could I do?

Jenny Lynn did more than read her Bible. she responded to his call on her life as well.

1. Memorize your Bible. Nothing will make the Bible a part of you as much as memorizing verses. “I have hidden your word in my heart,” the Bible said, “that I might not sin against you.” (Psalm 119:11.) Remembering that Jesus Christ is the word, and that it is his presence that keeps us from sinning against God, nevertheless memorizing scripture and hiding it in our hearts keeps the presence of God fresh.

Prisoners of War North Vietnam brought back stories of how they had pieced together all the verses of scripture they had memorized to form a partial Bible. It was these verses which helped some of them make it through those horrible years of imprisonment.

My mother and father established a pattern of Bible memorization which they carried on for years, committing one verse a week to memory. I know others who memorize a verse a day. Some people choose to memorize entire chapters at a time. A friend keeps Bible verses, written on little cards, above the sun visor of his car. When he is waiting for a traffic light, he flips down the sun visor and works on his Bible memorization. I have another friend, a jungle pilot who flies missionaries over the vast expanses of the Amazon jungle in small airplanes. He studies his scripture card as he flies. A famous bible teacher testifies that memorizing portions of the Bible was the secret to his overcoming and incurable learning disability. Another says memorizing passages from the Bible helps him overcome stuttering.

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path,” David said in Psalm 119:105. Hide it in your heart and it will bring inner light as well.

1. Use Bible helps. There are a number of good books which will help you study the bible. Keep in mind that no book about the Bible is as good as the Bible itself, but the use of study AIDS will make things easier. Here are some books which will help you.
2. Concordance. A concordance is a book that lists all the words of the Bible and all the places that word is used. For instance, let's say you remember there is a verse of scripture somewhere in the Bible that talks about the 'valley of the shadow of death.' Go to your concordance and look up the word 'valley' or the word 'death' just as you would look up a word in the dictionary. You will then find several scripture references after each one. With 'valley' you'll find a number of references. One reference in the Bible talks about a 'valley of dry bones' in Ezekiel 37:1 common or about a 'valley of decision' in Joel 3:14, and about the "lily of the valley" in Song of Solomon 2:1. But if you keep checking, you'll find a reference to the 'valley of the shadow of death' in psalm 23:4.

I recommend you start with a simple English Concordance available online to help you trace words in the Bible.

1. Bible dictionary. A Bible dictionary is a cross between the dictionary and a one-volume encyclopedia period; it is a collection of articles explaining places, people and other subjects of the bible. One of the best is the New Bible Dictionary.
2. Commentaries. A commentary is a running explanation of the Bible chapter by chapter sometimes verse by verse. It explains what the text is about; commentaries come in many volume sets with comprehensive explanations of each verse of scripture. There are the more simple one volume commentaries available. A fine one volume commentary is the New Bible Commentary.
3. Bible aids. There are a number of books about the bible. I recommend you visit an online bookstore and ask whatever questions you may have. You'll be amazed at the vast collection of books and resources available online on many websites. Bible atlases, maps and study guides available online. They may also recommend a good viable correspondence course which you can enroll in as a more serious Bible student. Going online and asking for questions will bring up a great many resources. Discernment is important however.

The final word is important. While it is good to read the Bible alone and at quiet time, it is exciting to study it as part of a group. There are thousands, indeed tens of thousands, of Bible study groups around the nation. Many of these are part of Bible believing churches. many are available online. Becoming part of a Bible study as a member of a group allows you to have access to what the Holy Spirit is teaching others. Some of these resources are available on this website:[www.GodsView.com/faithtools](http://www.GodsView.com/faithtools).

Being part of a group will also help you keep from developing wrong interpretations.

Therefore, even though I recommend private Bible study as a part of your daily life, I hope you will find a small group of people, either a Bible study group which meets some evening of the week or perhaps a Sunday school class in a nearby church, and begin studying together with others who are also eager to learn more about the Bible.

