

Peace

in a

*Fallen
World*



Regain Eternal Trust in a Loving God

by

*Dawn
Dyson*

Peace in a Fallen World: How to Regain Eternal Trust in a Loving God

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INTRODUCTION

The Struggle is Real

If you are like most people, the struggle with anxiety and insecurity is real. Feelings of uncertainty, regret, depression, and dread come against the best of us. What may be surprising is that these emotions particularly come against Christians! This is because they are a weapon of spiritual warfare used by Satan to infect our emotions and ultimately produce doubt in God's ability to come through! Fear and disturbance—one issue after another—are designed to create distance between ourselves and a loving God. Don't fall for the bait!

There is POWER in PEACE

Christians are expressly told in the Word multiple times to "Fear not." If we look closely at fear, worry, anxiety, torment and the like, what all these hurtful and distracting emotions have in common is a lack of true Christ-centered PEACE. All of these fear-based emotions are NEGATIVE. They can lead to spiritual paralysis, where we are stricken with indecision, afraid of God, and cynical in our faith. In short, they are poison to the Christian soul.

In stark contrast, the Fruit of the Holy Spirit of God are all POSITIVE (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, meekness and self-control...). These qualities produce life. They are active, operative and full of "go"—or good energy! Remember:

Negative thoughts keep us focusing on the storms of life,
while positive thoughts keep us focusing on Jesus.

In John 14:27, Jesus tells us that He has left us His very own peace as the antidote for the damaging feelings we experience during times of trouble, or aloneness, or uncertainty about our future or relationships.

In this Bible Study, we will meet together with the spirit to encourage one another in overcoming the all-to-common tactics of the enemy to get believers catering to fears instead of receiving the ultimate peace Christ Jesus left us to enjoy.

Did you know you can be at complete peace
even in the midst of your most serious problem?

You can because you have Jesus Who has overcome the fallen world.

In this short book, you will experience an in-depth teaching designed to get this concept of Christ's peace really rooted in your heart, mind and soul. Allow the constant soul-state of Christ Himself (the Prince of Peace) to become more influential in your life than any negative emotion the enemy can throw against you. You'll be glad you did. Consider living in Peace a gift from God—because it is.

CHAPTER ONE: PEACE AND PRAYER

And the cares of this world...choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful (Mark 4:19, KJV).

The basis of joy is peace. Like the stem of a rose, peace is the pipeline of support that allows us to blossom as human beings. Jesus says:

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives.
Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid (John 14:27, NIV).

If you are troubled, worried, fearful, agitated...the antidote is Jesus' gift of PEACE to His believers. Prioritize His PEACE by receiving this perpetual gift from Him and your cares will fade as the unimportant hoaxes they are.

Counterintuitive to the world's method of thinking and striving, the easiest way to frame a peaceful mindset is "don't care about your problems."

What!?

It's not biblical.

Why not!?

Because we have prayer.

The fallen world CONDITIONS us to think and live in absolute error, contrarily to Biblical truth. Imagine what your day would be like if instead of the media piping chaos into your feed, this were replaced with Scripture—20-30 mini-blasts of the Word crossing your screen throughout the day. Instead of the mantra: "What are you going to do about it?" and the feelings of panic, sadness, or outrage, you would have God's mantra: "Don't worry about it; I will take care of the world for you" with feelings of security, safety, belonging and absolute calm. The latter is the gift of peace Jesus is talking about in John 14:27. Our proper response as believers is to accept Jesus' gift and intentionally minimize the distractions of this age.

In short, you can have problems OR you can have prayer. You get to choose what you want to focus on, think about, entertain, and Who to rely upon. To *cast your care* means to roll your load on God, which *is* biblical! Again, *worry is not* biblical. Though it may be an impulse, it is not to be *our choice*. In other words, anxiety and fear may attack us, but we get to hand that right over to Christ. And, not just once, but each and every time for our entire lifetime.

Think about what YOU, as a believer in Jesus Christ, have been given:

- YOU have a God Who cares, listens, and is active and alive.
- YOU have a God Who walks with YOU always.
- YOU have a God Who talks to YOU because He believes YOU are that important.
- YOU have an all-powerful, all-present, all-knowing God Whose role is to fight YOUR battles for YOU because He wants to impress YOU. Do you realize that GOD of the Universe cannot lose?

Compassion for others, **correction** when we have sinned—these are the correct responses for the believer because they bring us to LIFE. Uplifted countenance, closeness to God, is the result of these responses. However, **excessive concern** that drains our energy and leads to sadness (i.e., anxiety, worry, frustration, defeat, depression) is a sign that we have gone too far into the “cares of this world” (Mark 4:19). Like a pit of tar, we are sinking in the world’s sin and complication because we have not utilized prayer to God’s full intention.

PRAYER ISN’T FINISHED UNTIL GOD’s HAND PULLS YOU UP OUT OF THAT PIT

Anxiety, worry, frustration, defeat, or depression is the state that the unsaved have. It tends to panic and insecurity as a person, because those who do not have Christ only have their own abilities to rely upon. They live in perpetual distance from God. However, believers have the luxury of rolling their cares, their load, onto a very close in proximity God. Jesus built quite a bridge. It is the only bridge...

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

God, through prayer and belief in Jesus Christ, literally takes all of your problems off your hands and off your mind. He WANTS TO do this.

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

The value of Jesus Christ is indescribable in our walk with God. Because of Jesus Christ, we do not have to be afraid of the world. We do not have to be afraid of the devil, of evil. We do not have to be afraid of God, either. Because we have Jesus, we do not have to be afraid of anything.

Make this declaration with me today:

I will not live in fear.

I will live in Christ!

CHAPTER TWO: TRUE NORTH

Other people think it is a bother when we vent, an inconvenience, co-dependance—they cannot handle our problems because they were never designed to carry that weight. We cannot handle trouble ourselves, likewise, because we were never designed to!

Do we think we serve an unintelligent God? He is, rest assured, absolute brilliance and genius to infinity. He designed us to be weak in self-sufficiency, weak in human relationships, weak in self-operative finance, weak in physical healing, so we would depend fully upon Him and Him alone. He really thought this out and this is how He DECIDED to make us—fully dependent upon Him.

You are no bother to God!

Think about it. Our weakness, our times of being “in over our head” have one victorious result: *Cry out to God*. Here, use your tiny energies for one solid thing: *Heal that Relationship*. Praise Him in advance for getting your attention. Remember, with Him it is impossible for you to lose because God *never* loses.

Yourself, and other people, are not sources of dependence. Rather, they are something to love. Love yourself; love other people (Mark 12:31). Owe no man anything but to love them (Romans 13:8). That’s it. That is the *full* expectation for self and others.

Our only source of dependence is God. He is the only One Who can handle anything we can throw at Him and handle it for our good. He alone never lets us down. If we are let down by God, we are deceived. Repentance and clarity are available through Christ.

Here is the simple formula for success:

Depend on God 100%.

There is no other formula for living successfully.

By our very nature, the very WAY GOD CREATED US, we need Him to unburden us ON A REGULAR BASIS or we get buried in our own problems—this is never good. It does not matter how smart, independent, wealthy, gifted, or lucky we are. Life’s ebbs and flows are designed (on occasion at least) to overwhelm us in order to bring us back into full reliance upon God to save us from our troubles.

Sin comes from Satan, not God. But God intervenes to save, and also uses the experience to teach us about Himself and to help us make the right choices.

I remember a period of time, not so long ago, when it felt like the world was spinning like a compass with no true north. Everywhere I looked, I did not recognize anything, including myself. It was like a ship lost at sea with no bearings. I was at God's mercy, which was right where I needed to be. There, I came to myself and God sent me an epiphany. Instead of following the world's way and self-promoting and advancing myself to number one, so no one could hurt me, so I could make what I needed to make financially, on and on..., God brought this idea to my awareness: *I could dedicate myself to helping others succeed* in their dreams, goals and endeavors. I could allow God to use the gifts He gave me to make others successful or to improve their lives in some way, great or small. Once that switch was flipped, it was smooth sailing again and I was on course with God. PEACE! It was like the sunrays streamed and rolled through the clouds and lit the surface of the deep with diamonds of acceptance, simplicity and grace. God's smile. God's hand to guide me.

Somehow, Satan has spread the weed-seed in our thoughts that we are being irresponsible if we neglect our troubles. I mean shouldn't I worry about money? I have bills to pay! I'd like to correct that erroneous thinking, and all those excuses that set themselves contrary to the faith, and say that we are being the MOST RESPONSIBLE a believer can be when we GIVE THOSE EXACT PROBLEMS intentionally and directly to GOD to handle ON OUR BEHALF.

God does not just handle the spiritual things.

He handles everything.

Chronic, debilitating worry is not "being responsible;" rather, it is all out disobedience. It is as serious as sin can get. Worry, uncovered, is ugly, defiance against dependence upon God. Worry, when scaled back, is pride. Worry, unchecked and uncorrected, can grow, multiply and lead us into all mannerisms of self-sufficiency, rebellion, and doubt. Worry can cause us to make impulsive decisions that we know are not wise. Worry needs to be repented of and never picked up again.

Look closely at what Jesus told His disciples (saved followers who loved Jesus and believed He came from God, v. 27):

I have told you these things so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world (John 16:33, NIV).

Another translation says:

I have told you these things, so that you should not be offended (taken unawares and falter, or be caused to stumble and fall away). [I told you to keep you from being scandalized and repelled] (v. 1).

I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have [perfect] peace and confidence. In the world you have tribulation and trials and distress and frustration; but be of good cheer [take courage; be confident, certain, undaunted]! For I have overcome the world. [I have deprived it of power to harm you and have conquered it for you] (John 16:33, AMPC).

“I have told you...”

We perfectionists are driven to frustration when our circumstances do not cooperate with us, but above the only term coined with perfection is PEACE. Perfect peace. Our peace is perfect because it comes from Christ. He is our confidence in this place of constant change.

Look once again at John 16:33 above. Having trouble DOES NOT MEAN GOD IS ANGRY WITH YOU OR DISAPPOINTED IN YOU. Trouble is not God’s way of punishing you. It is His way of purifying and promoting you.

If you need Peace, ask God for it!

Ask for more of Jesus!

Ask for a renewed anointing of the Holy Spirit!

Receive it!

Sometimes, we’d like to stay stagnant and keep life uncomplicated, but God adds “fertilizer” (unpleasantness) to our ground (circumstances) to cultivate something better in the new season. He adds the extreme cold and the extreme heat in order to produce His fruit of the Holy Spirit in us in a way that feeds His sheep. Even during these stages of tending, you can have complete peace during times of change, or times of dormancy, when you see yourself central to God’s plan. He has not forgotten about you anymore than you would forget a garden you tended and relied upon for your daily food.

Somehow, Christians have come to think that grace means no earthly trouble, but a good look at what Jesus says in John 16:33 above corrects us and shows us that the actual grace is *His love* shining upon us through any circumstance, trouble, issue, embarrassment, shock, or uncertainty. The actual gift from God is faith, belief, and trust that He loves us. The real reality is that we will see all sorts of odd things in the fallen world that we never expected—we will suffer being misunderstood, neglected, dismissed, and ill-used—but you and I can still be full of cheer and have complete confidence because our Lord has already preconceived a solution to every situation we may face. He is our true north in a world that seems to be spinning out of control. This sailing the seas of change or walking

through the peaks and valleys of life is God's way of using us and guiding us, but also showing us that He always cares for us. Plain and simple.

You are not a failure for facing troubles.

God calls this success as a chosen disciple of Jesus Christ
so stay with the only One Who can help you and promote you.

CHAPTER THREE: ROOM FOR ONE

God takes care of you and He does a good enough job of it. Be thankful! Many people are not believers—think of the darkness and hopelessness they suffer. Christians have no need! We have an eternal God Who has secured Heaven for us through His Son.

God designed you to thrive when you respect your limit that you were created to only have room in your hands, heart, mind and soul for One (see Mark 12:30), the best thing (see Luke 10:42). It is a design that is very easy on us.

Let go of your problems.

Take hold of Christ.

If you are going to cling to something, cling to Christ Jesus and His Word. You can cling your worrisome thoughts all day long and end up empty, or you can cling to Jesus and be full to overflowing. You don't even need to understand what the solution is, He will just bring it. Your solution may not have any explanation whatsoever.

All I care to know is Jesus, because that is more than enough.

It is everything.

Won't you join me?

It is peaceful over here.

Compassion *mixed with worry* is nowhere near the same spirit or result as peace. Peace is pure, and peace is power—the *absolute* calm in any storm. Jesus says...

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives.
Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid (John 14:27, NIV).

This passage has a stout, unscalable wall in the middle of it; an impenetrable shield. Jesus is standing in the gap between Heaven and Hell saying, “I can give you peace on this side, on My side. You don't have to experience the world of sin or the trouble or fear it brings.” Do you see this? It's all about choice and Who you are with. In other passages, Jesus says we are either for Him or against Him (Matthew 12:30), either cold or hot (Revelation 3:16). Worry is siding with the enemy of Jesus Christ!

Worry—even when *mixed with good intentions*—is designed to weaken our faith, because we stare at our circumstances and ceaselessly wear ourselves out trying to fix what only God can fix.

Your borders are peace; keep your mind inside of them. Jesus is the Prince of Peace, the Expert and Source of it. Let's think along with Him and remain in pleasant places...

*What did you come out to **see** (Matthew 11:7)?*

*Be it unto you as you have **believed** (Matthew 8:13).*

These words are not just for young people, or new believers. They are for seasoned disciples called into ministry, people facing impossible, insurmountable things—late on.

As a Christian, you are wrapped in PEACE,

but you are also fighting in a full-fledged WAR.

It is the nature of us humans to desire to fashion our circumstances like clay—and we get frustrated when we realize our powerlessness to help ourselves. Particularly, once perfect, once rich, once famous and established, once fully healed, *then* we will have time for God again. Then, and only then, will we feel unafraid of Him. This is not accurate. God does not shun us in our weakness, but delights in showing out His strength through them.

If only we had the ability to change our own circumstances. If only we were...good enough, smart enough, wanted enough... But when we find ourselves lacking (which of course we are apart from God!) we then start in with rejection, defeat, depression—all words that describe one thing: Satan's lies.

This line of reasoning of “if-only self-help” is Satan's carrot in front of a horse he is disrespecting, diverting from its born inclination of nobility, and working into the ground.

Stop.

The truth is God owns you, yes, but He also values you above everything—enough to send His ONE AND ONLY SON to die and suffer in your place. So our actual truth in action is this: drop all your cares at His feet. He is ready to swoop them up and defeat ALL giants on your behalf. Heaven and earth cannot stop Him.

God cares so deeply about you, He is intimately acquainted with your age, your current place on earth, your current internal and external condition, and your measure of freedom.

Do you know that God wants you to have it all? All the good things are reserved especially for YOU by God Himself Who created them for you.

What you actually and truly are...

You are not a grasshopper so eliminate this from your self-reflection. You are a Royal in God's army. You are a holy force with a holy purpose with colossal and immense backing.