Above all, I hope you remember that it is not the Bible but the author of The Bible with whom you need to have fellowship. It is said that Gainsborough, the artist, longed to be also a musician. He bought musical instruments of many kinds and tried to play them. Once when he heard of a great violinist who played beautiful music on his instrument, Gainsborough bought the violin on which the master played so beautifully. Surely, he thought, if I have that wonderful instrument I will be able to play too. But he soon learned that the music was not in the violin, it was in the violinist.

There is an old story of two men who were called on in a large classroom, to recite the 23rd Psalm. One was a published orator trained in speech technique and drama. He repeated the psalm in a powerful way. When he finished, the audience cheered and even asked for an encore so that they might hear his wonderful voice again.

Then the other man, who was much older, repeated the same words, “The Lord is my shepherd: I shall not want.” When he finished, no sound came from the large class. Instead, the people sat in a deep mood of devotion and prayer.

Then the first man, the orator, stood to his feet. “I have a confession to make,” he said. “The difference between what you have just heard from my old friend, and what you've heard from me is this: I know the psalm, my friend knows the Shepherd.”

That, my friend, is power for living.



## **SUMMING IT UP**

The driveway from my house is dirt. Actually it is a combination of sand and clay we call “marl” in Florida. It winds through the tall pine trees in front of our house and emerges on a country road, which is also “marl.”. However, if you turn left you will soon hit the pavement. The road continues for a mile and connects with another paved road which in turn takes you out to I-95. Once on I-95 you can drive all the way to the state of Maine on a limited access, four-lane or more highway.

If I pull out of my driveway and head down my “marl” driveway I can honestly say I'm on the way to Maine. That does not mean I have arrived at my destination. Nor does it mean I'll get there before anyone else. But though I am still a long way off, and far behind, I can still say that I'm on the way.

If I drive into the ditch which borders the county road in front of my house, and get someone to pull me out, I can still say I'm on the way.

However, if I stay in the ditch, or if I turn right when I hit the country road rather than left, then I cannot only say I'm on the way. Only as long as I'm moving in the right direction am I on the way.

As a Christian you have not arrived at perfection. There's only been one man to live the perfect life, only one man who was totally filled with the Spirit. A Christian, however, is the one who has determined that the direction of his life will be toward Jesus Christ coming out away from him. as long as you have your face towards Jesus, no matter how far behind you are, no matter if your tires are flat, no matter if you stay in the ditch more than on the highway, you are still on the way.

If you have gotten this far in the book, then that is a good indication you're a good piece down the road, and much closer to your destination than when you started. You may not feel any closer. In fact, a lot of things may be going wrong in your life right now. That doesn't make any difference: if you have given your life to Jesus Christ and have allowed the Holy Spirit to fill you, you are headed rightly no matter how imperceptible the progress.

There are some closing thoughts I want to leave with you.

In the first place, the Christian life is not free from temptation. don't be fooled into thinking that if you were more like Jesus you wouldn't be tempted. Jesus was perfect and was tempted in the same way we are. In *Pilgrim's Progress*, John Bunyan points out that even at the Gate of Heaven there is a pathway leading to hell. In other words, no one on this side of glory ever reaches the point where he cannot make a wrong turn.

Also I'd like to remind you the Christian life is never free from mistakes. The best of us spend a lot of time in the ditches of life. But as Charles Allen once pointed out, the difference between a sheep and a pig is this: when a sheep falls in a mud hole, it bleats to get out. when the pig falls in, he just lies there and wallows.

As one who has been in the road for a long time on the road, I spend a lot of time pulling over to the side and saying to friends and strangers who are in a ditch, though you have fallen, you can still get up and start again.

That's the reason we have a Savior, to save us from our sin.

A Christian is one who is determined that the way of Christ is the best way and he has committed fully himself to that way.

In the front of my Bible I have pinned a reminder to myself. it says simply

“I cannot turn back, for I've entered into an irrevocable contract with god. I have committed my life to Jesus Christ and he has given me eternal life.”

I invite you, if you have not already done so, to join me on the road to God with Jesus christ. Power for Living is yours when you come to Christ. I urge you to do it now.

(Jamie Buckingham, author of Power for Living)





Arranged by Matt Ryan  
Visit us at [www.GodsView.info](http://www.GodsView.info)  
or email at [discover@godsview.info](mailto:discover@godsview.info)