That “perfect, rich, established” elusive façade gets in the way of the spiritual and powerful march you are on. God will move you, push you, press you, bump you to the side. Why? To keep you preserved and fighting on and useful in your royal heritage as a fighter, a warrior, on behalf of the Kingdom of God.

Temptations that come from the enemy’s lies are overrated diversions that cause stumbling and faltering and wandering confusions.

Like an addiction, God eventually weans us off human-imposed demands and self-accomplishment or people pleasing until we barely pay attention to worldly defined benchmarks to “success” anymore. We only look to Him as our Source and our Commander in Chief.

Once we have Jesus and Jesus has us,
there is no other measure of success to attain.
He will cause us to be our best.

We are the clay that God is fashioning. Once we decide Who is in control and leave it that way, we experience an unusually high measure of contentment, peace and trust...rest, even. It is going to be alright, we think. And we release a breath we did not know we were holding. So, breathe...

Jesus is your One and Only.

He is with you right now.

CHAPTER FOUR: WE NEED A NAP

The roller coaster of life can be exhausting and exhilarating, both. Miracles are wild sometimes—a doctor who is absolutely stumped by our illness, and even more so by our recovery; a child we thought would always be drinking or into drugs shows up 20 years later with a Bible in hand and clear eyes to tell you thank you for praying all those times. We cry and laugh at the same time. These are the notable encounters, but really, all of life is a miracle if we look at it clearly.

We are on a rotating planet spinning in mid-air, tipped at just the right angle from the sun. Food multiplies out of dead, buried seeds. We have a heartbeat that just keeps ticking and all we plug into to charge is God.

We are miracles from the moment we are conceived, and even far earlier when we were conceived in God's mind and chosen to be born for such a time as this (Esther 4:14).

Throughout our lives, reliance upon miracles that only God can perform is a requirement for survival. This is what Christ considers faith.

Think about it... We are placed in some precarious positions on earth, like Esther before the king; Daniel before the lions; Joseph before his brothers...all of them before the Angels of God. Uncomfortable. Nerve-racking. Stressful. Invisible, then very visible. So, if we perish, we perish, but let us be doing so in the miracles of God from the time we are born until the time we see His face (Esther 4:16). Just driving in traffic and arriving safely at our destination is a miracle!

Whatever you are faced with, whatever comes, as a Christian you are fully prepared. That said, we have to be brave here even though we are delicate, intricate mysteries unto ourselves. Think clearly about the bravery God instills in us and expects us to exhibit!

Then I saw a new sky (heaven) and a new earth, for the former sky and the former earth had passed away (vanished), and there no longer existed any sea. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, all arrayed like a bride beautified and adorned for her husband; Then I heard a mighty voice from the throne and I perceived its distinct words, saying, See! The abode of God is with men, and He will live (encamp, tent) among them; and they shall be His people, and God shall personally be with them and be their God.

God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more, neither shall there be anguish (sorrow and mourning) nor grief nor pain any more, for the old

conditions and the former order of things have passed away. And He Who is seated on the throne said, See! I make all things new. Also He said, Record this, for these sayings are faithful (accurate, incorruptible, and trustworthy) and true (genuine).

And He [further] said to me, It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I [Myself] will give water without price from the fountain (springs) of the water of Life. He who is victorious shall inherit all these things, and I will be God to him and he shall be My son.

But as for the cowards and the ignoble and the contemptible and the cravenly lacking in courage and the cowardly submissive, and as for the unbelieving and faithless, and as for the depraved and defiled with abominations, and as for murderers and the lewd and adulterous and the practitioners of magic arts and the idolaters (those who give supreme devotion to anyone or anything other than God) and all liars (those who knowingly convey untruth by word or deed)—[all of these shall have] their part in the lake that blazes with fire and brimstone. This is the second death (Revelation 21:1-8, AMPC).

The only way to survive God's miracles is to depend fully on Him all the way through and expect Him to do outlandish things from the front end.

Death is difficult. Life is beautiful.

Miracles occur when God transitions us from death to life.

You are a miracle.

This means, you are becoming beautiful, too.

He will transition you.

Butterflies completely transform. They are entirely made brand new. And, I believe, they are placed on the earth as God's metaphor for what He does with each one of us, spiritually. We need to embrace God's transformative power and methods that we do not always understand if we want to fly.

Yet you, Lord, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand (Isaiah 64:8, NIV).

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well (Psalm 139:14, NIV).

Miracles can be outlandish things we never thought in a million years would happen. Yet, we are to rest in them like in God's palm as He moves us to the other side of some

mysterious event (see Mark 4:35-41, AMPC). We are to trust God—no matter what, like that butterfly inside the cocoon, waiting, with no wings yet.

God enjoys impressing us with His majesty—He will show out and show off. One of my Pastors stated, “God will blow your mind!” And this is where we get the impulsiveness of Peter and the restless works of Martha—we ring our hands and wonder, “What is God up to?” But I prefer the leaning of John on Jesus’ chest (the disciple whom Jesus loves) and the sitting of Mary at Jesus’ feet (the “better portion” choice). This can be entirely counterintuitive when our whole world seems on fire, but nevertheless it is our right as believers to rest and just let the miracles happen.

So many successful, well-known people say they were scared, confused and absolutely clueless when major changes happened in their lives. This is normal, and not one of them stayed in this state. Rather, these times of uncertainty became the very context through which they were promoted to what worked well for them. We call these amazing people “risk-takers” but there is a good and biblical chance that, if they would have been asked ahead of the event, they all would have said, “No way; I’m not going through that.” God likely strings a cocoon together with ambiguity, because if it made perfect sense, the caterpillar would never agree to enter. Nor would we.

Several Old Testament passages point to this paradoxical push toward destiny and give us strong suggestions on how to keep our heads: we do not instruct God (Job 21:22); His thoughts and ways are above ours (Isaiah 55:8-9); we do not concern ourselves with matters too great for us (spoken by a king!) (Psalm 131:1). Stay humble.

In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit through the inspired Word of God comforts and assures us that we have been given the mind of Christ:

For who has known or understood the mind (the counsels and purposes) of the Lord so as to guide and instruct Him and give Him knowledge? But we have the mind of Christ (the Messiah) and do hold the thoughts (feelings and purposes) of His heart (1 Corinthians 2:16, AMPC).

Stay hopeful. No matter what is happening in your world, stay calm. Let Him handle it. God knows what He is doing.

In Mark 4:35-41 (AMPC), Jesus perfectly illustrates His recommendation for how to react during the illustrious acts of God. He literally shows us what to do in life-threatening situations and it is extremely counterintuitive:

On that same day [when] evening had come, He said to them, Let us go over to the other side [of the lake]. And leaving the throng, they took Him with them, [just] as He

was, in the boat [in which He was sitting]. And other boats were with Him. And a furious storm of wind [of hurricane proportions] arose, and the waves kept beating into the boat, so that it was already becoming filled.

But He [Himself] was in the stern [of the boat], **asleep** on the [leather] cushion; and they awoke Him and said to Him, Master, do You not care that we are perishing?

And He arose and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, Hush now! Be still (muzzled)! And the wind ceased (sank to rest as if exhausted by its beating) and there was [immediately] a great calm (a perfect peacefulness).

He said to them, Why are you so timid and fearful? How is it that you have no faith (no firmly relying trust)?

And they were filled with great awe and feared exceedingly and said one to another, Who then is this, that even wind and sea obey Him?

My goodness sake! Instead of panicking, like most of us do, we are supposed to rest (even sleep) as a sign of our faith in God. God will keep us alive and traveling well down the road of life.

Human nature is to figure it out, so let's deduce just a little...

- Was this the disciples' fault? No. They were accompanying Jesus and minding their own business when the storm erupted.
- Was there a warning? No. Not all storms are in the forecast and some of them were professional fishermen skilled at reading the sky. In all their intelligence, somehow, they missed it.
- Were the disciples terrified? Yes. This is human nature.
- What did Jesus care about? Their faith. He full well expects His followers to calm it right down and trust God in everything. Yes, *everything*.

Now, you and I have likely not arrived at this level of mastery yet, but it is certainly worth considering these bullet points in light of our current problem. Once that one is solved, there will come another and another. It is called "life." So, how is it that the more mature we become, the more anxious we seem to feel? I don't buy it, and I hope neither do you.

We often hear on social media and television that anxiety is common in the later stages of life. However, I'm discovering that the more mature we are as Christians, the more we should recognize that God has been carrying us and delivering us safely all of our lives no matter the storm. Doesn't He deserve far more respect than what we give Him? Count the

times He has saved and delivered you—my guess is it is too many to count, like stars in the night sky. Isn't He trustworthy, then?

God has promised never to leave us nor forsake us; and, He never has.

He has been with us through it all.

Let your character or moral disposition be free from love of money [including greed, avarice, lust, and craving for earthly possessions] and **be satisfied** with your present [circumstances and with what you have]; for He [God] Himself has said, I will not in any way fail you nor give you up nor leave you without support. [I will] not, [I will] not, [I will] not in any degree leave you helpless nor forsake nor let [you] down (relax My hold on you)! [Assuredly not] (Hebrews 13:5, AMPC)!

Be content with God, like a child quieted with his or her parent. This tranquil state of the soul is to be our commonplace experience. This is exactly why Jesus did not care what the storm was or how it manifested; He only cared about His followers' *quality of belief* because He knew the critical importance of faith. He also wanted to alleviate their unnecessary suffering.

We often presume our faith is in great shape, but when it is tested our knee-jerk reaction shows it is pretty weak, pretty shaky. Therefore, we must study passages like this often, and also build ourselves up, stir ourselves up, in the faith. Just like exercising to gain muscle and mobility, we actively strengthen and engage our faith by staying in the Word—something you are doing right now by reading this book! Keep it up!

Pray for thirst for the Word of God, for a reawakened excitement
to study it as often as you can.

Faith can be thought of as our spiritual structure. Like bones to the body, faith sustains human beings on the earth more than outside circumstances, forces or pressures. Faith is a mixture of two components: your spirit and God's Spirit—where you and He most intimately and purely connect. It is vital. This is why it was more important to Christ than a life-threatening storm.

Sometimes the best response to a storm is to take a nap
and get back to studying the Word.

What are storms allowed in our lives for?

On the earth, there is a battle commencing between good and evil. The friction of this creates storms, chaos, and confusion that seems to come out of nowhere. But, if we read

our Bibles, we can expect it to flare up from time to time, which is why Peter instructs us to not be surprised when it presents (see Deuteronomy 30:19; 1 Samuel 17:47; John 10:10; Ephesians 6:12; Revelation 12, full chapter). Anxious, impulsive, pressured, but spiritually bold, Peter.

Dear friends, **do not be surprised** at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you (1 Peter 4:12, NIV).

“...It happened to me all the time,” I can just hear him saying.

If we heed what Jesus illustrated, the main thing in the middle of these storms is our faith—that is what is being tested to begin with. The result—when the waters calmed and Jesus and His followers stepped out of the boat on the other side—was salvation and promotion. Ministry, in other words, or Kingdom advancement—the God-ordained ability to reach more people effectively for the sake of the Kingdom of God than if the event had never occurred (see Romans 8:28 and Mark 5, full chapter). This is often the only reason *why* that we are given while we are yet on the earth. Peter continues to expound:

...But rejoice, inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed (1 Peter 4:13, NIV).

If I may loosely paraphrase, “be happy, because when things get very hard, when they take you by surprise, when they make no natural sense whatsoever, when the Lord blows your mind like He did mine, *then* you are really ‘participating’ in Christianity right along with Christ. You can have joy on the front end, because God will use it, not only in Heaven, not only after the second coming of Christ, but in your lifetime. Test it and prove Him by it. It is always this way.”

Peter would know, and he addresses you, “Friend,” so it is safe for you to listen and believe him. This wild, inexplicable-ness is how being used by God actually looks and feels. The only way to explain it is by looking at the passages we are reviewing now.

Jesus Himself gives us permission to remain *absolutely calm* during our spiritual and natural storms. Peter puts the icing on the cake by saying, “Just go ahead and be happy, too, because it always turns out well in the end! Don’t ask me how! God just does it.”

Granted, there are some things that will take entering Heaven to see the full scope of joy, but we never get out of the requirement to trust God here. It is a choice and trials are a sure test of faith, but you can pass it. Be thankful for Jesus, for Peter, for the Word of God so that, at least in some measure, you do understand fully what is going on.

God is in control of your life, so no need to worry. He’s the Master. Like the disciples, just let Jesus handle it all. Don’t worry. Be happy. Jesus just wants our faith all the way through it—

whatever “it” is. Sometimes, we just need to take a long rest and reawaken our joy and satisfaction found only in God and His Word.

CHAPTER FIVE: GOD'S ILLUSTRIOS ACTS ARE SERIOUSLY HUMOUROUS

God is colossal. He really stirs things up, but His movements on the earth are kind. Powerful. But kind. God's good character houses His personality trait to do the impossible for us while we watch Him work... He likes to be good to you. You will come to points in time where He renders you speechless.

When this happens—when we are stunned or shocked by the behavior of others, or frustrated waiting for our breakthrough to come—I have learned that the shortest path to clarity is to humble myself before the mighty hand of God. In due time, He will exalt me and clarify my view even more.

Therefore humble yourselves [demote, lower yourselves in your own estimation] under the mighty hand of God, that in due time He may exalt you, **casting the whole of your care** [all your anxieties, all your worries, all your concerns, once and for all] on Him, for He cares for you affectionately and cares about you watchfully (1 Peter 5:6-7, AMPC).

God is looking for humility in us believers, not pride that we have picked up from the world. To help us know the difference, we are often hedged in. We cannot move forward yet, and we cannot go back.

We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body (2 Corinthians 4:8-10, NIV).

It is not easy, but people are watching; maybe from afar, but they are watching and their souls need saved. “A righteous man falls seven, but gets up eight... (Proverbs 24:16, paraphrase, author’s).

When we stumble in life so that God can raise us back up, we are to simultaneously “cast” whatever we are clutching to as a lifeline and take Jesus’ hand.

But Jesus immediately said to them: “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.”

“Lord, if it’s you,” Peter replied, “tell me to come to you on the water.”

“Come,” he said.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord, save me!”

Immediately **Jesus reached out his hand** and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt” (Matthew 14:27-31, NIV)?

Some of us envision this “casting” as a light toss of one or two items, and we will handle the rest, but the language (Greek: *epiripto*) encapsulates an extraordinarily heavy, cumbersome, grotesque weight like the largest mountain chain or the weight of the entire world and all of its sin. And the act of casting it is a formal shift, like handing over a title deed to a new owner, so that it no longer belongs to the original bearer.¹ In fact, this verse exemplifies the cross and the weight of all sin that Christ endured and disposed of on our behalf. We do not co-own or co-carry sin; it was transferred in full to Christ and He disposed of it. No residue. Nothing negative, not a feeling, a thought, a nuance, a worry, a tiny frown, or even a sigh is exempt in this “casting upon God”. Once we do so, our burden is so very light. Our souls lift in buoyancy and we are free to praise Him with our lips, words, smile, cheery countenance, since we are elevated (exalted) to the light. Due to Christ’s authority and God’s kindness, you and I have no need to be depressed or buried in the dark, in sin or in shame. It is all gone.

Moreover, if the devil tries to con you, cast all sin and negativity off as many times as you need to! Cast, cast, cast. Jesus is always ready, on stand by, to cleanse you of sin and carry the weight of worry on your behalf. He tosses it into the sea and removes it from you as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12)!

Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou taken up and cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that what he saith cometh to pass; he shall have it (Mark 11:23, ASV).

You are completely unburdened, unbound, and free.

Practical Tip: Please book an appointment with yourself on your calendar—daily, weekly or at least monthly. Intentionally take the time away from distraction and business to pause and reflect on all the miracles God has done for you since you could remember.

Document all the storms that came out of the blue and His kind deliverance.

¹ Topical Lexicon. 1977. *Epiriptó*. Retrieved August 23, 2025 at: <https://biblehub.com/greek/1977.htm>

This practice guarantees you two things: you'll run out of paper to write them all down on and you'll walk away happy. Keep doing what makes you happy! Glorify God for He is Good and His mercy endures forever!

Talk about it...

In Psalm 118:17 (AMP), the psalmist declares:

I will not die, but live, and declare the works and recount the **illustrious acts** of the LORD.

We certainly hear complaining these days, even at church. Social media is often coined, “doom scrolling.” It can not only waste time, but drag us down and cut up our attention span, so reverse that trend and start a praise report in your conversations and posts. Make it positive, then move on. Bring the light of Christ wherever you go! Make it a goal to “lighten” everyone’s load—it could be as simple as an infectious smile.

Noah Webster defines *illustrious* as a “glorious...display of the divine perfections,” with a focus on God’s actions, ambitions, and honor. A close proximity to this word is *illustrate*:

[T]o brighten with honor; to make glorious or to display the glory of; as to illustrate the perfections of God; to explain or elucidate; to make clear, intelligible or obvious, what is dark or obscure; as to illustrate a passage of Scripture by comments; to make clear to the understanding.²

Another way to say Psalm 118:17 might be, “I will not die, but live! I will recall often and tell anyone who will listen the revelatory works that God has done in my life! He has brought Scripture to life in front of my own eyes. He has delivered me from this thing and that! I cannot keep quiet—I’m too happy about it!”

This is what it means to have an *abundant, overflowing life* (see Psalm 23:5; John 10:10, AMPC). God has done so many great things, we can easily be glad if we focus on them instead of doom scrolling.

God works the most amazing victories out of the troubles of this world for those who put their faith in Him and we need to tell, tell, tell others that this is who God is and what God does.

As believers, we really do have zero—absolutely nothing, to worry about. And there is no other place on the earth to get a deal like that. God not only turns all of your problems around, He uses them to *illustrate* Scriptures—to you and others who may be watching;

² Id.

Scriptures that align directly to your situation in a way that proves the Word is the absolute Truth and the only Truth. Every jot and every tittle will come to pass in your life (Matthew 5:18)! Truly detailed—He has his eye on the sparrow, and I know He watches over you and me.³

³ Why should I feel discouraged?
Why should the shadows come?
Why should my heart be lonely
And long for heav'n and home,
When Jesus is my portion?
My constant Friend is He:
His eye is on the sparrow,
And I know He watches me;
His eye is on the sparrow,
And I know He watches me.

I sing because I'm happy—
I sing because I'm free—
For His eye is on the sparrow,
And I know He watches me.

“Let not your heart be troubled.”
His tender word I hear,
And resting on His goodness,
I lose my doubt and fear.
Though by the path He leadeth,
But one step I may see:
His eye is on the sparrow,
And I know He watches me;
His eye is on the sparrow,
And I know He watches me.

I sing because I'm happy—
I sing because I'm free—
For His eye is on the sparrow,
And I know He watches me.

Whenever I am tempted,
Whenever clouds arise,
When songs give place to sighing,
When hope within me dies,
I draw the closer to Him;
From care He sets me free:
His eye is on the sparrow,
And I know He watches me;
His eye is on the sparrow,
And I know He watches me.

I sing because I'm happy—
I sing because I'm free—

This illuminated, enlightened revelation dispels our doubt (doom and gloom) and loosens our tongue for true praise from the heart (see John 17:17). Sometimes, we don't have to say anything because God uses us to "show and tell" in a way that only He can. What we wish to avoid is to take this illumination, this light, this illustriousness of God's glorious work, acts, and ambitions, and hide it under a barrel, to go radio silent, to tell no one, and to forget about it ourselves.⁴ This ought not to be so, and is often the reason why we experience such depths of sorrow.

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12, ESV).

Now give it out!

Psalm 112:1, 4 says:

Praise the Lord! Hallelujah! Blessed (happy, fortunate, to be envied) is the man who fears (reveres and worships) the Lord, who delights greatly in His commandments. Light arises in the darkness for the upright, gracious, compassionate, and just [who are in right standing with God].

We all want to be happy, to be fortunate, to be envied instead of jealous of what others have. The defining line is what or Who we get our identity from. If we are trying to fit in and

For His eye is on the sparrow,
And I know He watches me.

From: *Why should I feel discouraged, Why should the shadows come*
Author: Civilla D. Martin (1905)
Tune: SPARROW
Published in 106 hymnals
Source: https://hymnary.org/text/why_should_i_feel_discouraged_why_should

⁴ Read Luke 11:33-36 and Matthew 5:14-16. Followers of Jesus have the light of Christ indwelling in them and are commissioned to go and make disciples of all men (see Matthew 28:16-20). This is not a calling reserved for just a few Christians, such as those with a large TV or international ministry. Rather, this is for every believer saved by God via Christ. All believers are led through troubles and difficulties, but Psalm 118:17 shows us that the natural response to the miraculous deliverance is to communicate, by dependence upon the Holy Spirit and guidance of the Word of God, to others. In this way, we stay vibrant and effective, rather than going dim in our faith. This author encourages you to try it. Recall what God has done for you in your past. Thank Him. Pray He would put someone in your path or make a way for you to tell someone to encourage them. Then, do so. See how this makes YOU feel. I find many times when I am feeling low of spirit or discouraged or even lonely that when I write something to other people, my spirits are lifted and I, myself, am rejuvenated when I tell others about Christ to the best of my God-granted ability. These passages taken together instruct us to do just that. You never know the positive impact you can make on someone else's life by proclaiming the illustrious acts of God!

earn our identity from the world, we are likely jealous, bitter and annoyed a lot. However, as soon as we put our identity in Christ, we are 100% content.

When searching for happiness that is lasting, a great place to start is to delight greatly in the Lord. In practical terms, you will get more out of an hour spent with God than if you spent that same hour purchasing a luxury car that you'd have to make payments on for seven years. Easy decision!

You can produce joy in your life when you “make on” over God and some truly biblical charity work done in His name more than a rich person makes on over their new house that they have to clean and pay taxes on. Pretty straightforward!

God owns everything and knows how to get you what you need. Delight yourself in the Lord and you will be happy, whereas someone with all of those things may very well be miserable with a perpetual drought in their soul.

Delight yourself in God and the treasures He provides: His presence, that puppy that loves you right back, that garden rose that blooms majestically every season, that sunrise or sunset just spent with you and God. This sort of time is never wasted. How simple!

God moves heaven and earth to show us the Word is true, that He is faithful. The Word works when we work the Word. God simply wants us to focus more on Him than anything else, to replace all the world's negativity with His positivity, because this is exactly what makes people genuinely happy from the inside out. It's not beauty products or the latest style. Truth be told, closeness and safety in God is what we want because it brings us pure joy.

God delights in you and does the impossible with indescribably unfair and unjust circumstances in order to give you something to celebrate! Let your light shine, and reflect on God's illustrious acts privately with Him OFTEN, and let Him present opportunities for you to share His praises with others! If you are in a season of waiting with regard to your current issue, take some time and really praise Him for all the past deliverances which you once stressed about and considered impossible.

Jot them down...

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

God's ironic sense of humor...

If you entertain it regularly or not, you are a miracle, shot straight out from God's Own Will into the world like Jonah from a whale. The Book of Jonah seems humorous, but it has to have humor in it so we can stand to hear its message!

It is actually one of God's most serious messages about being called into ministry in the Old Testament. Consider Jesus' words:

Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to Him, Teacher, we desire to see a sign or miracle from You [proving that You are what You claim to be].

But He replied to them, "An evil and adulterous generation (a generation morally unfaithful to God) seeks and demands a sign; but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah" (Matthew 12:38-39, AMPC).

Losing homes, families, and lands (and sometimes health, nearly your faith, mind, and bearings) is a precursor to a full-on ministry walk with Christ.

And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life (Matthew 19:29, NIV).

This is how a single seed drops into the ground, loses all that it is and all that it has, so that God can multiply it a hundred-fold for the sake of winning souls.

Sometimes I ask God to please be very gentle with me—I'm just a lady (as if He doesn't know this). The point I, and perhaps Jonah, are making is that sometimes being a miracle is hard. Sometimes, we are merely human and we get tired. Sometimes, we are forced to rest because nothing in our world is going right. I am here to say, that if that is where you find yourself, that's ok.

The truth is, some of us would not rest if we got paid to do it. We don't know what to do with ourselves, so we start to worry about what God is doing! We overthink to extremes. If your mind is racing and you do not know what to do to solve your problems (and who does?), I encourage you to get to the place where you can rest. Your #1 priority is not your natural problem; it is your relationship with God. Turn toward Him. Cry out to Him. And He will listen and rescue you. We all get in the muck and in the mire from time to time. He is prepared for this to happen...

Then Jesus told them this parable: "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?

And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home.

Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent (Luke 15:3-7, NIV).

Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded (James 4:8, NIV).

To repent means “to turn” back toward God because we have gotten turned around in our troubles. This is not a term reserved for people who have not accepted Christ, but also includes those of us who have walked with God for a long time, and want to do what is right, but have somehow gotten off track. Happens to the best of us. When we repent, we come out of confusion and hiding and simply say, “God, please help me, save me, rescue me. Please show me what You want me to know. I want to do Your will. Help me to believe in You and receive Your love and follow You closely once again. I thank You. Your Word says You are good. Please be good to me.”

The New Living Translation puts Hebrews 4:3 plainly: “...only we who believe can enter His rest.” And this is true. We cannot rest when we are worrying. We cannot rest when we are running from God, cynical, hard-hearted, angry, bitter or resentful. We can only rest *in faith*, when we are actively believing God for something good. We are blocked behind the sheep gate when we are deceived, in rebellion, angry at God because we don’t understand our circumstances, complaining or fearful—these sins will wear us completely out, especially as we get on in years.

No, the best way to rejuvenate and take care of your health—mind, body, and soul—is to get right with God and let Him absolutely handle life FOR YOU. This is not being lazy, this is a *requirement* if you do not want to be miserable and succumb to defeat. Sometimes it is a simple act of discipline—something disciples do for themselves because they know the Word is true, and they know they are being unwise and contrary. So just come back to God like a child or a lost son or daughter. He will rejoice and throw a party (read Luke 15:11-31)!

Read the Book of Jonah.

Once we are all washed up and cannot make heads or tails of it, we are faced with a choice to get back up again and follow God, or perish with anger and annoyance right there under the blazing sun. *Why is life so hard?* we complain. *God, what do you want me to do?*

The Book of Jonah does not tell us what Jonah chose; it is open-ended because, through it, *God is asking each one of us what our personal choice is*. The fact is, life can be very hard,

the cross shows us that. But we have a choice on if we are going to continue to follow Jesus, regardless.

On hearing it, many of his disciples said, “This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?”

Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, “Does this offend you? Then what if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe.”

For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. He went on to say, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them.”

From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

“You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve (John 6:60-67, NIV).

One of the reasons Jonah is such great writing, is that it is “seriously humorous.” Jonah was feeling ill used by both man and God and was pouting about it. How many of us pray, “Here I am, Lord, send me,” then panic when He takes us up on it.

The beauty is that Jonah (though it is not written in the story itself) did eventually get back up again. Not only that, he found something to write with and brilliantly told his story, succinctly, without over or under writing it. It really is one of the most amazing books in the Old Testament and, ironically, is one of the best matches for what it feels like for you and I to be “catapulted into ministry”. Sometimes, we feel ill-used and mistreated. Sometimes, our circumstances are almost shameful to us. They are so outlandish we cannot explain them! And, this is our sign that we are sharing in the sufferings of Jesus Christ—biblical proof and evidence that we are indeed being used by God.

For even as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (Matthew 12:40, AMPC).

Every Christian has to come to peace with the fact that they will “lose their gourd” someplace in service to God. *Why does this keep happening to me?* Because you are still “in service”. Be glad in that. Being happy—while being used by God, while not knowing all the answers, while not being able to solve your own problems—is far more important than having a “perfect” life. God is the One Who is perfect.

CHAPTER SIX: MASTER OF CIRCUMSTANCE (IT'S NOT US)

While there is a master of circumstance, it is not us. It is God. Again, if the axis tilt of the earth would change but one degree, it would be either toast or a popsicle. God orchestrates circumstance. Our job is to make peace with that, particularly in an “unbelieving” world where even those who profess to be Christians seem to think we should be able to control our destiny and solve our own problems. God is the One Who solves our problems. The only control we have is to accept Christ and trust God with everything.

A famous minister has a message called, “Out of Control and Loving It...” which is easy to do when our circumstances indicate we are being blessed. It is much more difficult when it seems the opposite is happening and we are in a period of what the Word calls “long-suffering.”

Blessed (happy, blithesome, joyous, spiritually prosperous—with life-joy and satisfaction in God’s favor and salvation, regardless of their outward conditions) are the meek (the mild, patient, **long-suffering**), for they shall inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5, AMPC)!

Clothe yourselves therefore, as God’s own chosen ones (His own picked representatives), [who are] purified and holy and well-beloved [by God Himself, by putting on behavior marked by] tenderhearted pity and mercy, kind feeling, a lowly opinion of yourselves, gentle ways, [and] patience [which is tireless and **long-suffering**, and has the power to endure whatever comes, with good temper] (Colossians 3:12, AMPC).

However, even in long-suffering, we ARE blessed because we are with God, in Christ, and the Holy Spirit will infuse us and comfort us, and the storm will pass. God will deliver us. This is very good news indeed, for no one else can.

Circumstances are fleeting facts which the authority and solidarity of the Truth of God’s Word always overcomes. This is why speaking the promises of the Word over your circumstances is a great spiritual weapon to wield. *Circumstances* are “worldly estates”⁵ that God may use for a temporary moment, but ultimately morphs into “heavenly estates”

⁵ Noah Webster’s 1828. *Circumstance*. Retrieved August 23, 2025 at: <https://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/circumstance>

for those who believe (see Matthew 8:13, 15:28). *Circumstances* are not to be feared, nor should they create anxiety, for they are merely guidance instruments—His rod and staff—that He uses to move you around, to this place or that, for His purposes (see Psalm 23).

Once we recognize life events in this way, it becomes a normal process to us and one that we no longer fret or fuss over. God closes a door and opens another, because we are walking by faith. We are moving and letting Him be the one to move and usher us, for His purposes rather than our own. Your life will not look like anyone else's, thus "doom" scrolling depresses us as we ceaselessly run comparison metrics in our heads. But we are not uniform—no two on earth alike, like fingerprints for we are authentically unique, handcrafted by God for His particular use.

To fret due to the way God prompts us to go or stay causes *us* to be difficult, sullen, braced and stiff—afraid of His directions when they come; resistant to change. Not an enjoyable way to live the Christian life, and it makes it HARDER for God to use us effectively. The King James says God, "tries the hearts and the reins" of His chosen kings (see KJV Psalm 7:9; 26:2). For a practical metaphor, a scared, stiff, braced horse is not pleasant to work with. However, a calm, soft, gentle horse that trusts his trainer is easy and enjoyable to be around. Which are you? In reality, there is no need for this negativity or stress when God bumps us in the side or causes people to cast us overboard. Just simply follow Him, all your life. Be willing to recognize how God communicates and stay relaxed, with an ear tuned toward His soft voice and your eyes on His Heaven.

"What is wrong with me?" need not play in the Christian's mind.

It's what is right with you that causes the friction.

Remember, Jesus says:

And anyone and everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands **for My name's sake** will receive many [even a hundred] times more and will inherit eternal life (Matthew 19:29, AMPC).

It is painful to lose, but you will get it back; it is a promise. If our faith is tied to circumstances, once they dry up, our faith dries up, too. This is not a bad test, but pass it. Go to God for His rivers in the desert. Here you learn that it is very wise to place your faith in God alone, not in worldly conditions which are subject to change because God uses them to communicate a specific direction to us; they are designed to be fleeting like vapor. If there is no direction yet, rest until He provides one!

Behold, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs forth; do you not perceive and know it and will you not give heed to it? I will even make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert (Isaiah 43:19, AMPC).

CHAPTER SEVEN: FINDING JOY BEYOND AFFLCTION

Remember God asking Jonah (vs. 4:9), “Would you **do well** to be angry about the gourd [circumstance]?”

If I may paraphrase...

- If circumstances make you angry, is this good FOR YOU? For other people? For your witness or proclamation of Me?
- If change makes you angry, are you following Me well and easily, OR are you blocking My lead?

This is a great question to ponder. What is producing ANGER in us, in our sinful, fallen natures, other than God doing exactly what He promised He would—leading us, using us for the good of His Kingdom and the benefit of many?

Rather than “gourd,” go ahead and insert whatever your current, biggest issue is:

Would you do well to be angry about _____?

...Because _____, whatever it is, is something God will use to work out for good, fitting into a plan, He had predestined before you were born. This is why belief in God’s sovereignty and master plan and goodness are crucial and foundational to a life of faith.

This does not make sense to us, until perhaps after we have gone all the way through it, but then we tend to get another thing. It is like Caleb, as an older man, climbing a mountain. The right frame of mind is, “we are well able” because GOD is with us every single step of the way. It is best just to keep climbing and keep on believing. It does not do us any favors to kick against the goad, but even when we do, and we drag our souls and become indeed spiritless and hopeless, God is still kind to speak to us, sit beside us on the sand and ask us the same, age old questions: *Would you do well to be angry with Me? Who else am I supposed to use?*

Depending on how severe the situation, we might spout off impetuously like Jonah did, without really thinking it through: “Yes! I’m so angry I could die!”

The fact of the matter is that God can arrange that, but we are here, after we receive the gift of Salvation via the grace of God and the work of Christ on the cross, for one very simple and profound reason: *to win His souls.*

READ: 2 Corinthians 4:1 – 5:11 (AMPC).

...[B]eing conscious, of fearing the Lord with respect and reverence, we seek **to win people over** (v. 11)

This is not people pleasing, this is God-pleasing, with your mind, heart and will fully apprised, crystal clear, that the one and only reason we tarry on this earth post-Salvation is to win souls to God through the message of Jesus Christ and the Gospel. That is it. If this is clear in your mind, the blessings and the difficulties flow to either side of you and you continue to climb whatever mountain looms before you, with your hand in God's hand and your eyes to the eternal prize in Heaven.

The enemy wants you looking down and internally confused, with no conviction as to your purpose. But look carefully at God's explanation of your circumstance: "You have been concerned about this "plant" though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight (Jonah 4:10, NIV)."

God is saying, whatever you filled the blank in with above—"plant" equating your circumstance—it is fleeting, it is temporary, and it will change. It will pass as quickly as it presented. In the grandest scheme of things it, whatever it is, is not important. It will not change your destiny. What is important is your mindset. What can change your destiny, however, is if you *damage your relationship with God*. We do this by being angry, being rash, closing the door, shutting down, and becoming irreverent toward Him and His purposes and His call on our lives.

Oh, my! I would never do that! we say. However, sitting down and giving up is an experience that happens to us all, no matter who we are, where we live, or what our circumstances are. We will wilt like a plant and we can almost feel our spirit break. "I am done." Now, this is not the sin, because here we can say to God, "Resurrect me, please. I've got nothing without You and my situation is hopeless; it has been too long and I see no way out." No, this is fine. What is the one unforgivable sin, however, is to blaspheme and grieve the Holy Spirit of God.

And so I tell you, every kind of sin and slander can be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come (Matthew 12:31-32, NIV).

It is also found in Mark 3:28-29 and Luke 12:10.

The precept of blasphemy is refusing to cry out to God when we are done, and rather we follow anger and become defiant and bitter for the rest of our miserable days. We remain in confusion rather than becoming like a little child and believing in His resurrecting power. *Blasphemy*, more specifically, is calling wrong/right and right/wrong, particularly after one

receives the Holy Spirit and knows better. This person consciously chooses to turn against God. This is the root of woe. As indicated, it can be denying, refusing to perform, or being angry with the call of God on one's own life, being frustrated with His methods of being asked to continually walk on water while other people seem to have it easier. It can be disobeying promptings of the Holy Spirit to repent.⁶

God asks, *Would you do well to be angry about being in My service?*

Who would be angry and resentful about a useful relationship with God? Sadly, many Christians today, because it is still hard, just like in Peter and Paul's day, and this dour attitude about being called into God's divine will—and learning how difficult it is, especially when it is not exactly what we had in mind—saddens or grieves the Spirit of God.

We blame Him, but in essence, we cut our ties with Him when we blaspheme the Holy Spirit. We took up a relationship with Him in order to be blessed, but then when the difficulty came, and our circumstances lingered, we started to complain. When it got down to the actual walk, we froze and refused to take one step more.

We refused to humble ourselves like a little child and consciously concede, "God, Your will be done." We got confused (per the enemy's plot) and started believing that it was somehow God's will to perpetually afflict us, we started calling good/evil and evil/good. Make no mistake, God's will is not to punish us with illness or curses, but to deliver us, heal us, restore us—indeed, resurrect us, and cause a good many witnesses to see it, too.

READ: 2 Corinthians 4:6-18 (AMPC) again.

For God Who said, Let light shine out of darkness, has shone in our hearts so as [to beam forth] the Light for the illumination of the knowledge of the majesty and glory of God [as it is manifest in the Person and is revealed] in the face of Jesus Christ (the Messiah).

However, **we possess this** precious treasure [the divine **Light** of the Gospel] in [frail, human] vessels of earth, that the grandeur and exceeding greatness of the power may be shown to be from God and not from ourselves.

We are hedged in (pressed) on every side [troubled and oppressed in every way], but not cramped or crushed; we suffer embarrassments and are perplexed and unable to find a way out, but not driven to despair;

⁶ Read more: <https://biblehub.com/greek/988.htm>
<https://biblehub.com/commentaries/matthew/12-31.htm>
<https://biblehub.com/lexicon/matthew/12-31.htm>

We are pursued (persecuted and hard driven), but not deserted [to stand alone]; we are struck down to the ground, but never struck out and destroyed;

Always carrying about in the body the liability and exposure to the same putting to death that the Lord Jesus suffered, **so that the [resurrection] life of Jesus also may be shown forth by and in our bodies.**

For we who live are constantly [experiencing] being handed over to death for Jesus' sake, **that the [resurrection] life of Jesus also may be evidenced through our flesh** which is liable to death.

Thus death is actively at work in us, but [it is in order that [our] life [may be actively at work] in you.

Yet **we have the same spirit of faith** as he had who wrote, I have believed, and therefore have I spoken. We too believe, and therefore we speak,

Assured that He Who raised up the Lord Jesus **will raise us up also with Jesus** and bring us [along] with you into His presence.

For all [these] things are [taking place] **for your sake**, so that the more grace (divine favor and spiritual blessing) extends to more and more people and multiplies through the many, the more thanksgiving may increase [and redound] to the glory of God.

Therefore **we do not become** discouraged (**utterly spiritless, exhausted, and wearied out** through fear). Though our outer man is [progressively] decaying and wasting away, yet our inner self is being [progressively] renewed day after day.

For our light, momentary affliction (this slight distress of the passing hour) is ever more and more abundantly preparing and producing and achieving for us an everlasting weight of glory [beyond all measure, excessively surpassing all comparisons and all calculations, a vast and transcendent glory and blessedness never to cease!],

Since we consider and look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are visible are temporal (brief and fleeting), but the things that are invisible are deathless and everlasting.

Satan wants us to feel cursed, by God. Satan wants us to feel and believe that God is mad at us, or the affliction would not be happening to us, and certainly not for this long.

However, Paul is pouring out his wisdom on this page telling you and me that the affliction is because we have something right with us, not wrong with us. We have been given, and do

carry the Light of Christ in us. Because of this, hell may come against us, but IT WILL NEVER WIN. God is not mad at you. God is not cursing you. God is delivering you or you would not be reading this right now. Period.

Yes, service to God really is this hard. But you have no conceptual idea of how good God's blessings will be as His reward for your faithful, lifelong endurance and kind, holy service.

It is not, "just you." This temporary affliction happens to ALL CHRISTIANS.

"Maybe all this is happening because I am doing something right, not wrong." We have been conditioned, in the world and in the church, solidified by comparisons (which the Word warns us against, because we are uniquely created by God with a divine plan to fulfill that is just as unique) that if we are "good" we will be blessed with an easy life. These passages of Paul's tell us that this is not always the case—we cannot always go by that! For, we are saved by grace not our own works. You and I are always reliant upon God's goodness, not our own, and to believe that God is afflicting us after we have accepted Christ is negating Christ's own work on the cross. The enemy is deceptive, so always, always believe in the goodness of God.

In Jonah 4:11 (paraphrase, author's), God explains Himself, "Jonah... should I have let 120,000 go to hell, and all their animals be destroyed? Is that compassion?"

And the Book is complete. There is silence that falls between God and Jonah (and us, as onlookers to the story) while God allows us time to think. In this silence, God ACKNOWLEDGES stuff is hard down here. He ACKNOWLEDGES and ADMITS He sends us out like sheep among wolves. However, if we always choose God, we are NEVER DEFEATED. We just get back up again especially when it is impossible.

Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26, NIV).

Jesus is looking at you, too. He says the EXACT same thing to you, and I, and every Christian who ever lived. If your circumstances did not appear for all intents and purposes to be utterly impossible you would not need God.

As stated above, somehow Jonah got back up, picked up parchment and ink, and wrote his story to God in his final answer. Not only would Jonah preach a sermon, he would also write a Book that you and I are drawing guidance from this very day. Jonah did answer God by GETTING BACK UP and continuing to be used by God someplace else—wherever that was, we do not know.

We may say today, regardless of whatever dilemma we are facing: "I'm okay either way. That's my final answer, because God knows more than I do." God is not after our supreme

intelligence or reasoning; He is after our WILLINGNESS TO GET BACK UP in spite of nothing making sense to us at all. That is what He wants to see.

Think about the relationship Jonah had with God after the anger, after the difficulty. Let's not you and I get angry, bitter and sour when life gets hard, or if we do, let's not stay there, because 1) we are being used by God and we must believe that (vs. 4:11), and 2) the last thing we want to do is blaspheme the Holy Spirit by denying Him or being irreverent to God and His holiness, and His Kingdom, and His plan.

We wish to stay joyful and keep serving God until He takes us home—no matter what that looks like. And, ultimately, we will each come to the point that we can find absolutely no joy except in and through Him. Remember, the fruit of the HOLY SPIRIT is JOY.

CHAPTER EIGHT: MANAGING THE MIND

If we do not manage our finances well, we go bankrupt. No different when we do not manage our minds well. We have been given the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16), not to mismanage it, but as the key for how to manage our thought life correctly. Christ is a mastermind on the Word of God; He IS the Word made flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:1, 14), so the New Testament words of Jesus Christ are a lamp unto our feet and the exact frame of mind that brings us mental blessings, soul peace, and clear direction (Psalm 119:105). For one example, Jesus says...

“Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4b, paraphrase, author’s).

Jesus said this to Satan during the wilderness trial, which is also called the Temptation. Trials = Temptation. It is in our deepest, longest, most severe trials that Satan tempts us to turn way from God, by getting us mentally and emotionally confused, by enticing us to think erroneously (deception), calling right things wrong and wrong things right, and, therefore, blaspheming the Holy Spirit.

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart (Hebrews 4:12, NIV).

Thank God, we have been given the Word of God in order to use it during times like these.

Jesus is saying, “it is written, and it will always be written...” (Matthew 4:4a), indicating very strongly that the lifeline for us who are caught in trials on the earth is the WORD OF GOD. **We must...we absolutely must** spend quiet time with God *reading His Word* or we get very spiritually confused in our wilderness trial. We become mentally sick because of the wear and tear and the length or severity or subtlety of temptation to disbelieve. Just like we eat healthy food each day to stay alive (i.e., “bread”), Jesus is saying, all the more important, we need to spend time studying and speaking the Word of God to stay spiritually alive.

If a Christian does not stay spiritually alive,
they lose the strength to stay alive in any other way
(physically, mentally, relationally, financially, etc.)

The spirit comes first, so prepare your mind...

Part of our gourd drying up (back to Jonah being angry at God over his aloneness and strange circumstances) is that we forget what God has done (Salvation). We, like Jonah, cannot make heads or tails out of what God is doing with us sometimes, but we can replace our futile reasoning with the simplicity of the WORD. Rather than endlessly complaining in your thought life, just memorize some Scripture. Pretty simple, right?

READ: Ephesians 2:8-15 (AMPC).

Remember... Remember... when you were separated from Christ (pre-Salvation), you had no hope, you were in the world without God. But now, in Christ Jesus...through the blood of Christ, you have been brought near to God (vs. 11, 12, 13; paraphrase, author's).

See how this verse does not focus on our problem. It focuses on God and how He saved us. When we magnify Him, we soon realize if He did it once, He will do it again. The Word is miraculously packed with free hope. All we had to do was read the verse. Very simple math is God's way of solving the most complex issues on the earth. Exchange your problem with a verse and faith in God.

When we do not keep our minds tucked inside the Word of God, we soon forget to be grateful to God for rescuing us from eternal damnation, from Hell. We replace our holy reverence for God with an unholy discontentment with life's experiences. We also turn away from God when we misunderstand Him. We replace worship with a reverence for what we have done (pride), if we are "successful" people; or, if we perceive we are "unsuccessful" failures, we think God mean and we shrink from Him. Either is equally off.

We are not winning, we are not losing. We are not successful, we are not failures. We are nothing. Without Christ, that is. This is why Paul says, "My goal, my one aim in this life, is to know nothing but Christ and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). That is all we have and all we are and all we ever will be here—*in Christ*. This is the healthiest mindset a person can experience because it is **the truth**. We think we have done so much, or we think we have been through too much, but the evil result of this "without the Spirit" thinking is that we turn away from God rather than toward Him. This is the mind of the flesh.

Now the mind of the flesh [which is sense and reason without the Holy Spirit] is death [death that comprises all the miseries arising from sin, both here and hereafter]. But the mind of the [Holy] Spirit is life and [soul] peace [both now and forever] (Romans 8:6, AMPC).

In reality, we must believe God alone is good, to us, or we will not approach Him. We will not cling to Him like the lifeline that He is if we do not manage our minds by feeding them a steady stream of the Word of God. The noise of the world is rubbish! The Word of God is our

Rock, the Voice we want to listen to like a sweet song. Let's get serious about living and feed ourselves the Word of God like Jesus indicates in the midst of His Own trial.

"Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4b, paraphrase, author's).

But without faith it is impossible to [walk with God and] please Him, for whoever comes [near] to God must [necessarily] believe that God exists and that He rewards those who [earnestly and diligently] seek Him (Hebrews 11:6, AMP).

...There is none good but one, that is, God (Mark 10:18b, KJV).

The Word of God is a necessity if we want to think and live well. As Proverbs 23:7a states, "As a person thinks, so he becomes" (paraphrase, author's). So, meditate day and night on the Word of God and you will become like Jesus (Joshua 1:8)!

We are to put on love by putting on Christ Jesus. We are not dressed spiritually without the Word cloaking our minds and penetrating our hearts. We can walk out the door without it, but we will be like the walking dead—no life inside of us. The real reality is **Christ in us**. He is the LIFE. He is the One Who has done it all—*all things required*—to make us right with God. So, to go around with our head down thinking the afflicting circumstances coming against us are because God is upset with us, makes no biblical sense in light of the New Testament. It makes no biblical sense when we study Paul's letters. Christ is our hope of glory even in the midst of a seemingly difficult life on earth. This is why Paul, in all of his perils and afflictions, continued to pronounce at every chance these two words:

IN CHRIST.

I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you **in Christ** Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:4, NIV).

I face death every day—yes, just as surely as I boast about you **in Christ** Jesus our Lord (1 Corinthians 15:31).

For as in Adam all die, so **in Christ** all will be made alive (1 Corinthians 15:22).

He made Christ who knew no sin to [judicially] be sin on our behalf, so that **in Him** we would become the righteousness of God [that is, we would be made acceptable to Him and placed in a right relationship with Him by His gracious lovingkindness] (2 Corinthians 5:21, AMP).

Paul describes his life experiences, his afflictions, like this...

I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn (2 Corinthians 11:23b-29, NIV)?

One might deduce that Paul had a “difficult” life, that everything was not coming up roses all the time. Perhaps his old acquaintances saw him as an outcast or a failure, someone to be pitied. If they saw him in the street, they might have passed on the other side and shook their heads at him and fed the rumor mill. Whatever Paul’s day-to-day existence felt like to him, it is just as important for us to consider what Paul does not say here: “God must be mad at me for something I did.” He never says that. Rather, he explains it to the Philippians like this:

Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ.

And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.

It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice.

Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and God’s provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body,

whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain (Philippians 1:12-21, NIV).

There were times it looked like the true Gospel was getting hijacked and tainted, and Paul was thrown in prison, yet he never said, “I must have failed. I must have upset God. I must not be a very good example to you. I must not be a good preacher.” He never said that either! Rather, he 100%, a million percent, trusted GOD that all of it was going to work out for good. Truly Paul believed that God was powerful enough to overcome all evil on the earth. Paul believed, just like Jesus said, “It is written, and it **will always be** written...” (Matthew 4:4a).

Likewise, let’s recall I Peter 4:12 (NIV): “Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.” The Devil wants you to think it is only happening to you, but it happens to all Christians: a loved one dies, isolation, financial strain, betrayal, losing a job when it is inconvenient, a mysterious illness no one can seem to help you with... Now, I’m not declaring these things over you. I’m simply stating that if they do happen to turn up, they also turned up in the disciples’ lives during Jesus’ time. They also turned up in the Book of Ruth, the Book of Jonah, Paul’s letters, John’s banishment to Patmos, Mother Theresa’s life, Billy Graham’s life..., and, your fellow Christians are not immune to the suffering either. My point is that you are not alone in your suffering. You are with Christ, you are *in Christ*, and your resurrection is woven into the plan—an unbreakable thread, an unerasable chapter in God’s History. Your situation is not a surprise to God, and He does have your epic deliverance planned just as sure as you are reading this.

Through the lens of the Word of God, through the eyes of Christ, you can see yourself the way He sees you: delivered, free, beautiful, whole, happy. Focus on this! *Be it unto you as you have believed...* so BELIEVE for the GOOD THINGS (Matthew 8:13; 9:20-22). Someone needs you to get back up. Do not give up. God will bring it to pass.

Now, managing one’s mind includes preparing one’s mind for a lifetime of Christian service and discovery. It is not a one-time occurrence, but more like a rollercoaster ride for the rest of your days. So, you will be stopped on occasion by God to rest from time to time. This is never easy, until you realize He is doing this so you reconnect with Him and so your productivity lasts your whole life through. Think about it: no need to prune a tree that is no longer yielding anything, so endure your times of harsh pruning with a patient, right heart attitude and biblical perspective (see the Vine and Branches). Your stability is not the roller

coaster of life's experiences, circumstances, or ebbs and flows; rather, it is the Rock of Christ. Remember, all else is sinking sand.⁷

How do we prepare our minds for a lifetime of Christian service and discovery?

It's devotion (a willingness to put Christ first place in all that we think, see, hear or do):

⁷ My hope is built on nothing less
than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
but wholly lean on Jesus' name.

On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand:
all other ground is sinking sand;
all other ground is sinking sand.

When darkness veils his lovely face,
I rest on his unchanging grace;
in every high and stormy gale,
my anchor holds within the veil.

On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand:
all other ground is sinking sand;
all other ground is sinking sand.

His oath, his covenant, his blood,
support me in the whelming flood;
when all around my soul gives way,
he then is all my hope and stay.

On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand:
all other ground is sinking sand;
all other ground is sinking sand.

When he shall come with trumpet sound,
O may I then in him be found:
dressed in his righteousness alone,
faultless to stand before the throne.

On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand:
all other ground is sinking sand;
all other ground is sinking sand.

From: *My hope is built on nothing less*

Author: Edward Mote (1834)

Tune: SOLID ROCK

Published in 1114 hymnals

Source: https://hymnary.org/text/my_hope_is_built_on_nothing_less

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Galatians 2:20, NIV).

It's dependence (adopting and accepting the realization that we are nothing without Christ, and can do nothing without Him, and an appreciation that we don't ever go it alone):

I am the Vine; you are the branches. Whoever lives in Me and I in him bears much (abundant) fruit. However, apart from Me [cut off from vital union with Me] you can do nothing (John 15:5, NIV).

It's discipleship (discipline to do for ourselves that which produces life in us, being diligent to spend time with God, in the Word, each day, prioritizing Him as our lifeline):

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:18-20, NIV).

Devotion, dependence, discipleship. Focus on these things and NOT on an endless string of problems to solve. Even if your spouse is angry and just slammed the door. Even if your child is in jail or other trouble and you cannot seem to help them. Even if that doctor's report just seemed to scare the life out of you. The Peace of Christ and the Purposes of Him crucified takes precedent. It takes first place and you do not need to worry no matter how serious the problem seems.

Post-Salvation, we are here, as Charles Spurgeon would say, to win Him souls, so let's get on with it! Even in the midst of your greatest problem, this is the one purpose that seems to confound any plot of Satan.

*What did you come out to **see** (Matthew 11:7)?*

*Be it unto you as you have **believed** (Matthew 8:13).*

I came out to see the Resurrection of Christ, or the crucifixion with Him (as Paul communicates) wasn't even necessary. If I have gone through all of this pain, suffering, confusion, and maltreatment, I want something GOOD to show for it—don't you? Well, I have good news for you indeed: SO DOES GOD. He agrees with you. He works all things out for good, even bad things have to bend a knee as He turns what the enemy meant against you into something beautiful.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28, NIV).

As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present outcome, that many people would be kept alive [as they are this day] (Genesis 50:20, AMP).

When we prepare our minds to see what God wants us to see—people coming to Him via Christ's Resurrection at work in us, it gives us the strength and energy to continue on in whatever capacity He orchestrates. You are never down if you are a Christian!

I want to **know Christ**—yes, to know **the power of his resurrection** and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, **somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead**.

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

Brothers and sisters, 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 heavenward in Christ Jesus.

All of us, then, **who are mature should take such a view of things**. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. **Their mind is set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven.** And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the **Lord Jesus Christ**, who, by the **power that enables him to bring everything under his control**, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body (Philippians 3: 10-21, NIV).

CHAPTER NINE: KEEP IT SIMPLE

The Gospel message is very simple. It is not complicated. Yet, many modern-day believers exchange simple companionship with Jesus with endless problem-solving and complexity, the latter of which is actually *problem-generating*, not problem-reducing. Did you know that you and I cannot solve our own problems?

Look back at some of your most serious troubles. Did you get yourself out, or did God deliver you little by little as you took tiny steps of obedience?

Did you understand all the complexities of the riddle, or was it solved just by the love of God?

I love these questions. I love to ponder them. We are mere sheep that the Good Shepherd leads AND THAT IS OK. That is how He made us, and has us. As long as our hearts are right toward God, He does not expect us to be brilliant, for He already is. He just expects us to, ever so simply, trust Him.

We do what we know, which is nothing more or less than to follow Him, read and know the Word, receive His love (this is huge!), and love Him back.

It could not be any simpler or more natural than a parent loving a child and that child feeling safe and barely paying any attention to the world. That is who we are, and our life goes much smoother when we remember this and fully rely upon God for our every need.

A good heart, a pure heart toward God, goes a long, long way. You really do not need to be complicated, or to think along complex lines. You just need to pray, give the matter to God, and go on enjoying your life. You do not need to live a complicated existence when the Word of God is so very simple a child can grasp it.

When we complicate things, we are striving, trying to “get” and outdo our neighbor in some sort of competition. Paul explains in Philippians 3: 7-8 (NIV), “Whatever were “gains” to me, I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord... I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ...” Those things we are striving for can take a great deal of time and energy, and if not from the Lord, too much time and energy and become, in essence, soul thieves.

For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul (Matthew 16:26a, KJV)?

Now, we are to “count the cost” of discipleship, Jesus says (Luke 14: 25-33). We do give up some things to serve the Lord, and we work with God to let Him “give and take” over the seasons. It is wise to ask, “to what end?” when we take on an endeavor, for some decisions come at a heavy tax that will not be sustainable in accordance with our Christian walk. Things that cost us Christ are far too expensive.

Again, the Gospel is not complicated. The world is complicated. The Gospel is as simple as the love of God through Christ Jesus.

Keep your focus pure...

Keep your focus pure like a clean-running stream—peaceful, calm, reflective, uncontaminated, but continuously moving in a decided, pointed direction. Not a raging river, but a peaceful, flowing, gentle stream. Have a heavenly aim.

What you focus on, what you “tend” the most, grows just like a garden. We all remember the children’s nursery rhyme: “Mary, Mary quite contrary, how does your garden grow?” You choose the seeds: weeds, or plants that will yield useful fruit over time. Gardens take planning, due diligence, tending, weeding, staking, watering, and a lot of prayer. The lesson is: *what we do today greatly impacts the harvest we will reap tomorrow.*

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not (Galatians 6:7-9, KJV).

Out of the same mouth come *both* blessing and cursing. These things, my brothers, should not be this way [for we have a moral obligation to speak in a manner that reflects our fear of God and profound respect for His precepts] (James 3:10, AMP).

A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them (Matthew 7:18-20, KJV).

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto

them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (Matthew 7:21-23, KJV).

Now Mary of the Bible (not the nursery rhyme) sat at Jesus' feet, like a child quiet before her father, to listen, to learn, to soak in His presence, His voice, and His guidance and wisdom. Her eyes and heart were wide open. Martha, on the other hand, was working, working, working and cranky about it. Martha was distracted, from Jesus, so the fruit she was exhibiting was irritation, anxiety and resentment against other people. "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:40b-42, NIV).

Following Jesus may cost us something, but we won't miss it. Like Paul, all those other things are nothing compared to knowing Christ. So choose your thoughts in accordance with the Word of God, and you will be choosing as wisely as any man or woman can. Tend your thinking well, and your garden will grow beautifully.

The Vine and the Branches...

Frustration is works of the flesh, works without the Holy Spirit, similar to what Martha was suffering above. When we are frustrated and impatient, we often ask the Lord, "God, what do you want me to do?" We are chomping at the bit, rearing to get on with it, but the Lord's answer often clashes with our "doing" mindset, because it is focused on our "being" with Him.

God is interested in Relationship.

We are interested in accomplishment.

God is relationship-driven; we are accomplishment-driven. These seem to be at odds with one another, but they are not. What we are really interested in is not accomplishment, but the alleviation of our problem. But this alleviation is not found in our "doing something about it." It is not in "figuring it out." Rather, the solution it is found in *relationship with God*, and His reward will be Him doing something about it, Him figuring it out, for us.

We go about problem solving in the most complicated, backward way, when the plain and simple remedy is this: "Hang out with Me," Jesus says. The parable that illustrates this is the Vine and the Branches found in John 15. Here Jesus instructs us that branches (souls) that are not **receiving** sap from the Vine (Christ) are tossed into the fire. We dry up like withered leaves when we separate from Christ and allow the Word to be choked out of our hearts and minds.

*It is crucial for believers to spend time just being with the Lord,
in His Word, communicating with Him,
considering His ways and being obedient to Him.*

The anointing (holy unction) of the Lord is RECEIVED while we are in His Presence, just soaking up His love and nearness and power like a sponge. Jesus' presence is like life-giving rain to parched, desert-dry ground. We cannot yield the fruit of the Spirit without spending time with God. This is a natural law just like a plant needs both light and water to grow and produce fruit.

Directly after this parable in John 15, Jesus tells us that the world will not treat believers favorably (vs. 18-27). In our garden metaphor this worldly resistance to us can manifest as storms, floods, winds, drought—conditions which seem harsh and hateful. Sin does not make sense because it is the fruit of lies. Jesus explains in John 15:25b: "They hated Me without a reason." When we experience unpleasant conditions in our own lives, the solution is simple: "Hang out with Me," Jesus says. He understands. Simply spend time with Him as the only cure. He accepts you. He wants you. He cares for you. He will shield you and correct conditions to ensure you are receiving from Him and producing good fruit in your life, in spite of circumstances, the cruelty of man, or maltreatment from the fallen world.

We keep our lives very simple when we hang out with Jesus and let Him handle all the complexities for us.

...I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full (John 10:10b, NIV).

CHAPTER TEN: HOLD THE RIGHT VIEW

As believers, we have so many gifts from God that non-believers do not have access to. Sad Christians are an oxymoron. While there is a time for sadness, there is also all the more time for JOY, since it is a fruit of the Spirit of God.

As believers, we get to replace worry with lovely, God-filled thoughts. We get to replace sorrow for beautiful things and simple joys—a flower in the field, a sunrise, a child’s laughter, a sweet, cuddly dog...whatever is lovely, pure, simple and brings us joy.

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be apparent to all. The Lord is near.

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—**think on these things.**

Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me, put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you (Philippians 4:4-9, BSB).

Do not let worry, or the enemy behind it, steal your joy. That cramps a believer’s style and does not sit in direct line with the fact that we are not going to hell, we are going to Heaven. That is our direction (up!, not down), and it needs to show on our souls and on our faces. How many dollars we spend on beauty products, when what we need is a heart full of joy—and it is offered to us for free. We just need to think about it far more often than we do.

We need to replace our problems with thoughts of pure joy

and simplicity in Christ Jesus.

When we simply believe in Jesus and trust God to solve all of our problems, we find we are following God. And the more we do, the more He prompts us. If you feel that you haven’t heard from God in a long time, get back to childlike faith. Soon you will be listening to God easily, with reverence God, and you will start to see once again how He is indeed your sun and shield.

For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly (Psalm 84:11, ESV).

A good portion of “uprightness” is to have a great relationship with God, to know Him and His Word, to derive your joy from the Lord Who is your strength, and to be willing to be used by Him, in His service, *all of your days*. This is a happy thing, far more simple than we try to make it. Again, you do not have to understand everything He is doing—where you’ll go, how you’ll pay for it, etc.—just be willing to follow Him! We cannot get back to this point if we do not first *think on* lovely things, things which are found in spending time with God and in His Word, meditating on His beautiful nature. When I think of Philippians 4:4-9, I think of pastures beside still waters. I crave nature because I love to watch God’s artistry and experience His gentleness. In nature, it seems problems just dissolve like vapor.

What did you come out to see (Matthew 11:7)?

When we see God in nature, we seem to look to the heavens. Heaven, like described in Revelation, is something to behold. I like to look to the heavens and white clouds and envision His Second Coming. When these lovely things are in our minds, problems seem specks if they cross our radar at all. Believers have eternity written in their hearts.

He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end (Ecclesiastes 3:11, NIV).

We are to have an eternal mindset, and a soul filled with wonder and awe at the vastness of God. When we do that, our mental state becomes healthy. We lighten up. We become kinder souled. We smile more. If you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ, all your problems will end once you cross over into Glory. So, why not end them now? What do you want to see? What do you want to entertain? What do you want to focus on? What do you consider to be important and worth your reverence? Remember, *Be it unto you as you have believed* (Matthew 8:13).

The One we believe in deserves all of our attention.

If looking at the heavens, anticipating Heaven, brings you joy, that is a clear sign to continue thinking about it and moving in that direction. What did you come out to see (in Matthew 11:7) is the Greek term *thecoma* (Gk: θεάομαι), which means to “contemplate”.⁸

We can contemplate all mannerisms of trouble and be mentally unhealthy, or unsound.

OR, we can contemplate all mannerisms of the holy and be mentally healthy, or sound.

⁸ Thayer’s Greek Lexicon. STRONGS NT 2300. Retrieved July 2, 2025 at: <https://biblehub.com/greek/2300.htm>

This is choosing death or life, in your thinking. This is just as critical as choosing life or death spiritually.

This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live (Deuteronomy 30:19, NIV).

The coma is where we get our English words, “theater” or “movie”. God’s original movie screen is the human imagination—the screen of your own mind. Jesus is saying, “What do you want to watch on the inside?” What do you want to rehearse? What is your favorite internal movie? Is it death or life?

We are literally to be “watching God” with our God granted imaginations. It is a large component of belief and it feeds our emotions with life-producing energy and will. We are to be “entertaining Jesus” non-stop.

Faith is our interior sight—the mood, the cinematography and beauty, the atmosphere, the reason we watch God, and what we are looking so intently for. When we are enthralled with God at a level we should be, we are absorbed in Him, seeking diligently to extract meaning, color, something to relate to at a heart-level, something good to fill us up in spirit to inspire us in our personal existence. Something lasting and worthy. Faith can be thought of as an interplay with our God-granted imagination and obedient action—a boundless pair when infused and aligned with the operative Word of God and His engaging brilliance.

The lead characters in your mind are God and you,

so create something beautiful with Him.

God is not an afterthought amidst our overloaded schedules. “You shall have no other gods before Me” includes our “busy-ness,” business, or profession (see Exodus 20:3). Our lives are an epic, sweeping, romantic movie that Heaven is watching. The Bible is so serious on this point of holy, inspired imagination that it states people who do not keep the vision in front of them, for the duration, actually die.

Where there is no vision [no redemptive revelation of God], the people perish; but he who keeps the law [of God, which includes that of man]—blessed (happy, fortunate, and enviable) is he (Proverbs 29:18, AMPC).

We crave a holy vision of God more than anything else on the earth. Without one, we wilt. Circumstances pale next to watching God and being in love with Him. They are just not that entertaining when you stack them next to the omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent God, Who was, is and is yet to come. *What can man do to you?* Circumstances lose every time when you hold the right view of God.

God has given you the mind of Christ to engage. To think, dream, and meditate, to follow Him, and to ingest His Word and use it to fuel you. Imagination is simply letting your mind, heart, and soul (and body/strength) thrive on biblical messaging and images, inspired by the goodness and purity of God. Let God take over your entire inner estate.

The Lord, in Matthew 11:7, is asking, “What story did you come out of your cocoon or seed-shell to witness?” “What direction are you going?” And if we “go” out into the world at the Lord’s beckoning, thrust or call, and we spend our time viewing the world and all its chaos and entertain its assault or offense, we eventually lose our power to get through that wilderness to the other side of it. We lose our way. We sit down in the middle, and “settle in Harran” or a desert-dry, spiritual-less, unbeautiful place, and become bewildered, bitter, angry (see Book of Jonah). Again, would it do us well to be angry (Jonah 4:8-10)? No, it would not. And the opposite of anger is peace, including peace in a fallen world.

As the born again, as those “used by God,” we have to have a different view from the majority of people in the world. We need to receive from God, and maintain or keep, a holy, elevated, broader, timeless view of Him, His scope, His love, and all the work He is doing with us. As believers in Jesus Christ, we come to understand the comforts of Heaven like the back of our hand; we are almost There, and this is our focus while the world we live in becomes folly under our footsteps.

Everything other than God turns to dust.

God alone is everlasting.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: CAST YOUR CARE

We let cares crush us, contrary to God's role and His willingness to take them off our hands. 1 Peter 5:6-7 tells us to "cast our care" but we don't want to because we are full of pride and think we should have it handled by now...

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you (1 Peter 5:6-7, NIV).

The first step to casting is to humble ourselves. Not easily done! But to toss our heavy load, our confusion from others, our inability and dashed expectations, our outcomes, our reputation, our comparisons, our misunderstandings, all our "what-ifs"—once and for all on God—first, we have to first admit we can't handle all of that. We have to recognize what should be obvious to all believers, but somehow each of us seems to forget:

God is in control.

This means I am not in control. I have to make peace with this and the moment I do, I've found my humility.

God wants to take all of that because you and I were never designed by Him to handle it on our own. This is because He cares for us in such a permeating, closer-than-a-brother sort of way, **there is nothing more we need to do** from here on out, other than give it all to Him.

When we really think about it, it is not our helplessness, rather it is God's sweetness that should be the focus. It is not our independence, but it is God's invitation to do life with us that we should see. Pride is absolutely blinding to a walk of faith with God.

It is more about God's willingness to love us, than our ability to succeed.

I say again, **there is nothing more we need to do**. God's Self-assigned job is to do it all *for us*. What a gift God's rest is and so many believers refuse it because they think full dependence upon God to fix everything and provide for them is somehow irresponsible! Nothing could be further from the truth. Our true responsibility is to include God on His terms because He knows best. Our entire job is to simply believe in God and let Him handle it. Our Lord is a Servant-Leader *to the extreme* (Matthew 20:28; John 14:14) and the world, and Satan, tries to con us out of God's beauty and His love that knows no bounds.

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you (1 Peter 5:6-7, NIV).

Humility let's God do it on our behalf. We trust Him to do things better than we or other people could. So, give God room and time to act. We do not outgrow God's Fatherhood. He is always our Father, our Parent, our Provider. This is the "humbling" that He is looking for in 1 Peter 5:6. He, Himself, will do it for you; He will lift you up for He alone is able to do so in the right way and at the right time.

God is with you!

We look to people, including ourselves, and that is where pride, idolatry and worry sprouts its weed seeds in our soul's field.

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith (I Peter 5:8-9a).

Faith is full dependence upon God. For everything.

We experience the symptom of exhaustion when we begin to pull out what should never have been planted or nursed to begin with, so reserve your valuable energy (oil) and crush anxiety at the mere suggestion of a defeated thought. Drown hopelessness at the mirage stage of it and determinately *choose* hope every time. Resist the devil at his onset...at the mere suggestion of an erroneous thought or attitude.

If you do not have peace about something, don't do it. If you don't know yet, wait until you are sure you do. The enemy wants you to rush and make panicked decisions. If a thought does not bring you peace, don't entertain it. Cast it out.

And above all these [put on] love and enfold yourselves with the bond of perfectness [which binds everything together completely in ideal harmony].

And let the **peace** (soul harmony which comes) from Christ rule (**act as umpire** continually) **in your hearts** [deciding and settling with finality all questions that arise in your minds, in that peaceful state] to which as [members of Christ's] one body you were also called [to live]. And be thankful (appreciative), [giving praise to God always].

Let the word [spoken by] Christ (the Messiah) have its home [in your hearts and minds] and dwell in you in [all its] richness...(Colossians 3:14-16a, AMPC).

For the weapons of our warfare are not physical [weapons of flesh and blood], but they are mighty before God for the overthrow *and* destruction of strongholds,

[Inasmuch as we] refute arguments *and* theories *and* reasonings and every proud *and* lofty thing that sets itself up against the [true] knowledge of God; and we

lead every thought *and* purpose away captive into the obedience of Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One) (2 Corinthians 10:4-5, AMPC).

Be confident in Christ. Pursue peace. Stand on the Word of God. When you do, you will witness the Promises of God become reality. As you believe in the power of God, it will manifest and multiply in your situation. God does not want you to believe to no event, and He did not send the Word to you for it to return to Him void (Isaiah 55:11). Walk by faith boldly and bravely. Remember that “little by little” and from “faith to faith” is the progress He is looking for.

...Stand[] firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen (1 Peter 5:9b-11).

So shall My word be that goes forth out of My mouth: it shall not return to Me void [without producing any effect, useless], but it shall accomplish that which I please *and* purpose, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it (Isaiah 55:11, AMPC).

Repent from overthinking it...

Satan’s agenda is to wear out the saints (Daniel 7:25a). How more effective to do this than to get people addicted to reasoning. Excessive reasoning will not rush God to act on your behalf as it is laced with fear and panic, not faith.

Worry seals our ears and blinds us from an otherwise perfect, pleasant vision. But once you take God’s hand again, your mind will soothe itself into familiarity (a sense of peace). Remember Jesus describes our lifeline and source of living in this simple, yet unbreakable way:

I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who abides in me and I in him bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing (John 15:5, MOUNCE).

Oh, but with Him...

Pruning shears only belong in the hands of God, the Master Gardener. We have no business cutting soul ties with God, which is what worry and anxiety and overthinking do.

Then the cares and anxieties of the world and distractions of the age, and the pleasure and delight and false glamour and deceitfulness of riches, and the craving

and passionate desire for other things creep in and choke and suffocate the Word, and it becomes fruitless (Mark 4:19, AMPC).

When we are grafted into the Vine, we have peace and quiet. That is how we know we are in good standing with God, whatever comes. Believers are to be content and feel secure and at home—with Him. Difficulty is taken in stride when we cling to the one thing that is important to us—our Relationship with God.

When we are off the Vine, our soul grumbles within us, confusion swirls all around us, and we become restless in our faith, both physically and mentally exhausted. Often our negative thoughts race, one after the other, but get us nowhere better. Our dour attitudes fester and swell to the point they cannot be contained. Once such a very STRONG Christian, complaint rots our fruit faster than any outside force.

The good news is, the course correction is very easy here: *repent, turn back around and face God.* It is a simple, natural, and effective cure for all the problems that are overtaking you. God's love is still there. He is your strength.

This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength (Nehemiah 8:10b, NIV).

Only God knows...

Not knowing every detail about our lives or what God is up to does not mean we are unintelligent. It does not mean we do not hear from God. Rather, resting your mind requires trust in God. You are not a robot, and He wants a working relationship with you. He wants you to trust Him to figure everything out and lead you to a great outcome.

For I know the thoughts *and* plans that I have for you, says the Lord, thoughts *and* plans for welfare *and* peace and not for evil, to give you hope in your final outcome (Jeremiah 29:11, AMPC).

Regarding matters too great for you, when you are content in the middle of transitory pressure, it is proof that you actually trust God with your life. It is evidence that you believe in God and His willingness and ability to provide for you.

Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me (Psalm 131:1, AMPC).

He is in control; we are out of it; and we are at complete peace with the distinction.

The irony of the Christian is that God does it all, willingly and perfectly, and yet somehow we think life is too hard. Get very comfortable *knowing God* and casting your cares upon

Him, and the importance of every-trivial-thing else will fade against the backdrop of His holy power and loving care.

I understand that there are unbearable events on the earth that happen, such as losing a loved one or a position of security—threat presents and out goes our peace. However, there is nothing to console us *other than God*. Nothing. No one.

He used the resurrection of Christ to show us His desire to reunite us to an eternal security that can never be stolen by man or devil.

Now, if you are suffering the loss of a loved one, think on Heaven where no tears exist, only perfection—perfected bodies, perfected souls, that run on forever in an environment of goodness we can barely imagine from here. There is no other place or Person who can offer that hope of reconciliation and reward—only God through Christ Jesus. The deepest most grievous pain there is, only has God as the sole answer to that void, that temporary separation, because He alone reunites loved ones eternally. This “pointing to God alone” proves God has a good plan and is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him out. There is no other answer, no other path to take, there is no one else we can go to for consolation of grief like this—just God. Every death we encounter points us to Heaven. This is not folly, it is designed like this for a reason because God wants faith.

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him (Hebrews 11:6, KJV).

For God so greatly loved and dearly prized the world that He [even] gave up His only begotten (unique) Son, so that whoever believes in (trusts in, clings to, relies on) Him shall not perish (come to destruction, be lost) but have eternal (everlasting) life (John 3:16, AMPC).

Jesus said to him, I am the Way and the Truth and the Life; no one comes to the Father except by (through) Me (John 14:6).

Every care that you encounter in this world—cast it, on God, for He cares for you forever.

CHAPTER TWELVE: PERCEPTUALLY HARD, SPIRITUALLY EASY

Often what we perceive in the natural mind as too hard is so spiritually easy when God gives us His answer. We have such a complex problem, we see no possible solution, but God says, “Trust Me.” Low and behold, in the end, it suffices. We don’t know how it was fixed, but it was.

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

Ingest His words: “Come to Me.” If I told you this was the solution to every single problem on the earth, you might chuckle. But it is.

It is.

Mankind will never come up with any other, either.

‘My yoke is EASY.’ Easy. Not hard. Impossible? Of course it is, or we would not need God! Problems do nothing but test human faith. That’s what problems are for here. Faith in Christ makes impossible things very easy for us to attain.

Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26, NIV).

LIFE IS IMPOSSIBLE BY DESIGN

Impossibility, or a vision, requires faith. A purpose, a vision, a goal, a dream, an impossibility does not mean it is too hard for us. It means that we need God to accomplish it. He says its easy. Light.

The impossible is only too hard when we attempt to go it without God.

Jesus says, “**all** things” are possible with God. In God, all good things are already done. Christ is seated.

Our part is belief. Faith. Trust. These are simple and easy to be borne. We are not “doing goodness” or “working goodness” on our own; God is at work because Goodness is Who He is, permeating our souls and our earth with it. Our faith in this is also a gift from God that is pleasant, un-worrisome, and healthful to our souls and marrow.

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21, NIV).

We of Little Faith

Life is impossible by design. We cannot afford it. We cannot heal ourselves. We cannot self-promote or make ourselves famous and rich. Our job is not guaranteed. We cannot feed the world. We cannot devise a better system. We cannot prevail over evil...**ON OUR OWN**. Rather, WE NEED GOD. So, we can stop incessantly reasoning about the line. When God is involved, then His promises to provide for us become a **yes and amen**. Life was designed that way—impossible, but for God!

And He said unto them, “Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?” Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm (Matthew 8:26, NKJV).

God is a genius. He created us to *require* Him not only to survive, but to thrive, to stay sane, to simply be happy. If you want more joy and relief, ease and refreshment, if you need a rescue, you simply need God.

Successful living must include God.

He is the Rock life itself is based upon.

For all the promises of God in Him are “yea”; and in Him “amen” unto the glory of God by us (2 Corinthians 1:20, NKJV).

Only God can overcome the evil in the world.

We cooperate by *trusting* Him with this each day.

Trust means to lean on and to rely upon. God is reliable, so you and I have no need to worry, to reason, to overthink. We do have a need to lean on God and to enjoy God, to expect God to act and intervene on our behalf. We get to watch God in His awesome workings, to give Him credit and praise, honor and glory for being Who He is—Our God, Our Lord, Our Creator, Our Father, Our Hope.

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice (Philippians 4:4, NKJV)!

Another thing that makes life perceptually hard is complaining. Complaint leads to destruction, but praise leads to building up, restoration and rejuvenation.

Complaining takes effort. It drains your valuable energy out on the floor and can actually cause harm to the Kingdom of God (see Revelation 3:15; 1 Timothy 1:19; Deuteronomy 30:19). It erodes trust and diminishes your confidence in God. You do not have to complain out loud, though unfortunately many of us have. Complaint can be stone silent and

manifest as a coldness or disappointment in God. Complaint is a backward stance and a symptom that your relationship with God needs healing.

I think that God simply wants acknowledgement, credit and praise from us. It's simple, not complicated. He wants togetherness and companionship. He does not enjoy witnessing our anxiety, which equates to a separation. He does not enjoy fielding our one-sided complaints that are not really prayers, not really a two-way dialogue, and, therefore, not really fair discourse (see Psalm 95:10-11, 1 Corinthians 10:5-6).

If we spoke to God to sincerely listen to His responses, He would talk to us with gladness. We do not do so when we think God is angry and no longer loves us. When our hearts are cold and dark, we cannot hear from God because we are incessantly complaining, grumbling and faultfinding OF THE PERFECT GOD, and not letting Him so much as interject an answer or direction.

And will not [our just] God defend and protect and avenge His elect (His chosen ones), who cry to Him day and night? Will He defer them and delay help on their behalf? I tell you, He will defend and protect and avenge them speedily. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find [persistence in] faith on the earth (Luke 18:7-8, AMPC)?

Faith is believing beyond what the world or the enemy tries to convince us. Faith is believing God is Good, loving, and will come through beautifully in our case.

The above “selective hearing” syndrome illustrates a common, spiritual communication problem that starts with our pride and manifests in our stubborn defiance. We will not believe God, even though we know better. We seal our ears, hearts and minds so we can meditate on our pain and problems. We refuse to hear the voice of God, and also to heed or obey it, then we wonder what went wrong, why we don’t have a victorious life like we had planned.

So let’s you and I turn this around and listen to God for a moment...

Therefore humble yourselves [demote, lower yourselves in your own estimation] under the mighty hand of God, that in due time He may exalt you, casting the whole of your care [all your anxieties, all your worries, all your concerns, once and for all] on Him, for He cares for you affectionately and cares about you watchfully. Be well balanced (temperate, sober of mind), be vigilant and cautious at all times; for that enemy of yours, the devil, roams around like a lion roaring [in fierce hunger], seeking someone to seize upon and devour (1 Peter 5:6-8, AMPC).

They grumbled in their tents and did not listen to the voice of the LORD (Psalm 106:25, BSB).

And do not complain, as some of them did, and were killed by the destroying angel (1 Corinthians 10:10, BSB).

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

To have effective spiritual communication, a particular conversation with God is not finished until you experience PEACE.

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid (John 14:27, KJV).

Jesus is just as sweet, loving, protective and fierce as He has always been. The world has gotten louder, more cruel, more chaotic, and more unreasonable since God took you where you did not wish to go (see John 21:18; Book of Jonah).

Remember that Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8). So choose your focus, or your spirit will not let you enter God's rest. To be effective, keep God first.

Complaint (gogguzó) leads to destruction (*olothreuó*). The opposite is also true: **praise** leads to **rejuvenation** and **abundance**. *Complaint* (Strong's 1111) is a “smoldering discontent” denoting an “audible, discontented murmuring—often half-whispered, yet unmistakably hostile to God’s purposes or the authority He has established. It is more than a momentary sigh; it is sustained, willful complaint that fuels unbelief and spreads discord.”⁹

Think of gritted teeth or a clenched jaw or fists. Complaining is a filthy habit set on destroying you. Now if you are upset at circumstances, confused and do not feel close to God, TELL HIM. Work with Him to get the matter correct for, via unchecked, habitual complaint, believers are backsliding into unbelievers and fall off the vine and spoil or decay. The solution?

Turn to God.

⁹ Bible Hub Topical Lexicon. 1111. Gogguzo. Retrieved June 29, 2025 at: <https://biblehub.com/greek/1111.htm>

Stay in the Word, pray and obey God each and every day.

He will lead you out of darkness, into the Light once again.

The reason for this spiritual spoilage is that meditation on the Word night and day gives way to meditation on problems via distractions of the age.¹⁰ It chokes out what was once solid inside a believer. But no garden blossoms long if no one tends it. We are to care for and love GOD with all of our mind, heart, soul and strength. Everything else is immaterial.

Jesus declared, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment” (Matthew 22:37, BSB).

Complaint makes life perceptually hard. Praise makes things spiritually easy. Consider your thoughts and words carefully today. Choose your habits wisely.

¹⁰ Read the Parable of the Sower and others in Mark 4, AMPC. Note that the calming of the storm is not, in this author’s opinion, an oddity thrown in amongst parables on farming, but the calming effect comes in when the Word is made effective in the believer’s heart, over time and amidst great challenges and displacements. How often has a believer been called from the farm, to the city, to the sea—all foreign territory once out of the country where one was born and born again. Seeds and seas are blown by the same spirited wind and God is the master of them all. ¹⁸ And the ones sown among the thorns are others who hear the Word; ¹⁹ Then the cares *and* anxieties of the world *and* distractions of the age, and the pleasure *and* delight *and* false glamour *and* deceitfulness of riches, and the craving *and* passionate desire for other things creep in and choke *and* suffocate the Word, and it becomes fruitless. ²⁰ And those sown on the good (well-adapted) soil are the ones who hear the Word and receive *and* accept *and* welcome it and bear fruit—some thirty times as much as was sown, some sixty times as much, and some [even] a hundred times as much.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: THE PROPER DEFINITION OF SUCCESS

The majority of the time “success” is simply a willingness to fail. It is a willingness to try something that might not work out. Why? You are human. You are here on this planet for a “character” test, a “faith-walk” test—a God-pleasing test, not a people-pleasing test (Galatians 1:10).

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him (Hebrews 11:6, NIV).

Look at the defined responsibilities in this passage: we believe; God rewards. God is more concerned with the state of your soul: your mind, heart, will, personality and emotions. Who you are; not, what you do.

Notice the fallen world is focused on “rewarding” what you do and could care less who you really are or what you believe. Not so with God. He is intimately connected with who you are on the inside—that is what will work its way out to the outside, just like a seed ultimately produces a certain type of fruit by design. True reward, lasting and real reward, is nothing more or less than God’s blessing. We don’t earn or deserve it.

So what is perhaps more important to God than our “success” is our “bravery”. Why? He is looking for courageous hearts. He is looking for those with a “right heart attitude.” Selfish ambition, competition, and multi-car garages belong in the lowest rung of accomplishment for a person. True Victory (“real success”) is and always has been God’s, and He has already won every conceivable battle there ever was or will ever be. The very moment Christ paid for our sins on the cross, we achieved our utmost as a human being by doing absolutely nothing at all. We can read the Book of Revelation and gain a better understanding of what God considers “success”. All that is required of us is a whole lot of belief (in Christ) and a bit of bravery to see the plan in God’s mind all the way through.

Now while we are on the earth, a believer who is filled with faith, no matter how small, possesses some unique characteristics: a willingness to get up each day, to do their best at what is set in front of them (no matter how insignificant it seems), to honor God with their life in whatever way that He chooses, to banish doubt and negativism.

Time in the quiet...

Time in the quiet helps us to formulate a proper, biblical mindset for whatever is in the future. It seems we are not accomplishing a thing, that no one knows our name, but this “non-work” and secrecy (isolation) is a paramount part of the work! It creates the proper alignment before the jet takes off the runway again. And, it can be as simple as taking care of yourself, a critter, a garden, a houseplant. It can be taking a walk, watching a sunset or sunrise, listening to a bird, smelling a flower. It can be doing very little at all!

Sometimes, God just wants you to rest, to sit at His feet, to humble yourself like a child, to quiet your soul. Maybe He misses you. Sometimes, God just wants to be with you because He values you. He is the custodian and steward of the Relationship He has with you, and if you are prone to “workaholism” and “perfectionism” like me, this Relationship is likely starving for attention. There is no need for depression during these times—enjoy them!

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest...”
(Matthew 11:28, NIV).

God knows how to bring you back into balance after seasons during which you were living in a very out-of-balance way.

Rather than becoming frustrated during stagnation—begging, “God, what do you want me to do?” or “How long is this going to last, God?”—simply give God His due devotion and wait. This can look like doing nothing but devoting your inner thoughts to Him, one racing notion after another, handing them over unto the obedience of Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 10:5, Philippians 4:8). Remember, God can multiply all the rest of it when it is time, creating rapid expansion but He usually waits until your heart, soul, mind and strength are restored and He is first place (as He should be) once again.

HUMBLE YOURSELF

Small beginnings...

Do not despise the days of small beginnings, for the Lord feels joy when He sees the work begin, when He sees the plumb line in Zerubbabel’s hand (Zechariah 4:10a; paraphrase, author’s).

Douay-Rheims (Latin Vulgate) says “little days”—don’t hate your seemingly insignificant days, slow days when it seems you are on the back side of nowhere, accomplishing nothing and time moves at a snail’s pace, because God absolutely loves them! These days are precious to a life of faith. These days primarily consist of hope. Small beginnings consist of an idea that the person knows will require God for the thing to eventually work and come to pass. “Little days” are the first-born acts a person undertakes in the aftermath of prayer

(obedience to what they believe God instructed them in personal dialogue). It can be as simple as a positive confession—"I believe what God said will happen!"

The context of Zechariah 4:10 is the small beginnings of building the Lord's great temple. Read "The Source of Power" section in MacLaren's Expositions, from which the following excerpts have been taken:¹¹

There are no beginnings or endings, properly speaking, in human affairs, but all is one unbroken flow [for Believers]. One man only has made a real new beginning, and that is Jesus Christ; and He only will really carry His work to its very last issues. He is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending. He is the Foundation of the true Temple...

If we realise that God's Spirit is the guarantee for the success of work done for God, we shall escape the vulgar error of measuring the importance of things by their size, as, no doubt, many of these builders were doing. No one will help on the day of great things who despises that of small ones. They say that the seeds of the 'big trees' in California are the smallest of all the conifers. I do not vouch for the truth of the statement, but God's work always begins with little seeds, as the history of the Church and of every good cause shows.

Men might look with contempt on the humble beginning, but other eyes than theirs looked at it with other emotions. The eyes which in the last vision were spoken of as directed on the foundation stone, gaze on the work with joy. These are the seven eyes of 'the Lord,' which are 'the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth' {Revelation 5:6}.

If we try to get so near God as to see things with His eyes, we shall be saved from many a false estimate of what is great and what is small, and may have our own poor little doings invested with strange dignity, because He deigns to behold and bless them.

So what is true success? It is a willingness to be one tiny drop in a vast sea of possibility of all that God owns and does—and finding great pleasure in the tiny contribution. It is trust that God will have you hit your mark, belief that He will have your destiny work and come together beautifully because He only lays, accomplishes and completes GOOD PLANS. It is finding that place of awe for all the work that God is doing from Genesis to Revelation

¹¹ MacLaren's Expositions. *The Source of Power*. Bible Hub, retrieved 8/12/2025 at <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/zechariah/4-10.htm>

and eternally beyond. It is being more than okay with being merely one thread in a vast interweaving of God's design and finding PEACE, DIGNITY, and IDENTITY in that.

You are crucial, you are being used, you have your unique colour, grain, purpose, and place in God's great scheme. I know sometimes it feels like you have gained no traction at all. But faith in Christ testifies that you have not gained traction because you are flying in God's grace! You are not stuck on the tarmac if you are in God's palm; like Christ asleep in the boat whilst it was being moved across waters, you and I have no idea the vastness of rest when we rely on God. The mega-movement, the unbelievable accomplishments, the Victory, the Power, the Crown, the King of all Kings, the top, the Alpha, the Omega, the beginning and the end, remember, are ALL HIM! You and I cannot fail from the moment we accept Christ as our Savior. We are not competing with God, rather, we are chosen by God to join with Him in all He is doing. So don't worry about failure! You can't if you stay with God. Your accomplishments? All God's. What if this or that happens? What if you get "rejected"—no worries. Just think about God's Word and you'll be closer to success than ever before.

In short, success looks a lot like rest. It is ok for you to rest in God and get prepared for the next stage in His plan. You won't miss a thing if you do, so enjoy your times of rest in God and draw near to Him. That's what rest is for.

By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done (Genesis 2:2-3, NIV).

Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. For we also have had the good news proclaimed to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because they did not share the faith of those who obeyed. Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said, "So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'" And yet his works have been finished since the creation of the world... (Hebrews 4:1-3, NIV).

If you are in a season of divine-orchestrated rest, it is an intervention. Please read Hebrews 4:1-13.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN: BUT WHAT DO I DO?

We do the spiritual things first. We abide in Christ. Then, we do what He leads us to next. If He is not showing you yet, it is not time yet. Waiting, with a good attitude, is the goal. Oftentimes, waiting brings a lot of nastiness out of our souls before we get to the good attitude. In a sense, waiting is God's method of cleansing us, purifying us, and resting us before He has us continue at the next level.

I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me (Philippians 4:11-13).

All people have problems, as Jesus instructs in John 16:33 (NIV):

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

Only Christians get to have problems and not really care about them! I do not mean in an uncompassionate way, for we do want to exhibit compassion. I mean “not care” in a living-above-it sort of way, with a pure and genuine soul smile for we are completely confident on God. What is any trial going to do to you? Nothing. It cannot impact you forever, for Jesus has overcome the world. He declares you divinely protected. (See Psalm chapter 91 and 188:6; Romans 12:19.) Through Christ, God gives you full permission to be happy and enjoy your life, even if you have a problem you cannot solve.

Be honest with yourself: *Are you enjoying your life?* Sadly, many Christians do not. Again, you and I need to make a personal choice inline with why Jesus came:

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full (John 10:10, NIV).

When we are unhappy Christians, we are not giving due consideration for all Christ has done for us. Sometimes we are not being brave enough to obey God to move, or we are not being patient in His assigned sufferings, remaining hopeful that He will deliver us yet. We think more needs to be done, by us, but actually God is the One at work and working perfectly. What we are to do is trust Him to do it right, and on time. Trusting God invites the type of spiritual rest made available only to believers.

Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint (Isaiah 40:31, NIV).

When we get to a higher vantage point, spiritually, we can see that God has it handled already. He has already provided a way out. In His perfect way and time, He will show you what that is. You and I are merely walking each day out by faith—and they can be fun, lighthearted days set above a swirling sea of worldly issues (see Matthew 14:31). We get to cast our care and enjoy God!

Glory in all things...

In simple things, like peace and contentment, God is more likely to prosper His own goodness. It really is phenomenal, perhaps not simple at all, but the substance of miracles. We just receive God's grace. He will multiply and magnify it with holy ease, and then place it in our hands as a blessing. This works best when there are no heart, mind, or soul blockages, no doubts to hinder the pure process of living the zoe life. Simple graces like these are what make life truly rich.

However, we go through seasons where we cannot rest until we figure out what God is up to. We demand exactness and make ourselves miserable because we do not have a really good explanation as to why He is using us in such an uncomfortable manner. We demand to know why, and for how long. God's simple answer is usually, *because I am God.*

Oswald Chambers writes, "Instead of God being on the side of our prejudices, He is deliberately wiping them out. It is part of our moral education to have our prejudices run straight across by His providence, and to watch how He does it."¹²

Moral education is often painful. We have our preferences and ideas on how we want to serve God, but like Jonah, sometimes God's ideas prevail. We have no problem with God using us in a way that we prefer, in our church of choice, with people that we like. However, God often takes us on some interesting tours of faith before we get to that place.

Wherever you find yourself in service to God, my question to you is this: if you were 100% comfortable all the time, how much use would God get from you?

Oswald continues:

"Jesus has some extraordinarily peculiar sheep: some that are unkempt and dirty, some that are awkward or pushy, and some that have gone astray! But it is impossible to exhaust God's love, and it is impossible to exhaust my love if it flows from the Spirit of God within me."¹³

¹² Chambers, O. Not a Bit of It! My Utmost for His Highest. Retrieved June 29, 2025 at: <https://utmost.org/classic/not-a-bit-of-it-classic/>

¹³ Id. His Commission to Us. Retrieved June 29, 2025 at: <https://utmost.org/updated/his-commission-to-us/>

The love of God is our armor, our reason, our shield, our motivation. It fuels our will to keep going, to try one more day, to never give up. Let God do some outlandish stuff with you. He will reward you for waiting out ambiguity with a good attitude. It will not be forever.

Following Jesus means change is always on the beautiful horizon. Keep looking up and ahead. And always keep love front and center.

Do everything in love (1 Corinthians 16:14, NIV).

If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love [for others growing out of God's love for me], then I have become only a noisy gong or a clangling cymbal [just an annoying distraction] (1 Corinthians 13:1, AMP).

But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:8-9, NIV).

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Do not quench the Spirit. Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all; hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil.

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it (1 Thessalonians 5:16-24, NIV).

God does not put near as much weight on your earthly status as on your willingness to put on His armor spiritually. Once the armor of faith and love is on, the war is on, and the worldly title vanishes in a sea of God's love. God will win souls.

Prosperity works from the inside, out. Jesus warned the Pharisees to clean the inside, for what is hidden inside will come out into the open.

Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean (Matthew 23:26, NIV).

God wants to prosper your soul, first. One of the straightest paths to soul prosperity is to ignore the problems in the world around you and start paying attention to God, reflect the Word within the state of your own soul, and put Him in the place of honor in your innermost

thoughts. If your soul exists in the peace that Jesus bequeathed to you, you will find grace in abundance and more breakthroughs in your circumstances.

Peace I leave with you; My [own] peace I now give *and* bequeath to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. [Stop allowing yourselves to be agitated and disturbed; and do not permit yourselves to be fearful and intimidated and cowardly and unsettled] (John 14:27, AMPC).

Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth (3 John 1:2, KJV).

The order of 3 John 1:2 indicates that the state of your soul works its way out through your circumstances and bodily health. Here is another way of saying it:

Even so, every healthy (sound) tree bears good fruit [worthy of admiration], but the sickly (decaying, worthless) tree bears bad (worthless) fruit. A good (healthy) tree cannot bear bad (worthless) fruit, nor can a bad (diseased) tree bear excellent fruit [worthy of admiration]. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and cast into the fire. Therefore, you will fully know them by their fruits (Matthew 7:17-20).

We cannot get by on our past level of faith, nor can we study the Word of God in depth for a season and barely pick it up again and think these former years will suffice. More important than eating daily food and drinking water each day, the Word of God is alive and what we live on.

Many of us experience times of spiritual dullness or dryness. We feel God is distant, or it seems we have not heard from Him in a long time. If your spiritual life seems to be drying up like a brook, I encourage you to get quiet before God and get immersed in the Word again.

We all need a fresh dose of the Word and God's presence and direction *each day*. This was Jesus' way of **daily** living:

I am able to do nothing from Myself [independently, of My own accord—but only as I am taught by God and as I get His orders]. Even as I hear, I judge [I decide as I am bidden to decide. As the voice comes to Me, so I give a decision], and My judgment is right (just, righteous), because I do not seek or consult My own will [I have no desire to do what is pleasing to Myself, My own aim, My own purpose] but only the will and pleasure of the Father Who sent Me (John 5:30, AMPC).

Every day is a dialogue with God. So many believers have difficulty making decisions because they lack confidence that God will speak to them in time. But He does. Ask Him!

He will speak to you about those decisions. They need not pressure you. God will send orders into your spirit *each and every day that you need them.*

Some Christians lack the bravery to step out in faith and find out if what they believe they heard was correct. Remember, it is impossible to please God without faith, and we walk by faith. Faith is required! I encourage you to step out and find out in faith. Be willing to be seen trying. Be willing to be incorrect. God will find you, comfort, console you and get you moving in the right direction again. He can make up lost time. And I believe sometimes He just wants to see your good faith effort to serve Him.

I love to hike trails. Sometimes, you come to an unexpected divide in the lane. You can freeze in indecision and anxiety for a while, only to find out that the paths reconnect down the line anyhow. Similarly, in God's economy, He can course-correct either side for those who stay with Him in heart. The journey is more about relationship-building and less about our human perfectionism. Remember, God makes your paths straight. He is your constant companion. He is always by your side, ready and able to guide you well.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight (Proverbs 3:5-6, NIV).

But the Helper (Comforter, Advocate, Intercessor—Counselor, Strengthener, **Standby**), the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name [in My place, to represent Me and act on My behalf], He will teach you all things. And He will help you remember everything that I have told you (John 14:26, AMP).

God is more apt to move significantly and powerfully on your behalf when you finally realize that *He values your trust.* He values it so much that He may not let you move forward in life or in ministry until you reestablish it and reconnect with Him at the right level. Once you get right in your relationship to God, your soul will respond exceedingly well to the rest and peace of God.

This course correction does not require an audience or yet another public accomplishment, career milestone or educational certificate. Rather, it requires your quiet reverence, your sincere praise, your refusal to complain against God, and a realization that He alone is your joy.

I hope God has used this message to encourage a gentle resting of all of your thoughts, anxieties and concerns on Him, once and for all, with an enormous TRUST that He will work it all out for good, for you.

And, isn't that what the Bible says?

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28, NIV)

No matter how long or hard it has been, God wants YOU to know that you are no exception to this verse. He means you have been called according to His purpose, and He means He promises and He will work for the good because you love Him. He is still with you, always has been and always will be.

So what do we do as Christians? We simply BELIEVE.

But to as many as did receive and welcome Him, He gave the right [the authority, the privilege] to become children of God, that is, to those who believe in (adhere to, trust in, and rely on) His name—who were born, not of blood [natural conception], nor of the will of the flesh [physical impulse], nor of the will of man [that of a natural father], but of God [that is, a divine and supernatural birth—they are born of God—spiritually transformed, renewed, sanctified] (John 1:12-13, AMP).

CONCLUSION: WISDOM OF A CHILD

In summation, the smartest, surest thing you and I can do to obtain PEACE in a FALLEN WORLD is lay down our demands to figure it all out and simply go back to following the Lord like a little child.

- Children laugh. Adults much less.
- Children dream. Adults much less.
- Children get back up when they fall. Adults much less.

But, is this decline in joy, creativity and resilience as we age due to the influence of God or of the enemy of God?

He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: “Truly I tell you, **unless you change and become like little children**, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:2-4, NIV).

When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:41, NIV).

These things have I spoken unto you, that **my joy** might **remain in you**, and that your joy might **be full** (John 15:11, KJV).

Just as we are to continue to abide on the Vine in order to grow spiritually, we are also to *continue to increase in the JOY* Christ has given us as believers. In John 15:11, Jesus states that His joy is to **REMAIN** in us, not dissipate as we age. In fact, I would go so far as to say I believe His Joy is designed to *multiply* the nearer we get to Heaven.

But the fruit of the Spirit is **love, joy, peace**, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22, NIV).

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be **made the righteousness of God in him** (2 Corinthians 5:21, KJV).

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

As Fruit of the Holy Spirit of God, implanted in us, joy is to **INCREASE**, even as we decrease, similar to John 3:30 (KJV): “He must increase, but I must decrease.”

I feel a righteous indignation when I realize that the enemy of God has worked overtime to steal the joy, peace and right standing with God away from believers. Joy, peace and rightness with God are gifts straight from Jesus to us. We have to fight to keep them. We ought not let ourselves be cheated out of what is rightfully ours. When we get determined to take hold of all Christ died to give us, our story can go like this...

- Children laugh. Adults much more.
- Children dream. Adults much more.
- Children get back up when they fall. Adults much more.

Adults becoming “like a child” is critical in entering the Kingdom of God, so it is also critical in experiencing the righteousness, peace and joy of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps the Holy Spirit wants, and even needs, His temple (you) to be filled with these traits so He feels more at home.

Please take this opportunity to *become the child in you* once again.

Lighten your load. Smile, have fun, and trust that your Father loves you with an unconditional love. He knows right where you are and His will is for you to laugh. Dream. Get back up when you fall.

The fact that you and I are temporary residents of the fallen world makes no difference, for we are PERMANENT residents of the eternal Kingdom of Heaven through Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior.

Whatever your circumstance, no matter how hard it has been, God will take your hand and lead you through whatever pit Satan has plotted—and you’ll come out shining, happy and new yet again. It is an established pattern for believers.

For thus said the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel: In returning [to Me] and resting [in Me] you shall be saved; in quietness and in [trusting] confidence shall be your strength (Isaiah 30:15a,b, AMPC).

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice (Philippians 4:4, NIV)!

God is asking you and I for our consideration, our willing obedience, to return to Him. God only knows that the world has many enticements, confusions, diversions and lies in it, all designed to get us off course. We get complicated and beg God for simplicity, and here it is: either God is your Provider, or He never was. He will either continue to take care of you, or He never has. What do you *believe*? If you believe like a child, you know God will take care of you. You know you are secure in this life and in the one to come.

Come like a little child, and return to your Father. Once you do this, He will open the eyes of your heart and grant you the revelation and wisdom you need. This life only makes true sense inside the embrace of a loving God. So make the decision you will not live this life without God being first place in it, for it becomes no life at all.

We all learn this and it is never to late to lay down bitterness, fear and anxiety and take hold of the Peace and Joy Jesus has given you. Let go of unbelief and get into full agreement with God. He will bring you the desires of your tender heart and cause you to continue to bear much fruit, *joyfully, peacefully, and in complete rest and contentment.*

Via His Son and the fruit of the Holy Spirit, God has already given you complete peace in a fallen world—enjoy it, and tell others all God has done.

May God bless you.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dawn Dyson has taught the Word of God since she was 12 years old. She started teaching Vacation Bible School in summers in rural Nebraska, then Sunday School at her local church.

She earned a Master of Divinity in 2019, along with other degrees, from Liberty University and was a member of Thomas Road Baptist Church while she attended school in Lynchburg, Virginia.

An avid writer, Dawn has authored several blog posts and books, including novels, devotionals, and Bible study guides, with the most recent title being the basis for this Autumn 2025 Bible Study.

In her spare time, Dawn has participated in international mission trips to impoverished nations, international hurricane disaster relief efforts, and anti-human-trafficking movements with various non-profit, Christian organizations.

Dawn enjoys Christian ministry and riding her beloved American Quarter Horse, Kegan.



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